

Towards a New Proposal for Translating the Conjunction כִּי in Deuteronomy 4.29

The Bible Translator
2020, Vol. 71(2) 158–178
© The Author(s) 2020

Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/2051677020918633
journals.sagepub.com/home/tbt



Peter Goeman 

Assistant Professor of Old Testament & Biblical Languages,
Shepherds Theological Seminary, North Carolina, USA

Abstract

English translations almost universally understand the phrase כִּי תִדְרֹשׁנוּ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ in Deut 4.29 as a conditional statement: “if you seek him with all your heart and all your soul.” This article challenges the typical translation and argues that instead of expressing a condition, Deut 4.29 should be understood as the reason Israel will repent and turn to Yahweh. This argument is supported by the near context of Deut 4, as well as the remote context of Deut 29–30. In addition, the typical usage of כִּי clauses in Hebrew grammar provides positive evidence for a causal understanding of Deut 4.29. In addition to the contextual and grammatical evidence, the LXX of Deut 4.29 and Jer 29.11 (36.13 LXX) demonstrates that the first translators of the text likely did not view this text as conditional. Thus, Deut 4.29 is best read as the reason for Israel’s latter-day return to Yahweh—Israel will find Yahweh *because* they will seek him with their whole heart.

Keywords

כִּי, Deuteronomy 4.29, Deuteronomistic theology, latter days, eschatology, prophecy, Hebrew grammar, translation

Introduction

Bible translators have no easy task. Complexities exist in both the biblical languages as well as the target language, resulting in many difficult

Corresponding author:

Peter Goeman, Shepherds Theological Seminary, 6051 Tryon Road, Cary NC 27518, USA.

Email: pgoeman@shepherds.edu

Table 1. Representative English translations of Deut 4.29⁴

CSB	But from there, you will search for the LORD your God, and you will find Him when you seek Him with all your heart and all your soul.
ESV	But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.
KJV	But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.
NASB	But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. ⁵
NET	But if you seek the LORD your God from there, you will find him, if, indeed,⁶ you seek him with all your heart and soul.
NIV	But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁷
NRSV	From there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul. ⁸

translation decisions. Unavoidably, to a certain degree each translation ends up reflecting the translator's interpretation and understanding. From time to time these translations are challenged and new interpretations are proposed based on a reexamination of the evidence.¹

Accordingly, it is the goal of this paper to challenge the traditional English translation of Deut 4.29 and propose a new translation. Historically, this verse has been translated in English as part of a conditional clause.² However, I believe there is enough evidence to seriously reconsider the English translations. Before looking at this evidence, a brief survey of English translations demonstrates the near-universal translation of Deut 4.29 as a conditional statement (see Table 1).³

The issue at hand is how the כִּי clause should be translated. The Hebrew reads as follows:

ובקשתם משם את־יהוה אלהיך ומצאת כי תדרשנו בכל־לבבך ובכל־נפשך

¹ I am grateful for the constructive feedback I received on an earlier draft of this paper from Abner Chou and William Barrick. Their feedback helped sharpen the focus of this paper. However, any remaining shortcomings in this article are the fault of the author.

² This translational history goes back as far as the 1382 Wycliffe Bible.

³ The only exceptions I noted were HCSB/CSB and YLT, which translate the pertinent clause as "when" rather than "if."

⁴ Emphasis has been added for ease of comparison.

⁵ Both NASB and NASU have the same reading.

⁶ The NET Bible utilizes a conditional *and* emphatic translation.

⁷ Both the 1984 and 2011 NIV translations have the same reading.

⁸ Both RSV and NRSV have the same conditional reading.

Although the majority of English translations convey a conditional understanding (“if”), I would like to suggest that the evidence points toward a translation of certainty. I will argue that the evidence points to a causal translation (“for/because”),⁹ though a temporal nuance (“when”) may also be possible. If my proposal is correct, Deut 4.29 would be giving the reason that Israel will find Yahweh when they look for him. Ultimately, it will be because they seek Yahweh with full devotion.

The immediate context of Deut 4.29

Deuteronomy 4.29 is part of a special pericope (4.25-31) that follows a summary of Israel’s history. By reminding Israel of their past (vv. 1-21), Moses points the people toward God’s goodness despite their sinful history. Moses then uses the springboard of the past as a warning and an impetus for “future thought and action” (Merrill 1994, 114).¹⁰ As such, Moses urges the people to remember from where they have come, and to remember that their God is a “consuming fire, a jealous God” (v. 24).

Following v. 24, Deut 4.25 begins a new unit of thought set apart by the ׀ particle. Most English translations translate this ׀ clause as temporal (“when”).¹¹ Bandstra observes that when a temporal ׀ is used with a *qatal* or *yiqtol* verb, it signals a “new departure,” which is “meant to be discontinuous with the context” (1982, 124). Although this ׀ clause could be conditional, it is more likely temporal. When a “context suggests a higher probability that the contents of the ׀ clause will actually occur,” then a translation of “when” is appropriate to express more certainty (see Aejmelaeus 1986, 197).¹²

⁹ Such seems to be the understanding of BDB (473), which lists Deut 4.29 under the section of ׀ translated as “Because, since (ὅτι).” BDB further describes this use of ׀ as, “enunciating the conditions under which a fut. action is conceived as possible.” BDB connects this idea to the German translation *indem* (“by/while”) rather than *wenn* (“if/when”).

¹⁰ Cf. Mayes 1993, 199. Mayes states, “The reflections on the past and future reach progressively further in each succeeding section. . . . Vv. 25-28 look forward to the Babylonian exile. . . . Vv. 29-31 unite both farthest past and farthest future in seeing the possibility of Israel’s renewal in exile on the basis of covenant with the patriarchs, a possibility assured by the very fact that it is with Israel alone out of all the nations that God has entered into a special relationship (vv. 32-40).”

¹¹ Here we have the ׀ particle with an imperfect verb, likely indicating a future time period. Cf. Fuller and Choi 2017, §80f: “This flexible particle, when used temporally, may be used for past time, with the perfect, and for present and future time, usually with the imperfect.” See also Robson 2016, 154. It should be noted that although some scholars combine the conditional and temporal categories (cf. *DCH*, 386), it is still necessary within such classifications to differentiate ׀ clauses that have a temporal nuance. Thus, it seems helpful at the outset to maintain a distinction between conditional and temporal understandings (cf. Aejmelaeus 1986, 197).

¹² Aejmelaeus goes on to acknowledge that the line between conditional and temporal is often vague, and so the decision ends up being based on an examination of the context.

In defense of the temporal translation of v. 25, we should note that the context speaks of Israel's subsequent generations: children (בָּנִים) and children's children (וּבְנֵי בָנִים) (see Robson 2016, 154). The certainty of having children argues that this is talking about an expected future time period. Additionally, throughout Deuteronomy the certainty of entering and living in Canaan is expressed temporally in similar ways: either with כִּי + הִיָּה (cf. 6.10; 11.29), or with כִּי + an imperfect verb (e.g., 6.20; 7.1; 12.20, 29; cf. 4.25). The Deuteronomic expectation is that there will be a future life experience in Canaan. Thus it seems reasonable that in Deut 4.25 the situation laid out was expected to be a future experience.

