If Not, Or Else, and Maybe in Akkadian and Perhaps in Hebrew

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The particle *ulašūma* ('or else') in Old Babylonian Akkadian is analyzed from a functional and syntactic point of view. In addition to its known functions as a pro-polar protasis ('if not, otherwise, or else') and as a disjunctive particle ('or'), it is also concluded to function as a conditional exponent. As such it is shown to belong with other expressions of epistemic modality (modal and conditional particles). Its most plausible diachronic source is determined, based on comparative as well as Akkadian material, to have been a non-verbal circumstantial expression *u lā šū ('it (is) not') ultimately meaning 'it not being the case. . .'. In the second part of the paper, a cognate origin (*ū lā hī 'it not being the case') is proposed for the Biblical Hebrew epistemic particle *ʔūlay* ('maybe/if'). Two possible paths are discussed—one is internal development and the other a result of language contact. Each path is considered, paying meticulous attention to the respective sets of difficulties. The difference in the synchronic function and meaning between the Akkadian and Hebrew particles is bridged based on the syntactic and functional analysis of the Old Babylonian particle, which shows it to be an epistemic particle.

1. SYNCHRONIC DATA AND ANALYSIS

The particle *ulašūma* 'or else, if not, otherwise' (CAD U/W 72a) is mainly found in the western variety of Old Babylonian from the Mari archives (as represented in the Archibab data base) and said to occur in the vicinity of present-futures, imperatives, and precatives (AHw 1408a), very similar in fact to a conditional protasis. Von Soden (GAG §117e) attributes its origin to the disjunctive particle *ūlā* 'or' and glosses the construction accordingly—'sein oder ist' (supposedly from Old Assyrian *ūlā* 'or' + *-šu*). Finet (1956: §55c) translates it as "s'il n'en est pas ainsi (et que), si au contraire." The particle is spelled *ú-la-šu(-ú)-ma*.

1.1. *Synchronic Description of* ulašūma

The basic function as well as motivation of the particle *ulašūma* is to serve as a proform for a negative or polar protasis, very much like *šumma lā kīam* 'if not', and akin to the rare Biblical Hebrew *wālō* 'if not, or else, otherwise'. For instance:

(1)   ARM 27 132: 26–27[1]
    šumma   *eleʾʾi*   *uštessē-šu*[2]
    IF   1SG.be_able   1SG.evict.NPST-ACC.3MSG

1. The glossing follows the Leipzig rules, with the following differences: PN = personal name; GN = geographical name; CN = canal name; [. . .] encloses a broken section; NVC = non-verbal clause.

2. A T-form (G, D, Š) which imparts neither middle voice (as T stems) nor iterative (as TN) and whose function is simply present-future is a peculiarity of Mari OB (see also ARM 26/2 328: 18–19).

ulašūma	*išat-am*	*aqallū-šu*
OR ELSE	fire-ACC	1SG.roast.NPST-ACC.3MSG

"If I can, I will evict him. **Otherwise** I will burn him with fire"
(see also ARM 26/2 328: 17–19).

The particle **ulašūma** in fact stands for the polar protasis, namely "if I can**not** evict him." In addition, the particle may occur following a directive:[3]

(2)   ARM 26/2 408: 47–48

bēl-ū [*sic*]	*arn-im*	*šūrêm*	
owner-NOM.PL	sin-GEN	direct.IMP.DAT.1SG	

ulašūma	*ana*	PN	*idiš-šunūti-ma*	*l-i-dūk-ū-šunūti*[4]
OR ELSE	to	PN	give.IMP-ACC.3MPL-CONN	JUSS-3-kill-MPL-ACC.3MPL

"Direct the rebels to me, **or else,** give them to PN and they should kill them"
(for another translation, see Heimpel 2003: 349) (see also ARM 26/1 5: 49–53; 26/2 534: 28–30).

Note that even when not preceded by a conditional, as in ex. 2, the particle is still able to create a conditional-like environment. In other words, it is able to present the content of the command in the preceding directive ("direct them to me") as a mere possibility ("if you do not direct. . ."). Consequently, what follows the particle is a possibility as well. The function of *ulašūma* is hence very similar to a modal particle such as 'perhaps'. In either case, be it a conditional construction or a directive preceding the particle *ulašūma*, the latter stands for a protasis that is referential to the preceding context. This function of *ulašūma* is the most common among the seventy-eight examples (in the Mari Letters in Archibab and Tell al-Rimaḥ in OBTR).

Table 1

immediate context	**opposite polarity protasis**	apodosis
directive(s)	*šumma lā ta/iparras*	the conditioned second part of a bipartite structure (the first being the protasis)
or	*šumma lā kīam**	
conditional	*ulašūma**	

*rarely following a negative preceding context (row 10 in Table 2)

This scheme occurs following a directive (rarely an indicative) or a conditional construction. In this function there is generally a syntactic equivalence between the three members in the protasis group (Table 1). The consequence of this equivalence is that the following clause (or clauses) has to be a conditional *apodosis*, which is normally a *conditioned* clause, because it depends on the protasis for its realization.

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3. The directives are a conglomerate of forms that express a command—imperatives, precatives, prohibitives, etc.

4. Glossing the examples is relative to specific forms and in conformity with my morphological analysis. In the indicative forms (e.g., *aqallū-šu* ex. 1) I analyze the expression of the 1st and 3rd person to be ø. The historical markings ʔ- and *y*-, having disappeared, left ø, whereas the vowel after these preformatives is analyzed as part of the stem (e.g., *u*- in D and Š stem; see Goldenberg 1994). If ø is not actually written, its function remains inseparable in glossing, and therefore no hyphen is used. In the precative form, however, *-i*- in Old Babylonian distinctly marks 3rd person, whereas *-u*- occurs only with the 1st person.

1.2. The Bipartite Structure Following ulašūma

1.2.1. Formal Findings

Another function type of *ulašūma* mentioned by von Soden (AHw 1408a), is that which occurs with what he terms "inserted conditional" (*eingeschobene Bedingungsatz*). Indeed, roughly 30% of all the occurrences of the particle in the corpus (23/78 cases) behave somewhat differently than what is demonstrated above. In those cases, the particle occurs immediately preceding what appears to be a conditional sentence:

(3)   M. 8956, Durand, *MARI* 6, p. 63, n. 130

abn-um   damiq-t-um,   [in]a   qāt-i-ya   ib[ašš]i [. . .]
stone-NOM   good-FS-NOM   in   hand-GEN-GEN.1SG   exist.SG

ana   bēl-i-ya   l-i-bil
to   lord-GEN-GEN.1SG   JUSS-3SG-bring

bēl-ī   l-ī-mur–ma
lord-GEN.1SG   JUSS-3SG-look–CONN

šumma   abn-um   īn   bēl-i-ya   imtahar
IF   stone-NOM   eye.CONST   lord-GEN-GEN.1SG   3SG.appeal.PF

l-i-klā-ši   ulašūma   īn   bēl-i-ya   lā
JUSS-3SG-hold-ACC.3FSG   eye.CONST   lord-GEN.1SG   NEG

imḫur   abn-am   l-u-terr-ū-nim-ma . . .[5]
3SG.receive.PST   stone-ACC   JUSS-3-return-MPL-DAT.1SG–CONN

"I have a precious stone at my disposal [. . .] let him bring it to my lord. Let my lord examine it, and if my lord finds the stone attractive, let him keep it. ***ulašūma*** he has not found it attractive, let them return the stone to me . . . ."