Verse 25 continues with a *weqatal* verb sequence. When a *weqatal* sequence follows an imperfect verb, it is most naturally viewed as communicating succession tied to the imperfect verb.¹³ Thus, in this case, Israel will father children (תּוֹלִיד), and they will dwell in the land for a long time (וְנוֹשְׁנָתָם); but then they will act corruptly (וְהִשְׁחָתָם),¹⁴ make idols for themselves (וְעִשִּׂיתָם), and do evil in God's sight (וְעָשִׂיתָם). Importantly, each of these *weqatal* verb forms carries on the idea of the previous *yiqtol* form (תּוֹלִיד) in an unbroken chain. If this unbroken *weqatal* sequence is tied to the temporal clause at the start of v. 25, then this is evidence that this section is meant to be read as a prophecy about Israel's future (cf. Kalland 1992, 46).¹⁵

Verse 26 interjects with what might be described as an instantaneous use of the perfect (see Waltke and O'Connor 1990, §30.5.1.d).¹⁶ This use of the perfect is natural in direct speech, and often occurs in prophetic contexts, or contexts of certitude (Fuller and Choi 2017, §3q). As Weinfeld notes, "When one makes a formal declaration, one uses the finite verb, though the declaration pertains to the present or future and not to the past" (1991, 201).¹⁷ The temporal marker "today" (הַיּוֹם) also provides evidence that this is an instantaneous perfect. The speaker is providing a contrast between the

¹³ On this point, see Fuller and Choi 2017, §6d; Arnold and Choi 2003, §3.5.2; Chisholm 1998, 99–103.

¹⁴ Although some English translations see a conditional clause beginning with this *weqatal*, there is no indication of a break here. See Robson 2016, 155.

¹⁵ The statements about Israel's future here are so strong and coincide so well with what happens that it has caused some commentators to label this passage *vaticinium ex eventu* (a prediction after the fact) since it matches with Israel's future so closely. For one such commentator, see Biddle 2003, 87, who states, "In fact, vv. 24–28 go on to describe events very similar to those of the Babylonian crisis, occasioning suspicions that they represent a *vaticinium ex eventu*, a prediction after the fact."

¹⁶ "An instantaneous perfective represents a situation occurring at the very instant the expression is being uttered. This use appears chiefly with *verba dicendi* ('verbs of speaking,' swearing, declaring, advising, etc.) or gestures associated with speaking."

¹⁷ Such declarations usually utilize הִנֵּה or רְאֵה (cf. Gen 1.29; 41.41; 47.23; Deut 2.31; 30.15).

current situation facing Israel and the future promise of quick removal from the land. In other words, Moses is passionately testifying to Israel that they will not be long in the land, but they will be devastated in the future.

Verse 27 starts another *weqatal* sequence, which either connects to the previous chain in v. 25 or, more likely, connects to the imperfect verbs in v. 26, “You will utterly perish” (אֲבַד תֵּאֲבֹדוּ), “You will not live long in it” (לֹא־תֵאֲרִיכֵן יָמִים), and “You will be utterly destroyed” (הַשְׁמַד תִּשְׁמָדוּ). Verse 27 continues these ideas by stating that Yahweh will scatter (וְהִפִּץ) Israel among the peoples, and they will remain among the nations (וְנִשְׁאַרְתֶּם) in exile. Verse 28 likewise continues the chain of *weqatals* and reveals that in their exile Israel will serve other gods (וְעִבַּדְתֶּם).¹⁸ Although in some cases the extended relative clause of v. 28 might be seen as a break in the chain of *weqatals*, the repetition of שָׁם in vv. 28 and 29 ties the *weqatal* chain together.¹⁹ Thus, v. 29 continues the *same* chain of *weqatals* with the statement that from their exile Israel will seek Yahweh (וּבִקְשֶׁתֶּם), and not only seek him, but they will find him (וּמִצְאתֶם).²⁰ We will address the second half of this verse in detail, but for now it is important to observe the *weqatal* sequence links with the foregoing thoughts of v. 26 and following (see Robson 2016, 158). Further, it is helpful to note at this point that the “heart and soul” language used here (and elsewhere in Deuteronomy) is an expectation of Israel’s full commitment to Yahweh.²¹

¹⁸ As will be discussed later, this prophecy is quite similar to the sequence of events that is found in Deut 29–30 as well as in the prophets. For one example, see Hos 3.4–5. Notably, both Deut 4.30 and Hos 3.5 are tied together through the concept of the “latter days” (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים).

¹⁹ שָׁם occurs once in each verse (4x; 4.26–29), tying them all together.

²⁰ It is of interest here to observe the switch from plural “you will seek” (וּבִקְשֶׁתֶּם) to the singular “you will find” (וּמִצְאתֶם). McConville sees this as evidence that indicates “a significant new turn in the argument. The ‘seeking’ of Yahweh by Israel is not merely the next in a series of events, to be taken for granted” (McConville 2002, 110). However, in Deut 4 there are at least nine significant switches between singular and plural, and one cannot argue each switch is a new turn in the argument. Switches between singular and plural take place in Deut 4.1, 3, 5 (although רָאָה may simply be a discourse marker and not a true change); 4.9, 11, 19, 20, 23, 25, 29. In fact, the pattern of a plural verb switching to a singular occurs fifteen times in Deuteronomy, a common pattern without significant changes in argumentation (cf. Deut 2.24; 4.29; 7.25; 11.10; 12.5, 16; 13.1; 14.21; 19.19; 22.24; 27.2, 4; 28.62; 31.19). It may be that the change in plurality and singularity is intended for emphasis (Mayes 1993, 201; Weinfeld 1991, 222–23) but to go beyond that seems to be too much speculation. But see Christensen (2001, 96), who argues that this shift to the singular marks a “new rhythmic unit, which continues through v. 34.” Christensen holds that these occurrences of *Numeruswechsel* are tied to Deuteronomy being an aural book intended to be heard, and thus mark rhythmic units (2001, c–ci).

²¹ Kalland 1992, 42, notes that the only way out of this future predicament is complete recommitment to Yahweh. Kalland also observes that this language of full commitment is picked up in 6.5; 10.12; 11.13; 26.16; 30.2, 6, 10—a connection that will be addressed in the following section.