The cases in this subcategory are presented schematically in Table 2; the group consists of all the cases that have an alleged conditional clause following *ulašūma*. It is subdivided into two groups—one preceded by a simple clause (rows 1–12, exemplified in ex. 4), made up mostly of directives (see n. 3), and the other follows a conditional construction (rows 13–23, exemplified in ex. 3). Of the conditionals that follow the particle, two are introduced by *šumma* and are hence clearly marked conditionals (rows 1 and 14 in Table 2). Five of the cases occur with the particle *-ma* between the alleged protasis and apodosis (rows 6–10 in Table 2). These are found only with the first group, that following a simple clause (rows 1–12) and only connecting indicative forms. These five cases are quite similar to the paratactic conditional pattern for several reasons (see ex. 5 and discussion further below). In the rest of the examples, sixteen cases, the structure following the particle is not marked as a conditional in any explicit way.

As for the meaning, the bipartite structure following the particle is consistently rendered as a conditional:

a. "Sinon, <u>si elle ne lui plaît pas</u>, qu'on me la retourne . . ." (Durand, *MARI* 6: 63, n. 130; our ex. 3)

b. "But if not, <u>if she lives with the weaving-women</u> . . ." (OBTR 142: 16–17, row 13 in Table 2).

However, the particle *ulašūma* is still rendered in the same way:

5. The form *luterrūnim* may be a mistake; in Old Babylonian one expects *literrūnim*.

(4)   ARM 27 102: 20–25 (no. 11 in Table 2)
    inanna   *bēl-ī*   *l-i-wa''er–ma ...*
    now   lord-GEN.1SG   JUSS-3SG-instruct-CONN

    ṣab-am   *l-i-kabbid-ū-nim-ma*   *l-i-ṭrud-ū-nim*
    troops-ACC   JUSS-3-outfit-MPL-CONN   JUSS-3-send-MPL-DAT.1SG

    u   *še'-um*   *ina*   *simān-i-šu*   *arḫiš*   *l-i-k-kamis*
    CONN   grain-NOM in   season-GEN-GEN.3MSG   quickly   JUSS-3SG-PASS-collect

    ulašūma   *bēl-ī*   ⌈*ṣāba-am*⌉   *ul*   *iṭarrad-am<-ma>*[6]
               lord-GEN.1SG   troops-ACC   NEG   3SG.send.NPST-DAT.1SG

    še'-um   *ša*   *ekall-im*   *imaqqut*
    grain-NOM   OF   palace-GEN   3SG.fall.NPST

    "Now my lord must give instructions, and they must outfit and dispatch troops to me. . . .
    And the grain must be collected quickly, in good time. **Otherwise, if** my lord does not
    dispatch troops to me, the grain of the palace will go to waste" (Heimpel 2003: 444).

In both exx. 3 and 4 the structure following the particle *ulašūma* reminds one of the paratactic conditional pattern with *-ma*, except, of course, that in most cases (16/21, 78%) the particle-*ma* is not found. The scheme is shown as follows:

immediate context (directive or conditional)	*ulašūma*	protasis	—	apodosis

In these cases neither a conditional particle nor any other connective particle binds the two parts of the alleged condition, the protasis and the apodosis which follow *ulašūma*. Yet, the condition is semantically solid and incontestable.

1.2.2. The Need for an Overt Signal

Based upon a comprehensive survey of the conditional constructions in central OB (Cohen 2012), a small number of particles are found to be essential in signaling a construction as conditional: the conditional particle *šumma*, the modal particles *pīqat/midde*, and the particle *-ma.* Their function, together with other features, is to indicate explicitly conditionality. This section reviews these particles and their function, with the intention of showing, in the following sections (§§1.2.3–1.2.4), the similarity between *ulašūma* and these particles.

Table 3 (p. 156) shows instances of various conditional patterns from central Old Babylonian: the first is the connected conditional pattern (Cohen 2012: 78–90), in which the connective particle *-ma* indicates the boundary between the protasis and the apodosis and connects them (see below for more details). This pattern could also be exemplified from the Mari corpus:

(5)   ARM 26 234: 9'–11'
    bīt-am   *annêm*   *lā-t-eppeš-ā*
    house-ACC   DEM.ACC.MSG   PROH-2-do-PL

    t-eppeš-ā-šu-ma   *ana*   *nār-im*   *ušamqas-su*
    2-do.NPST-PL-ACC.3MSG-CONN   to   river-GEN   1SG.CAUS.fall.NPST-ACC.3MSG

    "Do not (re)build this house. Should you (re)build it, I will make it collapse into the
    river."

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6. The addition of *-ma* by the editor of the text is a case in point, because it shows that his *Sprachgefühl* requires that it somehow indicate or justify this sequence as a conditional.

Table 2

no.	reference	preceding context	ulašuma	protasis (*šumma* PRES$_3$)	connective	apodosis
01	M.9541+ MARI 5, 157–159+ARM 1:1'–4'	COH			—	[IMP]
02	ARM 28, 81:16'–21'	IMP—COH	→	STV$_3$	—	IMP—COH
03	FM 3, 138:1'–9'	PREC		(–PRES$_3$)	—	PREC—PREC
04	ARM 10, 91:8'–12'	**PRES$_1$**		PRES$_3$	[...]	[PREC]
05	ARM 3, 15:9–20	*assurri* {*inīma* PRES$_3$} PRES$_3$—PRES$_3$		PRES$_3$	—	(–PRES$_3$) u (–PRES$_1$)
06	FM 2, 116:51–54	PREC u PRES?		(–PRES$_3$)	-ma	(–PRES$_3$)
07	ARM 14, 61:8–12	PREC		PRES$_3$	-ma	[PRES$_3$—(–[)PRES$_3$]
08	ARM 14, 18:10'–15'	COH—COH		PRES$_3$	-ma	NVC
09	ARM 14, 14:28–33	PREC(x)		(–PRES$_3$)(x)	-ma*	[...]
10	ARM 28 18:44–45	PROH$_1$(x)[—PROH$_1$]		PRES$_1$(x)	-ma	PRES$_3$
11	ARM 27, 102:20–25	PREC—PREC—PREC(x) PREC		(–PRES$_2$)(x)	<—ma>	PRES$_3$
12	ARM 26, 428:1"–5"	IMP(x)		(–PRES$_2$)(x)	—	[PREC]
13	OBTR 142:10–20	INF(y) (–STV$_1$(3)); *šumma* STV$_3$(3)—STV$_3$(4)	→	STV$_3$	—	PREC$_3$ [—]PRES$_1$(y)
14	M.5003:6–13	IMP(y); *šumma* DSM PRES$_1$(x)		*šumma* PRES (–PRES$_3$)(x)	—	IMP(y)
15	A.1025:60–62	PRES$_1$(y); *šumma* STV$_3$(x)		STV$_3$(–x)	—	(–PRES$_1$)(y)
16	ARM 10, 136:11–18	PREC—IMP; *šumma* STV$_3$(x)		(–STV$_3$)(x)	—	PREC
17	ARM 14, 48:40–43	IMP; *šumma* PRES$_2$(x)		(–PRES$_2$)(x)	—	PREC
18	A.731:23–30	COH; *šumma* PRES$_3$(x)—(–PRES$_3$)(y) u (–PRES$_3$)		PRES$_3$(x)—PRES$_3$(y)	—	PREC
19	M.8956 (notes!)	PREC; *šumma* **PF$_3$**(x)		(–**PRET$_3$**)(x)	—	PREC
20	OBTR 124:15–20	PREC; *šumma* **PF$_3$**(x)		*adini* (–**PRET$_3$**)(x)	—	[...]
21	ARM 10, 176:17–21	IMP; *šumma* STV$_3$		(–NVC)	—	(PROH$_3$)
22	ARM 13, 51:11–18	COH; *šumma* STV$_3$		PRES$_3$	—	COH
23	A.3815:6–13	IMP PREC; *šumma* STV$_3$		(–[STV$_3$)]	[	]

LEGEND: **COH**ortative; **IMP**erative; PF—perfect; **PREC**ative; **PRES**ent; **PRET**erite; **PROH**ibitive; **STV**—stative NVC—nonverbal clause; **DSM**—direct speech marker; (**–FORM**)—negative form; **FORM**$_{\text{NUMBER}}$—person; (x/y)—representing the (same) verbal lexeme across a structure.

Table 3. The Sequence *iparras* ("present future") and *liprus* (precative) in Conditionals

	conditional pattern	particle	protasis	connective	apodosis	remarks
1	paratactic	—	*iparras*	***-ma***	*liprus*	
2	conditional particle	***šumma***	*iparras*	—	*liprus*	
3	modal particle	***pīqat, midde***	*iparras*	—	*liprus*	
4	(no conditional)	none	*iparras*	none	*liprus*	(juxtaposed)
5		***ulašūma***	*iparras*	—	*liprus*	?

The second pattern in Table 3 is the ubiquitous *šumma* conditional pattern (Cohen 2012: 29–78). The third is the modal particle conditional pattern (Cohen 2012: 93–97), in which particles that otherwise mean "perhaps" function as conditional connectives. In the Mari texts, the modal particles *pīqat* and *midde* generally do not form conditional patterns (Wasserman 2012: 23, 53). The model is known from central OB. Nevertheless, the following example should be considered:

(6)   A.2342 (ARM 26/1, p. 42) [A.2342] 7–11
   inanna   **pīqat**   *šarr-um*   *uštašannā-ma*   *išappar-am*
   now   king-NOM   3SG.repeat.NPST-CONN   3SG.write.NPST-DAT.1SG

   nāpalt-am   *mala*   *ana*   *ṣēr*   *šarr-im*   *ašappar-u*
   answer-ACC   as_much_as   to   king-GEN   1SG.write.NPST-SUBJ

   annī-t-am   *lā*   *annī-t-am*   *bēl-ī*   *l-i-špur-am*
   DEM-FSG-ACC   NEG   DEM-FSG-ACC   lord-GEN.1SG   JUSS-3SG-write-DAT.1SG

   "Now, if (lit. maybe) the king writes to me again, let my lord write to me whatever
   answer I should write to the king, this or that."

It was mentioned above that conditional patterns in OB generally occur with some particle that overtly identifies them as such (in addition to other special features). Moreover, these particles are normally incompatible with each other, namely they do not generally co-occur (see Table 3). Another function of these particles, regardless of their actual position, is *connecting the protasis and the apodosis into one construction*. For instance, the particle *pīqat* (in ex. 6 and in the third row of Table 3) binds both sides into a single construction. In contrast, in row 4 of Table 3 we see that when a directive follows a present-future verbal form (a very common sequence found in most conditional patterns), without any conjunctive particle, they remain two unrelated clauses and do not impart any connection or conditionality.

1.2.3. The Relevance of These Findings

The group of structures that follow the particle *ulašūma* and are suspected to be conditionals have the following features, which coincide with various features of other conditionals:

1. A very common phenomenon in paratactic *-ma* conditionals in OB is the *polar lexical resumption* taking place between the context ("Do not [re]build the house") and the protasis ("[Should] you [re]build it"). The preceding directive (which can be cohortative, imperative, precative, or rarely, the prohibitive) generally assumes the execution of the commanded action. There is therefore a plain logical incompatibility between the two forms in the same utterance—"Do not (re)build the house" vs. "Should you (re)build it." This incompatibility is resolvable only by interpreting the structure following the directive *as an unequivocal con-*

ditional. It is important to note that this polar lexical resumption is the functional equivalent of *šumma lā kīam* 'if not' and (at least originally) of *ulašūma* (as shown above, in Table 1). Namely, the form *teppešāšu* ("you [re]build it," ex. 5), at least in principle, can be replaced by *ulašūma* or *šumma lā kīam* 'if not'.[7]

The feature of polar lexical resumption is found in twelve cases (rows 9–20 in Table 2), four in the first group (rows 9–12) and eight in the second (rows 13–20). The resumption takes place between the preceding clause and the protasis (rows 9–12, ex. 4: "let them send me troops . . . my lord does not send me troops . . ."). When two conditional structures are involved on either side of the particle, the resumption takes place between the protases (rows 14–20, ex. 3: "if my lord finds the stone attractive . . . (if) he has not found it attractive . . ."). In three cases the resumption exists between the apodoses as well (rows 13–15).

2. The distribution of forms in both protasis and apodosis (Table 4) is very similar to an ordinary condition with *šumma*:

a. Protases of the alleged conditional never consist of directives (cohortatives, imperatives, precatives, or prohibitives), only of indicative forms.

b. The majority of the forms in the protasis consists of present forms (IPARRAS), whereas the majority of the forms in the apodosis consist of directives.

c. In one case (row 19 in Table 2, ex. 3 above), the alleged protasis has a negative preterite form (LĀ IPRUS) which is *prospective*, namely, pointing at the *future*. A negative IPRUS (as *lā imḫur*) may refer to the future only when occurring in a conditional protasis (Cohen 2012: 43–54, 81–82).

These features, common to both known conditional patterns and to the alleged conditional following *ulašūma*, constitute a substantial body of argumentation in favor of the analysis of the structure as conditional. This justifies the unanimous interpretation as a conditional in the editions.