At this point, v. 30 seems to confirm our understanding of the context being one of prophetic certainty (Merrill 1994, 128).²² Although the LXX takes the phrase “When you are in tribulation” (בְּצָר לָךְ) as the completion of v. 29 (see Wevers 1995, 83), it is best interpreted as asyndesis, and thus belongs at the beginning of v. 30.²³ This asyndesis argues for an explanatory connection between v. 30 and the prior verses (Robson 2016, 159).²⁴ The adverbial temporal phrase followed by a *weqatal* is a fairly regularly expression of time found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (see Robson 2016, 159; Waltke and O’Connor 1990, §32.2.6b),²⁵ and it emphasizes temporal certainty rather than conditionality. This certainty is expressed in the translation, “When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you” (בְּצָר לָךְ וּמִצָּוָד כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה).²⁶ The verse continues, “in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice” (בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים וּשְׁבַת עַד־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּשְׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹל). Although some do not see the phrase “latter days” (בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים) as being eschatological, it has been argued elsewhere that the uniqueness of the phrase and the context of its usage suggest that it is a reference to an eschatological sequence and time period which the prophets build upon and expand (see Beale 2011, 92–102).²⁷ If the foregoing interpretation is correct, then v. 30 provides affirmation that the context of Deut 4.25–31 is one of prophetic certainty and not conditionality. Verse 31 concludes the section by providing the reason Israel can be assured of God’s acceptance when they turn to Yahweh. Their God will accept them because he is merciful.

Having argued for a context of predictive prophecy in Deut 4.25–31, I submit we should allow this context to influence our translation of the כִּי clause in the latter half of v. 29. Given the surrounding context of Deut 4.29, it seems to make most sense to translate the phrase in question with certainty rather than conditionality. Not only does the near context give credence for this translation, but the remote context of Deuteronomy also appears to argue for this idea.

²² “Not to be overlooked here is the absence of any conditionality. The text is clear that it is not a matter of if Israel returns and obeys but when. Repentance is obviously a matter of free will, but the biblical witness is unanimous that the impetus to repent is something God himself will plant within his people in order to encourage and enable them to return to him and to the land (cf. Lev 26:40–45; Deut 30:1–10; Jer 31:27–34; Ezek 36:22–31).”

²³ Robson states that the attempt to fit בְּצָר לָךְ with v. 29 “represents an attempt to simplify the syntax (*BHQ: Deuteronomy*, 63*) and leaves וּמִצָּוָד hanging, not consequent on the preceding actions” (2016, 159).

²⁴ In his introduction, Robson states that asyndesis functions in one of two ways: (1) as an explanatory or parenthetical phrase, or (2) as a start of a new section (2016, 7).

²⁵ As examples, Waltke and O’Connor give Exod 16.6–7; Deut 4.30; Isa 16.14; Judg 16.2; Josh 2.14.

²⁶ This and the following quotation represent the 1995 NASB translation.

²⁷ Cf. Hos 3.4–5; Mic 4.1; Dan 10.14.

The remote context of Deuteronomy

Having argued for prophetic certainty from the near context of Deut 4.25-31, I also want to put forward a brief argument that the structure and message of Deuteronomy also point toward understanding Deut 4.25-31 as prophetic. Many scholars have pointed out the connection between Deuteronomy's earlier and later chapters. For example, Christensen outlines Deuteronomy as a "concentric structure" with the following chiasmic pattern (1993, 9):

- A—The Outer Frame: A Look Backwards (Deut 1–3)
- B—The Inner Frame: The Great Peroration (4–11)
- C—The Central Core: Covenant Stipulations (12–26)
- B'—The Inner Frame: The Covenant Ceremony (27–30)
- A'—The Outer Frame: A Look Forward (31–34)

In explaining this outline, Christensen argues that the "Outer Frame" sections (Deut 1–3 and 31–34) can be read together, as well as the two "Inner Frame" sections (Deut 4–11 and 27–30) (1993, 10).

McConville also notes a connection between earlier and later parts of Deuteronomy. In his commentary he observes connections between Deut 27 and Deut 11 (2002, 387). Additionally, he notes that chs. 29–30 have connections with chs. 10–11 (413).

Other scholars have also noted connections between the early and later parts of Deuteronomy. Of special note are the works of Craigie, Tigay, Weinfeld, and Robson—all of whom have noted the various connections between Deut 4 and 30 (Craigie 1976, 363; Tigay 1996, 283; Weinfeld, 1991, 213–16; Robson 2016, 127–28). Regarding the connection between Deut 4 and 29–30, Robson observes the following:

Structurally within the book of Deuteronomy as a whole, there are close links with chapters 29–30: e.g., bowing down (השתחוה) and serving (עבד) gods of the nations that have been allotted (חלק) to those nations (4:10; 29:25 [ET 26]); calling heaven and earth as witnesses against them (העידתי בכם היום את־השמים ואת־הארץ) (4:26; 30:19); a forward look to exile (4:25-28; 29:22-28 [ET 23-29]) and possible restoration (4:29-31 and 30:1-10). (Robson 2016, 127–28)

Based on the foregoing observations, it seems reasonable to view Deut 29–30 as a further elaboration of what has come earlier. This observation seems confirmed by looking at the sequence between Deut 29 and 30. Deuteronomy 29 warns of exile, and Deut 30.1-10 provides assurance of salvation from the exile that was warned of in the previous chapter.²⁸

²⁸ Multiple authors have noted the chiasmic structure of Deut 30.1-10, which emphasizes Yahweh giving Israel a new heart, facilitating their return to him. See Block 2012, 695; McConville 2002, 424; Tigay 1996, 284.

This same chronological sequence is mirrored in Deut 4.25-31 (Tigay 1996, 283).

Deuteronomy 30.6 emphasizes that Yahweh will circumcise Israel's heart, and thus the Israelite will love Yahweh "with all your heart and all your soul" (בְּכָל-לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ). Similarly, Deut 4.29 emphasizes that Israel will find Yahweh because they will seek him "with all your heart and all your soul" (בְּכָל-לִבְּכֶם וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁכֶם)—the exact same phrase as 30.6. In Deuteronomic theology then, Yahweh is ultimately the one who circumcises Israel's heart, and this action allows them to seek Yahweh with their whole heart.²⁹

Based on the foregoing discussion, the certainty of exile and restoration seems to be a key part of Deuteronomic theology. The key to Israel's return to Yahweh is a circumcised heart, which Yahweh himself will provide. It seems more than reasonable that Deut 4.29 is also communicating this message. Israel will find Yahweh when they are completely devoted to Yahweh—something Yahweh himself will ensure (cf. Deut 30.6).

Hebrew grammar and כִּי clauses

Up to this point, I have argued from the immediate and remote contexts that Deut 4.29 should be translated in accordance with prophetic certainty rather than conditionality. Although I have argued that both causal and temporal translations are more conducive to the context of Deut 4.29, I believe the grammatical evidence points more strongly toward a causal understanding.³⁰

Concerning the general usage of כִּי clauses in Biblical Hebrew,³¹ it is well established that "כִּי mainly serves as a connective, a conjunction to

²⁹ Commentators often note the connection between Deut 30.6 and 10.16. In agreement with Meade (2014, 79–80), it seems best to see 10.16 as a command which Israel is incapable of obeying by their own power. Thus, God's action in 30.6 becomes the necessary step that will bring about devotion to Yahweh (see Merrill, 1994, 388–89). This same paradigm seems present in Deut 4.25-31.