Table 4. The Forms in the Protasis and Apodosis after *ulašūma*

protasis paradigm	cases		apodosis paradigm	cases		Distribution of forms is *very* similar to **ordinary conditions**
PRES	7	62%	directives	10	62%	
-PRES	6		PRES	3	31%	
STV	3	24%	-PRES	2		
-STV	2		NVC	1		
-PRET	2					
NVC	1					

1.2.4. Conclusions: *ulašūma* as a Conditional Particle

The preceding analysis of the bipartite structure following *ulašūma* raises two interrelated questions. The first is what the function of the particle *ulašūma* would be in view of the conclusion that the following bipartite structure is a full-fledged conditional construction. The second is what can formally account for this incontestable conditionality, since in most cases (16/21) there is no overt morpheme here to signal both parts as protasis and apodosis.

If the particle *ulašūma* stands for a polar protasis (like *šumma lā kīam* 'if not'), one would have expected only one additional part to function as apodosis (as indeed is the case with

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7. Note that a negative context preceding these expressions is rare but attested, e.g., rows 10 and 18 in Table 2.

most of the cases of *ulašūma*, cf. exx. 1–2, which have a structure [if not + apodosis]). In those cases where it occurs with a bipartite structure (Table 2), the particle is generally interpreted (as reflected in the editions) as if it still had its original function, namely 'if not/or else'. However, we have shown that in roughly half the cases polar lexical resumption ("do it. You do not do it . . .") takes place and that this resumption is more or less a functional equivalent of what *ulašūma* originally expressed, thereby creating some redundancy. It could be conjectured that the particle expresses some contrast between the part preceding and the following conditional, as is perhaps reflected in the translation "si au contraire" ("if on the contrary," Finet 1956: §55c; ARM 15: 190). However, we still need to answer the question about conditional marking.

It has been concluded that these are indeed conditional constructions. Yet, leaving out the cases with *šumma* (2) or *-ma* (5), we still have sixteen clear cases in which the only thing that could remotely identify the constructions as such by binding together the two parts is the particle *ulašūma* itself. Another argument in favor of this conclusion is the common polar lexical resumption, which in fact makes redundant the original function of *ulašūma* (essentially, to express the same idea, "do it; or else . . ."). The particle *ulašūma* in these cases seems to function as a *conditional connective*, whose most important function is binding both sides, protasis and apodosis, together, very much like *šumma*, *pīqat*, *midde*, or *-ma*. Returning to Table 3, the last row actually belongs with all the other patterns:

5	***ulašūma* conditional**	*ulašūma*	*iparras*	—	*liprus*

1.3. The Disjunctive Function of ulašūma

The relationship between the expression of disjunction between states of affairs and irrealis markers (conditional, possibility, etc.) is discussed in Mauri 2008 as well as in Mauri and van der Awera 2012: 388–94. Alternative states of affairs are viewed as mutually exclusive possibilities, i.e., as merely potential or possible—since only one of them will eventually take place (very much like mutually exclusive conditionals). For this reason, when they are marked by irrealis exponents, alternative inference is easily made.

The particle *ulašūma* also functions, occasionally, as a disjunctive connective, akin to "or":

(7) ARM 2 53: 22–24

[*šu*]*mma*	PN	[*la*]	*illak*	*ulū*	*n-idâk-šu*
IF	PN	NEG	3SG.go.NPST	DISJ	1PL-kill.NPST-ACC.3MSG

uˤlaˀšūma	*ina*	*kuss-î-šu*		*n-udappar-šu*
DISJ	from	throne-GEN-GEN.3MSG		1PL-remove.NPST-ACC.3MSG

"If PN does [not] come, either (= *ulū*) we kill him or (= *ulašūma*) we drive him off his throne" (see similarly Ghouti 1992: ll. 43–46).

Other disjunctive connectives in OB (to the exclusion of *ū* 'or', which does not occur between clauses) are *šumma* (otherwise known as a conditional particle)[8] and *pīqat* (otherwise 'perhaps').[9] This affinity between conditional/epistemic particles on the one hand and

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8. Finet 1956: §81f; GAG §162b; CAD Š/3 277. For instance, ARM 1 103: 10–13: "Je vous enverrai toute information que j'aurai, (pour savoir) si (= *šumma*) c'est vous qui vous transporterez vers moi ou (= *šumma*) moi qui le ferai dans votre direction."

9. Finet 1956: §81d; Wasserman 2012: 20–22; CAD P 387b. For instance, ARM 2 66: 9–13: "I have spoken to PN, either (*pīqat*) he returns it to you, or (*pīqat*) he does not." (But Durand 1997–2000, 2: 479 translates "Il te (le)

disjunctive expressions on the other, puts the particle *ulašūma* in good company, since it too, like the other epistemic particles, introduces a conditioned, that is, *an uncertain state of affairs*. Another such exponent is *ulū* (ex. 7), which also seems to have originated in another irrealis expression—the modal particle *lū*.

A frequent conditional pattern in English consists of #imperative + or + finite clause#, e.g., "do it or I'll punish you." This is equated with "do it, otherwise I'll punish you" (and analyzed as pragmatically interchangeable with "If you don't do it, I'll punish you"; Declerck and Reed 2001: 401–2). Note that "or" is the exact equivalent of "otherwise." In both cases it stands for a possibility that is the negative of the imperative lexeme.

1.4. The Modal Function of ulašūma

The foregoing sections provided a functional account of the particle *ulašūma*. Its three basic functions have been described, namely, as an exponent standing for a polar conditional protasis ('if not/otherwise', §1.1), as a conditional exponent preceding a bipartite structure (~'if', §§1.2–1.2.4) and as a disjunctive particle ('or', §1.3).

In all these functions the particle expresses close shades of epistemic modality, namely, referring to the degree of certainty attributed by the speaker to a state of affairs. In this function it is similar to other epistemic particles such as *šumma*, *pīqat*, etc.

This close association of *ulašūma* 'or (else)' with particles such as *pīqat* 'if, maybe' turns out to be an important detail in the discussion of the Hebrew particle *ʔūlay* below.

2. STRUCTURE AND PROPOSED ORIGIN

After the synchronic description of the particle, it is time to offer a plausible diachronic origin for the particle *ulašūma*.

There are several options for the historical makeup of the particle:

1. **ūlā-šu-ma** (OAss. disjunctive connective + suffixed pronoun + *-ma*)
2. *ulla-šu-ma* ('no' + suffixed pronoun + *-ma*)
3. *u laššu–ma* (connective + negative existential + *-ma*)
4. *ula-šū-ma* (negative particle + nominative pronoun + *-ma*)
5. *u/ū-lā-šū-ma* (connective + negative particle + nominative pronoun + *-ma*)

The first option was hinted at by von Soden (GAG §117e), namely, that the origin of the particle *ulašūma* is in the Old Assyrian disjunctive particle *ūlā* 'or'. This is clear from the way he glosses the construction—'sein 'oder' ist' ('his 'or' exists' as if it came from Old Assyrian *ūlā* 'or', the suffixed pronoun *-šu* and what he regards as the predicate marking particle *-ma*).[10] The problem with this putative origin is that *ulašūma* is attested only in OB, whereas *ūlā* 'or' exists in a different dialect, Old Assyrian.