³⁰ It should be noted that Follingstad has argued against the idea of causal categories of כִּי, opting instead for a unified deictic usage. "The core function of כִּי is the same throughout all its contexts. It shifts viewpoint to the propositional content being structured, 'mentioning' it metarepresentationally as the object of discourse—marking it as a propositional content (thought or utterance) entertained about some state of affairs, rather than a description of them" (2001, 320). This idea has not found widespread acceptance among scholars (cf. BHRG, 432–33). Although a thorough examination of Follingstad's proposal is not possible here, Locatell (2017, 111–18) has pointed out some of the problems with such an approach. Although not rejecting the category of causal כִּי, Muilenburg (1961) argues that an original emphatic function of כִּי is to be found in varying degrees in all its uses. Aejmelaeus (1986, 195) correctly challenges the idea that a word's etymology would be present in all of its functions (cf. Locatell 2017, 24).

³¹ For a thorough history of the study of כִּי, see Locatell 2017, 10–34; Follingstad 2001, 15–63; Meyer 2001, 41–50.

join clauses to one another” (Aejmelaus 1986, 195).³² Although there are a variety of ways a **כי** clause can be categorized,³³ for our purposes, the causal use of **כי** needs detailed attention.³⁴ However, to distinguish causal **כי** from other uses is sometimes difficult. In order to discern the nuance of **כי**, a significant factor is the relationship between the **כי** clause and the main clause (see Aejmelaus 1986, 196; Bandstra 1982, 16–17, 90, 121, 159).

The **כי** clause must either precede the main clause or follow it. Bandstra has observed that 95% of the time a causal **כי** clause *follows* the main clause (1982, 159).³⁵ Bandstra also observed that a circumstantial **כי** clause *precedes* the main clause 94.7% of the time (1982, 121).³⁶ These observations are explainable in that the **כי** clause is related to the main clause through the concept of topicalization (Bandstra 1982, 90–92).³⁷ Thus, in a circumstantial clause, the information in the **כי** clause is antecedent to the main clause, and provides the backdrop to understanding the main clause. In contrast to the

³² That is not to say this is the sole function of **כי**. Meyer 2001 has cogently argued that **כי** also can relate to larger units of discourse. In the words of Locatell (2019, 79), “It also transcends morpho-syntactic categories by its extension to other word classes such as complementizer and discourse marker.” Yet, it is certainly most well known for its adverbial function.

³³ For a full listing of usages attributed to **כי** in Biblical Hebrew, see *HALOT*, 470–71; cf. Williams 2007, 156–59.

³⁴ The causal use of **כי** is often subcategorized. Bandstra subcategorizes causal **כי** into three categories: reason, grounds, and motive clauses (1982, 163–71). More recently, Locatell (2019, 82–96) has subcategorized causal **כי** into four domains: speech-act, epistemic, metalinguistic, and content. Helpfully, Locatell has traced the study of the causal use of **כי** (79–82). Among notable contributions, Claassen 1983 has noted that causal **כי** need not relate two facts or events, but it can also indicate a speaker’s own position or discourse argument. Locatell calls this usage speech-act.

³⁵ In his study of **כי** clauses, Bandstra focused only on the Pentateuch and the Psalms. He identifies 1,037 occurrences (my own search yielded 1,040) in the Pentateuch, and 443 in the Psalms (1982, 18). Bandstra notes that the causal use of **כי** is the most prominent (58%) of the **כי** clauses (159). He also notes that circumstantial **כי** clauses are second most common, occurring 18.4% of the time in his corpus (121). For more on clause structure for causal **כי**, see Aejmelaus 1986, 199; Locatell 2019, 84–86.

³⁶ See also Aejmelaus 1986, 196.

³⁷ Concerning circumstantial (temporal and conditional) **כי** clauses, Bandstra states, “Our analysis of all the **כי** clauses in the Pentateuch reveals that a **כי** clause precedes the clause to which it is linked if it is a circumstantial, conditional-protasis or concessive clause. . . . The reason for this fact is now transparent in the light of the topicalization principle. The principle that more topical material comes first can be applied not just to elements within a clause but also to clauses within a sentence. Temporal circumstantial clauses, as well as the ‘given’ clause of a conditional sentence, and concessive statements, all contain information antecedent to or presupposed by the main clause. Hence these clauses are more topical than the main clause and will ordinarily come before it” (1982, 90–91). In relation to causal clauses, Bandstra notes, “The **כי** clause breaks the narrative continuity (it is resumed in the next verse) and inserts anterior material. But the **כי** clause follows the main clause (because it is less topical) even though temporally prior. In those rare cases where the **כי** causal clause comes before the main clause the causal clause becomes the focus with the result/main clause becoming secondary” (92).

circumstantial כִּי clause, the causal כִּי clause follows the main clause and thus presupposes the main clause. Bandstra states, “The topicalization principle tells us that given or presupposed material normally comes first. Even though the כִּי clause is temporally or logically anterior to the main clause it follows it in the surface structure because the main clause is presupposed” (1982, 160).

Bandstra’s study is helpful for understanding the general workings of כִּי clauses in Hebrew grammar. However, Bandstra lists our passage (Deut 4.29) with eight other exceptions in Deuteronomy (6.25; 22.8; 28.2, 9, 13, 45; 30.10 [2x]) that he identifies as circumstantial כִּי clauses even though the כִּי clause follows the main clause (1982, 126).³⁸ Given that all of these exceptions take place in Deuteronomy, I think we profit by examining them in a little more detail.

Deuteronomy 6.25 is the first exception listed by Bandstra (excluding Deut 4.29). Most English translations treat the כִּי clause as a conditional clause.³⁹ ESV translates it as “And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us” (וְצִדְקָה תִּהְיֶה-לָּנוּ כִּי-נִשְׁמַר לְעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-הַמִּצְוֹת הַזֹּאת לִפְנֵי (יהוה) אֱלֹהֵינוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּנוּ). This translation views the first part of the sentence as the apodosis in the conditional sentence, with the protasis coming after the *’atnah* (Robson 2016, 229). Although this could be a genuine exception to the normal grammatical patterns we see in the Pentateuch, two pieces of evidence may be used to argue for the expected causal nuance. First, the phrase that heads the verse, “And it will be righteousness for us” (וְצִדְקָה תִּהְיֶה-לָּנוּ) is a disjunctive clause. It is extremely rare for a *waw* of apodosis to come before a noun. In fact, Joüon and Muraoka note that such a use is strictly a non-classical construction, and they give no examples in pre-exilic Hebrew (2006, §1711).⁴⁰ Second, the context of this verse is one of a father explaining to his children *why* Israel obeys the laws. In context it is acceptable to allow the last phrase to be the reason or motivation for Israel’s righteousness. In other words, within the father’s answer to the son the reason it is “righteousness to us” is that we are keeping (נִשְׁמַר) God’s commands. To be sure, the father’s statements certainly contain inherent conditionality because of the covenantal context of law keeping. But I would propose that while conditionality is found in the context of the conversation between father and son, the grammar itself is emphasizing the role obedience has in being the reason righteousness would belong to the family.