The second option has the particle *ulla* 'no', which is rare and generally found in direct speech, mostly as a responsive, rather than as part of a clause. It occurs once in a combination with a pronoun ("his 'no'" CAD U/W 75). However, this meaning is quite removed from that of a polar conditional, the basic function of *ulašūma*. In addition, the spelling does not indicate any doubled consonants.

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rapportera sans doute, ou sans doute non"; also ibid., 310, rem. d. "sans aucun doute").

10. The particle *-ma* is not really a predicate marker in NVCs but actually either a connective (when the NVC is a circumstantial clause; Cohen 2015: 386–91) or a focus marker (Cohen 2005: 268–69). The non-verbal predicate is marked by the respective order of elements (Huehnergard 1986).

The same problem exists with the third option, *laššu*, a 3MSG stative form meaning 'there is not x' or 'x is absent'. The x is generally part of the construction and hence expected to occur with it.

Options 4 and 5 seem to be more suitable to the origin of the particle—because of the spelling, which does not attest to any double consonants, as well as due to the fact that both contain frequent negative elements.

The particle, *wālō* 'if not',[11] which occurs only twice in Biblical Hebrew, is widely used to this day in the same function. This particle, consisting of the connective *w- and the negative particle *lō,* functions as polar proform (or pro-protasis),[12] very much like *ulašūma*.[13] As a clausal entity it has the negative particle *lō* as its predicate.[14] This is evident due to the fact that it is the only entity in the (pro)clause, occurring in analogy to *ʔim lō* 'if not', where, again, *lō* is the only entity in the clause.

Based upon the initial structural similarity with the two parts of the Hebrew particle *wālō* (connective and negative particle), the fifth option seems to be the most plausible, consisting of four elements: 1) a connective *u/ū*, 2) the negative particle *lā*, 3) the demonstrative or personal pronoun *šū*, and 4) the enclitic particle -*ma*. This sequence is explicable and justifiable based on readily existing entities as well as syntactic analogies in OB.

The difference in structure between the Heb. *wālō* and OB *ulašūma*, has to do with the fact that in OB the negative particles *ula/lā* do not occur on their own (not even in special slots like the conditional protasis),[15] unlike Hebrew, where *lō* can and does occur alone as a unipartite clause. In OB a predicate entity (P) in non-verbal clauses normally occurs with a nominal or pronominal subject (S), e.g., P *šū* 'it is P'.[16]

One could argue that the negative particle in fact marks the predicate[17] that immediately follows it and thus we would have to analyze the pronoun *šū* as a predicate, together with the conceptually similar *šumma lā kīam*(-*ma*) 'if not so', where the predicate, along the same lines, is *kīam* 'thus, so'. The negative particle does tend to mark—in the pragmatic framework of functional sentence perspective—the new piece of information in the clause (termed "rheme" in the Prague circle, see Cohen 2005: 253, 256–58). However, despite this, the framework is always context-sensitive and hence what is new is determined based upon the information flow in the context. Since both the pronoun *šū* and the proform *kīam* would stand for presupposed material, namely, what has been said before, they are not considered to be new information. Therefore, the new information is the negative particle itself.[18] The negative particle, among the putative original constituents of *ulašūma*, is thus analyzed as the rheme, or the new information, on analogy with Hebrew *wālō,* and with the ubiquitous Semitic non-verbal clause pattern #P—pron#.

The sequence of negative particle with a following pronoun occurs elsewhere, most clearly in Aramaic:

Egyptian Aramaic *hn lw* 'if not', where *lw* < לָא הוּ (Muraoka and Porten 1998: 25).

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11. Gesenius and Kautzsch 1910: §159dd; Joüon and Muraoka 2006: §167o; 2 Sam. 13:26; 2 Kings 5:17.

12. That is, it comes instead of a full polar protasis "if x does not . . . ."

13. Sjörs 2018: 107–8 explains the negative particle *ula* as a development from the connective *u* and the negative particle *lā*.

14. Compare a similar unipartite clausal entity, *wā-ʔayin* 'and (there is) none'.

15. See Cohen 2005: 49–58 for the study of unipartite predicates in OB.

16. This is a fairly common non-verbal clause pattern in ancient Semitic—Heb. P *hūʔ*, Aram. P *hū*, Gəʕəz P *wəʔətu*, etc.

17. As in *ul awātī* "(it is) not my affair" (AbB 11, 175: 9–10).

18. For a discussion and examples of the negative particle itself as predicate in all the phases of Hebrew, see Zewi 1998: 42–44 as well as 2007: 103–5.

Jewish Babylonian Aramaic *law* (<*lā hū*), *lay* (<*lā hī*) 'it (M/F) is not the case', composed of the negative particle as predicate and the pronoun as subject index and predicate marker (Bar-Asher Siegal 2013: 227–28).[19]

Syriac *law* (<*lā ʰū*) (Nöldeke 1904: §328b; Sokoloff 2009: 675–76).[20]

Hebrew from the fifth century CE on—*wəlō hī* 'it isn't the case'.

This is not enough: we need to account for the particle *-ma* at the end.[21] In a recent study devoted to circumstantial clauses in OB, it has been shown that the particle *-ma* occurring with non-verbal clauses is the *connective* (Cohen 2015: 386–91).[22] Moreover, it occurs with similar constituent makeup as we attribute to *ulašūma*:

(8) AbB 2, 170: 10–15

u	*aššum*	PN	*ša*	*bīs-su*	*maḫrī-ka*
CONN	TOP.MARK	PN	PRON.REL	house-GEN.3MS	front-GEN.2MS

u	***šū***	***aḫ-ī–ma*** = **circumstantial NVC**			
CONN	NOM.3MS	brother-GEN.1SG–CONN			

arḫiš	*aššas-su*	*u*	*mār-ī-šu*	*[p]uṭram–ma*
quickly	wife-GEN.3MS	CONN	son-OBL.PL-GEN.3MS	release.IMP.MS–CONN

"And, as for PN, whose house is in front of you, him being my brother, release his wife and sons . . . ."

(9) AbB 1, 116: 2'–8'

[i]š-tu	*ūm-ī*	*mād-ūtim*
since	day-OBL.PL	many-OBL.MPL

ab-ī	***u***	***aḫ-ī***	***atta-ma*** = **circumstantial NVC**
father-GEN.1SG	CONN	brother-GEN.1SG	NOM.2MSG-CONN

. . . *ana*	*balāṭ-i-ka*	. . .	*aktanarrab*
to	live.INF-GEN-GEN.2MSG		1SG.ITER.pray.NPST

"For many days, you being my father and brother, I have been praying … for your life."

These circumstantial non-verbal clauses are similar in structure to the putative structure of *ulašūma*. The order of elements could be different, either P–S or S–P, the latter being less common.[23] However, all the parts match, including the initial connective *u*[24] as well as the connective *-ma* at the end. As mentioned above, in circumstantial non-verbal clauses a final particle *-ma* is the connective, linking the circumstantial clause forward. It is plausible to assume that the particle *ulašūma* might well have begun as a non-verbal circumstantial clause meaning "this is not (the case) . . . ."