Similar to the previous example, the last part of Deut 22.8 is treated by most English translations as a condition: “When you build a new house,

³⁸ BHRG (433) also lists Deut 4.29 as an example of a protasis following the apodosis, noting that it is rare. However, BHRG does not go into detail about how this phenomenon appears limited to Deuteronomy, nor do they list the eight exceptions that Bandstra does.

³⁹ YLT is the lone exception, with a temporal translation of “when.”

⁴⁰ The only examples they give come from Chronicles.

you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it” (כִּי־יִפֹּל הַנֶּפֶל מִמֶּנּוּ).⁴¹ If the last כִּי clause is understood as conditional here, this would seem to be problematic because the verse already has a protasis at the beginning (עָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֶה לְגִגְדְּךָ וְלֹא־) (כִּי תִבְנֶה בֵּית חָדִשׁ) which is followed by an apodosis (תִּשִּׁים דַּמִּים בְּבֵיתְךָ). Another protasis added at the end would be grammatically awkward.

Alternatively, the phrase “if anyone should fall from it” (כִּי־יִפֹּל הַנֶּפֶל מִמֶּנּוּ) could simply be read as the reason for bloodguilt mentioned in the previous phrase.⁴² Furthermore, although this phrase is part of the law (which carries with it an inherent hypothetical nuance), the indefinite nature of the English translations is most likely related to the relative use of the participle and not the כִּי clause itself. On this point, Waltke and O’Connor note that the relative use of the participle can reflect a general indefiniteness (cf. “whoever falls”). “This sense is similar to the use of a substantival participle with the article to refer to a class of agents, for example, הַכֹּרֵת ‘the hewer (of trees)’ (Isa 14:8), namely, ‘all those who hew down (trees), woodsman’” (1990, §37.5.c). If this proposed understanding is correct, a possible translation of the last phrase of Deut 22.8 would be, “because of the one who falls from it,” or “because of someone who falls from it” (i.e., bloodguilt would be realized because someone falls off the roof).

Four of the nine exceptions listed by Bandstra come from Deut 28, which addresses the covenant blessings and curses for Israel. Deuteronomy 28.2 heads this list and is translated by most English translations in a way similar to ESV’s translation: “And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God.” However, not all English translations agree. CSB, NKJV, and YLT all translate the last phrase as causal, “because you obey the voice of the LORD your God.”

Importantly, when we compare Deut 28.2 to 28.45 (see Table 2), we note virtually identical grammatical structures. Although Bandstra lists Deut 28.45 as a circumstantial clause, the majority of English translations identify this כִּי clause as causal: “All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that he commanded you” (ESV).

The only significant difference between the two grammatical structures is that Deut 28.2 uses an imperfect verb following the כִּי (כִּי תִשְׁמָעַ), whereas in 28.45 a perfect verb follows the כִּי (כִּי־לֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ). In Deuteronomy, when a causal כִּי is followed by a perfect, it explains the causal relationship between

⁴¹ ESV is represented here; the only disagreement is in YLT again, which utilizes a temporal nuance.

⁴² Although there are not many other examples of this grammatical construction (כִּי + verb + ptc.), those that I was able to identify are translated as causal: cf. Exod 1.21; Jer 10.21; Hab 2.18.

Table 2. Comparison of Deut 28.2 and 28.45.

Deut 28.2		Deut 28.45
ובאו עליך בִּלְהַבְרֹכָתוֹת הָאֵלֶּה	Coming of blessing/ curse	ובאו עליך בִּלְהַקְלֹלוֹת הָאֵלֶּה
והשיגך	Extent of the “pursuit” of blessing/curse	ורדפוּךָ וְהִשִּׁיגוּךָ עַד הַשְׂמֹדֶךָ
כִּי תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ	Causal link to why blessing/curse come	כִּי־לֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
	Further clarification	לְשׁוֹמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי וְחֻקֹּתַי אֲשֶׁר צֻוֵּךָ

an action in the past (real or hypothetical) and its outcome (e.g., 5.5; 9.19; 13.6, 11). But, when a causal כִּי is followed by an imperfect, it explains the causal relationship of a situation or action in the future (e.g., 5.25; 7.4), or sometimes more specifically, a future progressive action (e.g., 12.20, 25, 28).⁴³ With this distinction in mind, perhaps the best way to view the difference between Deut 28.2 and 28.45 is with regard to perspective. Israel would (hypothetically) receive the blessings of the covenant because they will be obeying (תִּשְׁמַע, future progressive) the voice of Yahweh. Alternatively, they would receive the curses of the covenant because they had not obeyed (לֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ) the voice of Yahweh.⁴⁴ It seems reasonable to read Deut 28.2 and 28.45 this way. Therefore, I would argue that the emphasis should remain on causality, emphasizing the link between Israel’s actions (obedience or disobedience) and the result (blessing or cursing).⁴⁵

Deuteronomy 30.10 is the last of Bandstra’s exceptions. Although many English translations treat it as a conditional statement, ESV, HCSB, and NRSV treat it as temporal (“when you do this”), and YLT and NJPS read it as causal. Context would seem to prefer a causal or temporal statement since Deut 30.1-9 contains a promise to Israel that exile is not the end for them. Verse 10 clearly connects with the preceding verses through

⁴³ It also appears that the participle can be used to stress present progressive action in a causal clause (e.g., Deut 13.4; cf. Gen 3.5; 2 Sam 17.10).

⁴⁴ This understanding seems to be verified by simple logic. If Israel ceases at anytime to obey Yahweh, they cease to be “obeying” (progressive), and they have now “not obeyed” (past). Thus, Israel would (hypothetically) receive the blessings of the covenant only because Israel would be consistently obeying Yahweh and his law.

⁴⁵ Deuteronomy 28.9 and 13 are likewise usually translated as conditional statements with the protasis following the apodosis. However, these two verses also belong to a similar covenantal context. Each verse is listed in a series of promises (vv. 7-14) found within the larger section on blessing (vv. 1-14). In keeping with our foregoing argument, there would be nothing awkward in translating these examples with a causal nuance, letting the conditionality be derived from the covenantal context, yet keeping the emphasis on the link between action and result through causality.

numerous vocabulary items. For example, v. 10 notes obedience to “the voice of Yahweh” (תשמע בקול יהוה), which is a major theme in v. 8. Also, v. 10 mentions the keeping of Yahweh’s “commandments” (מצותיו, cf. 30.8), and allegiance to Yahweh with the “entire heart-and-soul” combination (בכל-לבבך ובכל-נפשך, 30.2).

Importantly, Deut 30.2 says that after both the blessing and the curse come, Israel will “return” (שוב) and “obey” (שמע). These are the same verbal links as are found in the כִּי clauses in Deut 30.10. Given the certainty of the previous verses (1-9), it makes more sense to see v. 10 as an explanation for Yahweh’s newfound delight in Israel (v. 9b).

After examining all of the exceptions listed by Bandstra, I would propose that any conditionality in these examples is derived from the covenantal context, not from the use of the כִּי clause itself.⁴⁶ In these examples it still seems acceptable to translate the כִּי clauses with a causal nuance in accordance with the normal expectation when the main clause precedes the כִּי clause (see Table 3). Applying these observations to Deut 4.29, I suggest that the grammatical evidence should motivate us to consider translating the כִּי clause there as causal.⁴⁷

כִּי clauses following a *weqatal*

One more grammatical argument might be helpful to consider in our discussion.⁴⁸ Since the כִּי clause in Deut 4.29 follows a *weqatal* verb, we can compare other instances in Deuteronomy where a כִּי clause follows a *weqatal* verb.⁴⁹ I have categorized the results by their typical translations in English (see Table 4).⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Aejmelaes also makes note of the covenantal context of Israel’s conditional obedience in these examples (1986, 207–8).

⁴⁷ Although I am persuaded by the above argumentation, I readily admit that some of Bandstra’s examples could be true exceptions to the normal grammatical pattern. The proposal that Deut 4.29 should be read as a causal clause does not rest on the need to disprove all of Bandstra’s exceptions. It is only in an effort to be thorough that I explain my reasoning with regard to the exceptions listed by Bandstra.

⁴⁸ Unless otherwise noted, in this section I accumulated the data through searches in Logos 8, using *BHS* as the source.

⁴⁹ I ran a simple grammatical search which yielded 53 verse results. Deuteronomy 19.6 and 31.21 each contain two relevant כִּי clauses, thus there are 55 total hits (54 excluding Deut 4.29). The general search had to be narrowed down to only applicable results. The search included fourteen כִּי clauses that directly followed non-*weqatal* verb forms (Deut 2.19; 7.16, 25, 26; 8.19; 12.20, 28; 14.21; 20.1; 24.1; 26.3; 28.39; 29.18; 31.17). These fourteen hits were outliers because they directly followed either an imperfect, jussive, or a verb of direct discourse (Deut 14.21 follows an infinitive absolute). All but three occurrences of these outliers are categorized as causal. Two are identifiable as content (8.19; 26.3), and one as concessive (29.18).

⁵⁰ For a base, I used primarily ESV, unless it was a minority view.

Table 3. Bandstra's exceptions with proposed translations (my translations unless noted otherwise).

ובקשתם משם את־יהוה אלהיך ומצאת כי תדרשנו בכל־לבבך ובכל־נפשך	But from there, you will search for Yahweh your God, and you will find him, for you will search for him with all your heart and all your soul (Deut 4.29).
וצדקה תהיה־לנו כי־נשמר לעשות את־כל־המצוה הזאת לפני יהוה אלהינו כאשר צונו	And it will be righteousness for us, since we are careful to do all this commandment before Yahweh our God, as he commanded us. (Deut 6.25)
כי תבנה בית חדש ועשית מעקה לגגך ולא־תשים דמים בביתך כי־יפל הנפל ממנו	When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you not bring bloodguilt on your house because someone falls from it. (Deut 22.8)
ובאו עליך כל־הברכות האלה והשיגך כי תשמע בקול יהוה אלהיך	All these blessings will come and overtake you, because you obey the LORD your God. (Deut 28.2 CSB)
יקימך יהוה לו לעם קדוש כאשר נשבע־ לך כי תשמר את־מצוות יהוה אלהיך והלכת בדרכיו	Yahweh will establish you for himself as his holy people, as he swore to you, because you are keeping the commands of Yahweh your God and you are walking in his ways. (Deut 28.9)
ונתגך יהוה לראש ולא לזנב והיית רק למעלה ולא תהיה למטה כי־תשמע אל־ מצוות יהוה אלהיך אשר אנכי מצוך היום לשמר ולעשות	And Yahweh will make you the head and not the tail, and you will only go up, and not down, because you obey the commands of Yahweh your God, which I am commanding you today to observe them carefully. (Deut 28.13)
ובאו עליך כל־הקללות האלה ורדפוך והשיגוך עד השמדך כי־לא שמעת בקול יהוה אלהיך לשמר מצותיו וחקתיו אשר צוך	All these curses will come, pursue, and overtake you until you are destroyed, since you did not obey the LORD your God and keep the commands and statutes he gave you. (Deut 28.45 CSB)
כי תשמע בקול יהוה אלהיך לשמר מצותיו וחקתיו הכתובה בספר התורה הזה כי תשוב אלי־הוה אלהיך בכל־ לבבך ובכל־נפשך	Since you will be heeding the LORD your God and keeping His commandments and laws that are recorded in this book of the Teaching—once you return to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul. (Deut 30.10 NJPS)

A few observations are worth noting. First, causal usage dominates as the primary category. This is expected since the כִּי clause is most often following a main clause carried on by the *weqatal*. A second observation is that content clauses (often called the nominalizing use of כִּי) are prominent. It is

Table 4. כי clauses following *weqatal* in Deuteronomy

Causal (17x)	Content (12x)	Temporal (5x)	Conditional (6x)
4.6	4.39	6.10	15.16
4.15	5.15	11.29	22.8
8.18	7.9	26.1	24.3
10.19	8.5	30.1	28.2
12.12	9.3	31.21 (כי 1st)	28.13
13.11	9.6		28.45
14.29	11.2 (or causal)		
16.1	15.15		
19.6 (2x)	16.12		
21.5	24.18		
22.19	24.22		
22.21	28.10		
28.62			
30.9			
31.21 (כי 2nd)			
31.29			

helpful to observe that in every one of these content clauses, כי is used with a verb of perception—primarily *יָדַע* or *זָכַר*, but also once *רָאָה* (in 28.10). Aejmelaeus notes that it is the verbal idea behind these verbs of perception which creates the expectation for an object clause following the main clause, which is marked by כי (1986, 200).

A third observation is that the temporal use of כי following a *weqatal* occurs not after a single (non-phrasal) verb, but in the phrase *וְהָיָה כִּי*, which is used at the beginning of the verses. The phrase *וְהָיָה כִּי* is used regularly in the Pentateuch to communicate temporality.⁵¹ Interestingly, Deut 15.16 (listed in the table as conditional) also utilizes the phrase *וְהָיָה כִּי* at the beginning of the verse, but there it seems to be conditional.⁵²

In addition to Deut 15.16, there are five other כי clauses following a *weqatal* that are understood as conditional by English translations. These

⁵¹ *וְהָיָה כִּי* occurs nineteen times in the Pentateuch.