19. For more on the special functions of *law* vis à vis *lā* in JBA, see Bar-Asher Siegal 2015.

20. The negation *law* was viewed in both Goldenberg 1993: 31–34 and Pat-El 2006: 340–41 as the negative counterpart of predicate marking *hw*.

21. In one view, this particle has two non-related functions, as a connective and as a focus particle (see GAG §123 as well as Finet 1956: §100a: "Outre son rôle de conjonction de coordination . . . la particule enclitique *-ma* sert à mettre en évidence un mot ou un groupe de mots"). Another view regards *-ma* as two homonymic particles (for instance, Cohen 2012: 2). This mostly has to do with a linguistic point of view.

22. Since circumstantial clauses in OB are chained rather than subordinated, they are consistently interconnected forward by the particle *-ma*.

23. The usual order for a non-verbal clause in OB with a personal pronoun is generally P–S (Huehnergard 1986: 223–26).

24. Compare the very similar Classical Arabic circumstantial pattern, #*wa-huwa* P# (Reckendorf 1921: §219) as well as the Hebrew #*wəhūʔ* P#.

To summarize, the particle *ulašūma* is presumed to have begun as a conditional circum-stantial non-verbal clause with the meaning 'this not being the case . . . ', which is connected forward by the particle *-ma*, as is generally the case with circumstantial clauses in OB.

Table 5

syntagm	connective	clause constituents		forward connecting
ulašūma	*u*	*lā* (P)	*šū* (S)	*-ma*
non-verbal circumstantial	(*u*)	P	pronoun (S)	*-ma*
		pronoun (S)	P	

The combination of a clause consisting of a negative particle and a pronoun is shown in Table 5 to have been quite common in ancient Semitic.

It is important to explain why the structure of *ulašūma* is perceived as a diachronic rather than a synchronic analysis: First and foremost, from a synchronic point of view, *ulašūma* is a particle and not a clause, circumstantial or otherwise. This is evident because no part of the particle is substitutable, and substitution is possible only for the entire particle (see Table 1). Secondly, from a synchronic syntactic analysis, circumstantial clauses and conditional constructions are markedly different from one another (see Cohen 2015: 402–3).

A final note pertains to the areas where *ulašūma* is attested. The Mari letters and the letters from Tell al-Rimaḥ could both be classified as peripheral Old Babylonian, where possibly Akkadian was a second language (Arkhipov and Loesov 2014: 6–7) and in contact with a western branch of Semitic (Amorite). This detail may constitute a link to the discussion about the Hebrew particle *ʔūlay*.

3. HEBREW *ʔŪLAY* SYNCHRONIC INFORMATION AND DATA

The following sections deal with the Hebrew particle *ʔūlay*, suggesting an etymology for it based on the foregoing analysis of the OB *ulašūma*, of which *ʔūlay* is here suggested to be a cognate.

The Hebrew particle *ʔūlay* means 'perhaps', according to the BDB, expressing a hope as well as a fear or doubt. When it is followed by (yet) another clause, it sometimes expresses the protasis (BDB: 19). The particle in Biblical Hebrew is discussed in Livnat 2001: 83–89, taking into consideration its contextual environment as well. The particle is described as essentially a dubitive, which reflects uncertainty and accordingly occurs in conditional constructions too:

(10) Josh. 14:12
      ʔūlay   YHWH   *ʔōṯ-ī*[25]   *wəhoraš-tī-m*
                 god   with-1SG   CONSEQ.drive_out-1SG-ACC.3PL

      a. "the LORD helping me, I will drive them out" (Today's New International version, 2002).
      b. "**if** so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out" (King James version 1611).

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25. This is an irregular spelling: *ʔōṯ-* is generally the allophone of the object marker preceding the pronominal suffix, and not the preposition 'with'.

c. "it **may be** that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out" (New King James version 1979–82).

(11)   Gen. 27:12

ʔūlay	*y-əmušš-enī*		*ʔāḇ-ī*
	3MSG-feel.NPST-ACC.1SG		father-1SG

wəhāyī-t̲ī	*bə-ʕēn-aʸ-w*		*ki-mt̲aʕteᵃʕ*
CONSEQ.be-1SG	in-eye-PL-3MSG		as-PTCP.deceive.MSG

wəheḇē-t̲ī	*ʕāl-ay*	*qəlālā*	*wəlō*	*ḇərāḵā*
CONSEQ.bring-1SG	on-1SG	curse	CONN-not	blessing

a. "**What if** my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing" (Today's New International version, 2002).
b. "**Perhaps** my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing" (New King James version 1979–82).

These two examples and their range of interpretations are good representatives of the functional range of the particle—it is indeed an epistemic marker which imparts uncertainty, and is translated by 'maybe' or 'perhaps', but when occurring with a bipartite structure in its scope it is occasionally to be interpreted as conditional too. The particle is in fact similar to *pīqat* and *midde* in central OB, which have these two functions as well.

4. DIACHRONIC VIEW OF *ʔŪLAY*

A couple of sources for the particle *ʔūlay* have been put forward over the years:

Ewald (1879: 197 n. 1) suggests that *ʔūlay* is made up of the equivalent 'whether not' (Ger. ob nicht), as if it had arisen from *ʔō* 'or' and *lō* 'not'. So does the BDB, conjecturing an origin from *ʔō* and *lay* (which they link to *lē* as in *lūlē* 'if . . . hadn't') together meaning 'or not'. Ewald also links *lai* with the pronominal element (as in *hal-**lā**-zɛ* 'that one'),[26] and the overall meaning as 'whether that'. Ewald ultimately derives *ʔūlay* from *lūlē* 'if not'. Barth (1893: 57) links *ʔūlay* with Syr. *ləway* 'would that'. König (1897, 2: 235) explains *lay* as a weakening of the counterfactual particle *law (whose normal reflex in Hebrew would be *lū*). Eitan (1929: 210) proposes to analyze the particle as a cognate of Arab. *wa-law* 'even if'. He regards the original etymology—*ʔō* and *lay* (= *lē* = *lō*)—as unsatisfactory.

The modern versions of the Hebrew dictionaries do not add anything new:

Donner, Rüterswörden, and Meyer (1987, 1: 23) suggest the etymology <*ʾū [Ar. ʾaw] + *lay < law [= Ar.; Akkad. *lū*]. Köhler, Baumgartner, Stamm, and Richardson (1994, 1: 21) suggest the etymology *ʾō* + *lō/lū* or *ul* + *ai*.

I would like to propose yet another source for the particle *ʔūlay*. This solution is by nature tentative and poses quite a few difficulties, but nevertheless it seems to me better established and motivated than the other proposed sources.