⁵² See Aejmelaeus (1986, 196). “The various כי clauses *preceding* their main clause are normally interpreted as conditional, temporal, or causal clauses. It is, however, an obvious fact that Hebrew does not formally distinguish between these cases. The common denominator of all כי clauses preceding their main clauses is that they state a circumstance pertaining to the following clause. For this reason, I suggest calling these כי clauses *circumstantial כי clauses*” (cf. 206).

verses should look familiar in that, apart from Deut 24.3, we have considered these verses in detail as part of Bandstra's exceptions and proposed that they could be interpreted as causal. Although the כִּי clause in Deut 24.3 follows a main clause and a *weqatal*, it is best understood as circumstantial because the כִּי clause is combined with the וְ conjunction. Each occurrence of כִּי וְ in the Hebrew Bible is the continuation of a circumstantial clause with slight modification. Each occurrence also takes place in legal texts, as might be expected (Exod 21.33; Lev 5.3; 13.16; 15.25; Deut 24.3). As such, this example, though clearly conditional, does not fit the pattern of a standalone כִּי clause following a main clause.

In summary, out of all the כִּי clauses that follow a *weqatal* verb, the only כִּי clauses that are clearly circumstantial (conditional or temporal) occur in כִּי וְהיה or כִּי וְאוֹ combinations. There are also a significant number of content clauses, but each of these is marked by verbs of perception (יָדַע, זָכַר, רָאָה). Because the כִּי clause in Deut 4.29 is noncomplex (i.e., not combined with another particle), and does not follow a verb of perception, it is likely that the כִּי clause should be translated as a causal, in line with the above evidence.

Evidence from the LXX

I have argued that the context of Deut 4.29 merits a translation of certainty rather than conditionality. I have also proposed that in accordance with the observed grammatical usage of כִּי clauses and their relationship to *weqatal* verbs, a causal understanding is most probable. At this point, it is helpful to consult the LXX as additional evidence.

Being the first translation of the Hebrew Bible, the LXX can often provide a helpful gauge to measure our understanding of the Hebrew. In Deut 4.29, it seems significant that the LXX opts for a non-conditional approach: καὶ ζητήσετε ἐκεῖ κύριον τὸν θεὸν ὑμῶν καὶ εὕρήσετε, ὅταν ἐκζητήσητε αὐτὸν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου ἐν τῇ θλίψει σου "And there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find [him], when you seek him with all your heart, and all your soul, in your oppression."⁵³ The relevant portion of the LXX, ὅταν ἐκζητήσητε αὐτὸν, translates the Hebrew בִּי תִדְרֹשֻׁנּוּ. Rather than utilizing the normal conditional particle (ἐάν),⁵⁴ the translator of Deuteronomy opts for ὅταν, a marker of temporality.⁵⁵

⁵³ My translation.

⁵⁴ There are 140 occurrences of ἐάν in Deuteronomy, 70 of which are translations of כִּי. For comparison, εἰ is only used 14 times in Deuteronomy.

⁵⁵ In the entire Pentateuch, ὅταν is only used as a translation for כִּי in Exod 3.21; Lev 19.23; 23.10; Num 11.29; 15.2, 22; Deut 4.29; 6.10; 11.29; 15.23. Setting aside Deut 4.29, each of these cases seems best understood as a temporal reference. On Num 11.29, see Wevers 1998, 178.

Table 5. Comparison of Deut 4.29 and Jer 29.13

Deut 4.29	Jer 29.13
ובקשתם משם את־יהוה אלהיך ומצאת כי תדרשנו בכל־לבבך ובכל־נפשך	ובקשתם אתי ומצאתם כי תדרשני בכל־ לבבכם
But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. (RSV)	You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart, (RSV)
καὶ ζητήσετε ἐκεῖ κύριον τὸν θεὸν ὑμῶν καὶ εὕρήσετε, ὅταν ἐκζητήσητε αὐτὸν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου ἐν τῇ θλίψει σου·	καὶ ἐκζητήσατέ με, καὶ εὕρήσετέ με, ὅτι ζητήσετέ με ἐν ὅλῃ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν,
And there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find [him], when you seek him with all your heart, and all your soul, in your oppression. (my translation)	And you will seek me and find me, for you will seek me with your whole heart. (my translation)

Thus, it seems the translator of Deut 4.29 understood the context to have more certainty to it than is often conveyed in English translations.⁵⁶

Insight into the כִּי clause of Deut 4.29 might also be found in Jer 29.13 (36.13 LXX). The connection between these two texts is very strong (see Table 5) and has caused at least one scholar to postulate that Deut 4.29 is literarily dependent upon Jer 29.13 (see Biddle 2003, 88).⁵⁷ However, it seems more likely that Jeremiah is dependent upon Deuteronomy (see Huey 1993, 254; Weinfeld 1991, 209).⁵⁸ Interestingly, although the Hebrew in Jer 29.13 is almost unquestionably a reference to Deut 4.29 (Fretheim 2002, 405), English translations typically translate Jer 29.13 with temporal certainty rather than conditionality.⁵⁹

Grammatically, these verses are fundamentally identical. So, why do English translations of the Hebrew prefer a conditional translation in Deut 4.29 and temporal certainty in Jer 29.13? Perhaps the answer is that some translators doubt the prophetic context of Deut 4, while the prophetic context in Jer 29 is almost universally recognized. However, if my foregoing argument is correct, the context of Deut 4.29 also aligns with a prophetic

⁵⁶ “The ὅταν clause is meant to modify εὕρήσετε, thus ‘you will find (him) when . . .’” (Wevers 1995, 83).

⁵⁷ Biddle notes, “Scholars debate whether Deuteronomy 4:29 depends literarily upon Jeremiah 29:13 or vice versa. The prophetic character of the notions of seeking and finding YHWH suggest Jeremiah 29:13 as the source for Deuteronomy 4:29” (2003, 88).

⁵⁸ Huey and Weinfeld both argue that Jeremiah’s prophecy is dependent not only on Deut 4.29 but also on 30.1-10.

⁵⁹ The NET Bible is the only notable exception.

context. If that argument holds up, then Jer 29.13 parallels Deut 4.29 not only grammatically, but also contextually.

At this point it is helpful to point out that the Greek translation of Jer 29.13 (36.13 LXX) supports a causal reading of the ׀ clause: καὶ ἐκζητήσατέ με, καὶ εὕρήσετέ με, ὅτι ζητήσετέ με ἐν ὅλῃ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν “And you will seek me and find me, for you will seek me with your whole heart.”⁶⁰ The pertinent phrase, “For you will seek me” (ὅτι ζητήσετέ με), clearly functions as a causal/explanatory clause in Greek.⁶¹ Thus, at least for the translator of Jer 29.13 (36.13 LXX), the reason Israel will find Yahweh is because they will search for him with full commitment.

After examining the evidence from the LXX translators, both Deut 4.29 and Jer 29.13 (36.13 LXX) seem to point the English translator away from a conditional understanding of Deut 4.29. Although the LXX translation cannot be a conclusive argument on its own, coupled with the contextual and grammatical arguments of this article, I believe it presents a compelling reason to reexamine the English translations of Deut 4.29.