In view of the foregoing discussion and proposed origin of *ulašūma*, it seems but logical to propose a similar path, whereby the particle *ʔūlay* originated historically from approximately the same (or rather cognate) constituents as we proposed above for *ulašūma*, namely *(ū) lā hī* (CONN-NEG-PRON.NOM.**3FS**) lit. 'and not it$_F$' ultimately meaning 'and it is not the case' (see Table 6).

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26. For which, see Barth 1913: 77–80.

Table 6

language	OB Akkadian	Hebrew
original constituents	**u + lā + šū–ma*	**ū + lā + hī*
glosses	CONN-NEG-PRON.**3MSG**-CONN	CONN-NEG-PRON.**3FSG**
original meaning	'this not being the case . . .'	'this not being the case'
synchronic function	'if not/or else'	'maybe/if'

This putative structure is indeed the core of our argument. Explaining how it came to be is far more speculative, and two alternative paths are suggested below. There are various difficulties in either path. First and foremost, there is the form of the negative particle in the structure, *lā*. As far as we know, the Canaanite vowel shift (*ā > ō*) had occurred quite early, and had changed **lā > lō* in Hebrew. Nevertheless, based on a paper describing the diachronic path of the compound preposition *zūlātī* ('except') in Hebrew as an internal development (Huehnergard and Wilson-Wright 2014), a similar path is followed below (§4.1). In addition to the form of the negative *lā*, there is yet another problem—the phrase *lā hī* (lit. 'not it') reconstructed for *ʾūlay* is not natural for Biblical Hebrew for several reasons. This set of problems compels us to propose yet another direction—that the negative element *lā* is probably not the Hebrew one but rather the result of borrowing from one of the surrounding Northwest Semitic languages, namely, Aramaic or Ugaritic. This direction of inquiry raises a set of difficulties and it is discussed under §4.2.

4.1. Internal Development

The internal development scenario, if plausible, is preferable to the borrowing scenario (see below). By this scenario, the source of the putative structure [*ū lā hī*] is Hebrew. The main difficulty is with the form of the negative particle, *lā*. The suggested origin for the Hebrew preposition *zūlātī* (Huehnergard and Wilson-Wright 2014) offers a possible solution. The Hebrew preposition is explained there as originating in the Hebrew phrase **zū lā* (which, like cognate Akkadian *ša lā* or Aramaic *dlā*, is taken to mean 'without'). The *-tī* at the end of the preposition is presumed to be a reduced form of the reconstructed independent oblique pronoun **huʾāti*. This pronoun can be reconstructed for Semitic based on related oblique 3rd person pronouns in several branches of Semitic—*hwt* and *hyt* in Sabaic and Ugaritic as well as *šuātī* and *šiāti* in Akkadian (Hasselbach 2007: 3 n. 14, and more recently, Hardy 2016: 305–6 and Cohen 2018).[27]

Huehnergard and Wilson-Wright explain that *-lā-* shortened to *-la-* before that Canaanite shift (2014: 10). This explanation can perhaps be adopted for *ū lā hī > ʾūlay*. The real difficulty seems to be that the Canaanite shift is attested very early (already by the fifteenth century BCE, at least five hundred years before Hebrew is attested). This means that our reconstruction has to be earlier than that (as Huehnergard and Wilson-Wright assume for *zūlātī*), a time for which we know hardly anything about Hebrew or Canaanite.

Another possibility is to accept, as a working hypothesis, the idea that the Canaanite shift spread gradually, in which case there might have been localities to which this feature arrived

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27. Both Hardy 2016 and Cohen 2018 discuss the advent of the accusative marker in Northwest Semitic from the same oblique pronouns at the same time in which the case system was in the process of disappearing.

late, and which still had *lā* instead of *lō*. However, despite the plausibility of such spread of a linguistic change, there is hardly any evidence for such enclaves in pre-exilic Hebrew.[28]

4.2. Borrowing

Borrowing is a kind of last resort in our case. I have mentioned above that the form of the negative particle *lā* and the phrase *lā hī* both point in the direction of another language. This was discussed in the previous section. As for the syntagm *lā hī*, the 3rd person pronoun *hī* (or *hū* for that matter) in Hebrew does not follow the negative particle *lō,* except in the form of *hălō,*[29] which is an altogether different particle than *lō*. In negative protases in Hebrew the negative particle always stands alone, without the support of a pronoun (cf. *ʾim lō*—apodosis). Moreover, the putative expression behind *lā hī* ('it is not the case') is expressed in Hebrew roughly by *lō ḵen*.[30] The expression *wəlō hī* ('it is not the case') including the choice of feminine *hī* over masculine after the negative element (the opposite of what is deemed to have occurred in Akkadian, where it is masculine) is occasionally found in Aramaic (cf. most clearly JBA *lay* <*lā hī* mentioned in §2 above). It is attested in Hebrew only in Mishnaic Hebrew (Jerusalem Talmud, fifth century). These are good enough reasons why borrowing should not be off the table.

A priori two languages are considered—Aramaic and Ugaritic. This path carries its own set of problems, which are discussed below.

4.2.1. Early Hebrew Contact with Aramaic and Ugaritic

Clear contact between Hebrew and Aramaic is proven beyond any doubt only for the post-exilic period. As for the pre-exilic period, the case is less clear: Lemaire (1985: 13) thinks, based on historical grounds, that "while Aramaic influence became predominant after the exile, it was already felt in varying degrees in the North and in the South as early as the First Temple period and even from the very beginnings of Israel. Accordingly one has to take into account two main Aramaic influences. During the First Temple period, the influence of northern Trans-Jordan-southern Syria Aramaean culture and later on of Assyro-Aramaean culture." He adds (pp. 14–15) that the Old Aramaic literary tradition (the inscription found at Deir ʿAlla) was in contact with the biblical literature revolving around the same character—Balaam.

In the same vein, among the various attempts to characterize the Deir ʿAlla inscription—as Aramaic, as Canaanite, as a separate branch of Northwest Semitic—there is yet another account (Beyer 2011), which explains the inscription based on the neat distribution of features (Aramaic grammatical features vs. several Hebrew lexical items, according to Beyer's view) as a mixed language.

Hurvitz (2003: 28–33) says that from the early Aramaic inscriptions it is clear that Aramaic spread and enjoyed high prestige early in the pre-exilic period. The geographic proximity of the northern Hebrew-speaking population to the land of the Arameans naturally

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28. A case in point is perhaps the prefixed lamed mentioned in Weiss 1978, which is analyzed as the negative particle, as in Old Aramaic. However, the original vocalization of this lamed in Hebrew, even if the analysis is correct, is unknown.

29. "[O]ften inviting, as it does, an affirmative answer, it is often used, (α) especially in conversation, for pointing to a fact in such a way as to arouse the interest of the person addressed, or to win his assent … (β) it has a tendency to become little more than an affirm. particle, declaring with some rhetor. emph. what is, or might be, well known" (BDB: 520).

30. "(d) לא כן not so (viz. as has been described or implied)" BDB: 486a.

explains shared isoglosses between Aramaic and Hebrew. A case in point would be Israelian Hebrew (Rendsburg 2003), which shows many such features.

Gzella (2015: 93–103) reviews the meager hard evidence for Aramaic–Cannanite multilingualism, and concludes that such bilingualism may well have existed already by the ninth century BCE, in several areas—a Syrian koiné in Palestine, influence on the language of literature and adminstration, and in vernaculars. The latter, for which we have hardly any proof, is especially important—for contact-induced grammaticalization is mostly found first in spoken language. There are exceptions, however (Heine and Kuteva 2005: 250–52).

To sum up, early Aramaic-Hebrew contact is not proven, but based on circumstantial evidence it is quite probable.

About linguistic contact with Ugaritic we do not know much beyond the obvious literary influence.

4.2.2. The Proposed Sequence

The sequence suggested as the source for *ʔūlay—ū lā hī*—must be examined from two angles: 1) whether all its putative parts may occur together in the source language; and 2) whether there are any further difficulties.

THE STRUCTURE: It is necessary to examine whether the borrowed entities are actually found in the putative source languages. In Aramaic the proposed non-verbal sequence, namely CONNECTIVE-NEGATIVE-PRONOUN, seems possible. According to the syntax of the Old Aramaic inscriptions, the negative particle is *l* (Degen 1969: §47a), the non-verbal clause has many occurrences of the 3rd person personal pronoun as subject (§79), which basically has the order predicate–subject (§82c), and the negative particle is written together with the following word. The validity of the structure in question *is further corroborated* by material from the next language phase. Imperial Aramaic has a bipartite non-verbal clause with a personal pronoun as its subject; the order is P–S when the subject is not prominent (Muraoka and Porten 1998: 285). An identical sequence is exemplified (pp. 322–23): ולא הו חתם "and it is not sealed." הן לא 'if not, otherwise' is analyzed there as if it is the result of *ellipsis*; namely, the pronoun *hū/hī* is thought to be missing.

In Ugaritic, on the other hand, there are non-verbal clauses (Tropper 2000: 852–60), including unipartite clauses (pp. 857–58), but they are generally negated by *bl* and by *ỉn* (p. 860), and not by *l* (p. 814). For this reason, Ugaritic is a less favorable candidate for borrowing our construction, where *lā* plays an important part.

THE INDIVIDUAL PARTS: Several local difficulties arise with regard to the different parts: the first is the original length of *lā* which is not reflected in *ʔūlay*. It was perhaps lost when the syllable closed (*lā-hī > lāy > lay*). The second difficulty is the final diphthong *ay*. Final *ay* is attested in several well explained cases—*ḥay < *ḥayy* '(a)live'; *gay < *gayʔ* 'valley'—both originating in a closed syllable, which presumably opened after the monophthongization law had stopped operating (Blau 2010: 99–102). The last part, preservation of the diphthong after this law had ceased could be applied to *ʔūlay*. Incidentally, final *ay* is thought to have been preserved in Old Aramaic, the Deir ʿAlla inscription, and southern Hebrew in both middle and final positions (Garr 2004: 35–40).

The third difficulty is the claim that connective *waw* is represented by *ʔū* (that is, represented by aleph). First, the mere possibility that this connective should have the sound of the vowel *ū* is first and foremost found in Akkadian, where this connective (< **wa*) merged with the disjunctive (**ʔaw*) and both are written with the same sign (*u* or *ù*). Representing the connective *waw* by the vowel *u/ū* is also very common in spoken dialects of Semitic (Neo-Aramaic, modern Arabic dialects). In Biblical Hebrew *waw* copulativum had several allo-

morphs—*wə-*, *wa-*, *wā-*, *wε-*, *we-* and finally, *u/ū* (Gesenius and Kautzsch 1910: §104d–e, analyzing the last allomorph as long). Even if this is the sound of the connective *waw*, one could wonder why it is spelled with aleph. An explanation for this is found in the nature of the letter aleph. Although originally representing a glottal stop, it had gradually become the default expression for representing an initial vowel (Joüon and Muraoka 2006: §24c and n. 1). This may be exemplified in Biblical Hebrew by those cases in which an initial *y*-sound is represented as */i/* and spelled with aleph: e.g., *ʔyš* for *yeš* (Gesenius and Kautzsch 1910: §26a n. 3, §47b n. 1). In addition, in Ugaritic, one connective particle, written *ủ* (and transcribed *ʔū*), served as an additive particle—'and, also, even' (Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2015: 3–4),[31] and there is little doubt that it too, like *w*, derives from the original Semitic connective **wa*.

We have mentioned above (§4) that the BDB links the endings of *ʔūlay* (אוּלַי) and *lūlē* 'if not'—*lay~lē*. The latter is written either לוּלֵא or לוּלֵי, which is basically explained as originating from **lūlō* (cf. Ar. *law lā*) by way of dissimilation (König 1897, 2: 236, 488–89). The solution proposed here for *ʔūlay* (namely, that its end originates in the phrase *lā hī*) could possibly work for *lūlē* as well as for several other related cases. That is, *lūlē* could be explained as originating from **lū-lā-hī* (lit. 'if it had not been the case' > **lūlay* > *lūlē*). I hope to elaborate upon this relationship elsewhere.

5. CONCLUSION

The foregoing sections investigate two particles, OB *ulašūma* and Hebrew *ʔūlay*, synchronically and diachronically. It is suggested that both particles originate in the same basic structure—a connective, a negative particle, and a personal/demonstrative pronoun. For *ʔūlay* this proposed sequence was explained by two alternative development scenarios: One involves internal development, which necessitates explaining the negative particle *lā* (that had changed in Hebrew into *lō* quite early, long before Hebrew was ever attested). The other scenario relies on borrowing, probably from Aramaic, where the sequence *ū lā hī* is natural, but contact of Hebrew with Aramaic in the early phases, although quite probable, is not proven. The important issue is the putative historical structure of *ʔūlay*, which I deem cognate to that of Old Babylonian *ulašūma*.

Quite some effort was invested into explaining how it is possible that a particle like *ulašūma,* originally with a pro-polar protasis function ('if not, or else') is semantically related to the other (*ʔūlay* 'maybe'). In other words, we had to plot the path between the meaning 'if not/or else' and a dubitive or conditional particle. The explanation was found in the range of the actual functions of the Akkadian particle. In addition to its function as a pro-polar protasis ('if not; or else'), where it introduces a conditioned state of affairs, it also occurs with conditional constructions. These conditionals, unanimously interpreted as such in various editions, show several features found only with several conditional types in OB Akkadian. However, more often than not they occur without any explicit conditional marker. Since conditionals in OB generally do have some kind of an overt connective, it was concluded that *ulašūma* served as one. In addition, it was shown that *ulašūma* also functioned as an irrealis disjunctive marker on a par with *šumma* and *pīqat*. These two functions place the particle among all other epistemic markers. The distance between the function of a pro-polar protasis and a dubitive particle is thus quite easily bridged.

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31. In Tropper 2012 we find a corroboration to this in §83.141.1 ("u als Konjunktion auf der Wortebene"); at the end, there is one case that might well be this *ủ*.

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