Conclusion

This article has sought to challenge the conditional understanding of the ׀ clause in Deut 4.29. Instead, the verse seems to make more sense with a temporal or causal translation. This understanding makes sense of both the near and far context in Deuteronomy. The context of Deut 4.25-31 argues for the prophetic certainty of Israel’s rebellion and exile, but also for their return to Yahweh. The expectation of Deuteronomy is that Israel will live in the land, rebel against Yahweh, and go into exile. However, the story does not end there. Israel is also promised restoration. The key to Israel’s restoration is God’s action, as detailed by the wider context of Deuteronomy, especially 30.1-10.

In addition to the arguments from context, the grammatical usage of ׀ clauses in the Pentateuch presents strong evidence for a causal nuance. Since the ׀ clause in question follows the main clause, a causal understanding would be the most natural reading of the text. Additionally, in Deuteronomy when a noncomplex ׀ clause follows a *weqatal*, it is likely a causal clause. Although grammatical rules can have exceptions, the evidence presented seems to confirm that it would be most natural to translate the ׀ clause in Deut 4.29 as causal.

⁶⁰ My translation.

⁶¹ Aejmelaes (2007) argues that LXX translators commonly utilize ὅτι as a translation to communicate causality rather than the often expected γάρ. She argues that the LXX partially influences the New Testament in this regard.

Finally, looking at the earliest translation of Deut 4.29 and Jer 29.13 (36.13 LXX) has lent support to our proposal. The translators of both Deuteronomy and Jeremiah seem to have understood the context to be one of certainty rather than conditionality. In light of the presented evidence, I would argue that it is best to translate the כִּי clause in Deut 4.29 as a causal statement rather than conditional. As such, Deut 4.29 gives the reason for Israel's latter day return to Yahweh—Israel will find Yahweh because they will seek him with their whole heart.

ORCID iD

Peter Goeman  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6295-6134>

References

- Aejmelaeus, Anneli. 1986. "Function and Interpretation of כִּי in Biblical Hebrew." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105(2): 193–209.
- . 2007. "OTI causale in Septuagintal Greek." Pages 11–30 in *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays*. Revised and expanded edition. Dudley, MA: Peeters.
- Arnold, Bill T., and John H. Choi. 2003. *A Guide to Biblical Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bandstra, Barry L. 1982. "The Syntax of Particle KY in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic." PhD dissertation, Yale University.
- Beale, G. K. 2011. *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Biddle, Mark E. 2003. *Deuteronomy*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys.
- Block, Daniel I. 2012. *Deuteronomy*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Brown, Francis, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs. 1977. *Enhanced Brown–Driver–Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Chisholm, Robert B., Jr. 1998. *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Christensen, Duane L. 1993. "Deuteronomy in Modern Research: Approaches and Issues." Pages 3–20 in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy*. Edited by Duane L. Christensen. Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 3. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
- . 2001. *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*. 2nd edition. Word Biblical Commentary 6A. Dallas: Word Books.
- Claassen, W. T. 1983. "Speaker-Orientated Functions of *ki* in Biblical Hebrew." *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 11: 29–46.
- Clines, David J. A., ed. 1993–2011. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. 8 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic and Sheffield Phoenix.
- Craigie, Peter. 1976. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Follingstad, Carl M. 2001. *Deictic Viewpoint in Biblical Hebrew Text: A Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Analysis of the Particle כִּי*. Dallas: SIL International.

- Fretheim, Terence E. 2002. *Jeremiah*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing.
- Fuller, Russell T., and Kyoungwon Choi. 2017. *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew Syntax: An Intermediate Grammar*. Invitation to Theological Studies Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic.
- Huey, F. B., Jr. 1993. *Jeremiah, Lamentations*. New American Commentary 16. Nashville: Broadman & Holman.
- Joüon, Paul, and T. Muraoka. 2006. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute.
- Kalland, Earl S. 1992. "Deuteronomy." Pages 1–236 in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Koehler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner, eds. 1994–2000. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Revised by Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm. Translated and edited by M. E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill.
- Locatell, C. S. 2017. "Grammatical Polysemy in the Hebrew Bible: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to ׀." PhD dissertation, Stellenbosch University.
- . 2019. "Causal Categories in Biblical Hebrew Discourse: A Cognitive Approach to Causal ׀." *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 45(2): 79–102.
- Mayes, A. D. H. 1993. "Deuteronomy 4 and the Literary Criticism of Deuteronomy." Pages 195–224 in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy*. Edited by Duane L. Christensen. Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 3. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
- McConville, J. Gordon. 2002. *Deuteronomy*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary 5. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.
- Meade, John D. "Circumcision of the Heart in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: Divine Means for Resolving Curse and Bringing Blessing." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 18(3): 59–85.
- Merrill, Eugene H. 1994. *Deuteronomy*. New American Commentary 4. Nashville: Broadman & Holman.
- Meyer, Esias E. 2001. "The Particle ׀, a Mere Conjunction or Something More?" *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 27(1): 39–62.
- Muilenburg, James 1961. "The Linguistic and Rhetorical Usages of the Particle ׀ in the Old Testament." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 32: 135–60.
- Pietersma, Albert, and Benjamin G. Wright, eds. 2007. *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Robson, James E. 2016. *Deuteronomy 1–11*. Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.
- Schenker, Adrian, et al., eds. 2007. *Biblia Hebraica Quinta editione cum apparatu critico novis curis elaborato*. Fascicle 5: *Deuteronomy*. Prepared by Carmel McCarthy. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Tigay, J. 1996. *Deuteronomy*. JPS Torah Commentary. Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society.
- van der Merwe, Christo H. J., Jacobus A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze. 2017. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*. 2nd edition. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Waltke, Bruce K., and M. O'Connor. 1990. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

- Weinfeld, Moshe. 1991. *Deuteronomy 1–11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 5. New York: Doubleday.
- Wevers, John William. 1995. *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy*. Septuagint and Cognate Studies 39. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- . 1998. *Notes on the Greek Text of Numbers*. Septuagint and Cognate Studies 46. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Williams, Ronald J. 2007. *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*. 3rd edition. Revised and expanded by John C. Beckman. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Abbreviations

BDB	Brown, Driver, and Briggs 1977 (in References)
BHQ	<i>Biblia Hebraica Quinta</i> (Schenker et al. 2007, in References)
BHRG	<i>Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar</i> (van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze 2017, in References)
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
CSB	Christian Standard Bible (2017)
DCH	<i>The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> (Clines 1993–2011, in References)
ESV	English Standard Version (2001)
HALOT	<i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner 1994–2000, in References)
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible (2009)
KJV	King James Version (1611)
NASB	New American Standard Bible (1977)
NASU	New American Standard Bible: Updated Edition (1995)
NET	New English Translation (2006, 2017)
NETS	<i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> (Pietersma and Wright 2007, in References)
NIV	New International Version (1984, 2011)
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society Version (<i>Tanakh</i> , 1985)
NKJV	New King James Version (1982)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (1989)
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1952)
YLT	Young's Literal Translation (1862)