

AN ANALYSIS OF THE HEBREW WORD HĀLAK (הָלַךְ) IN GENESIS 5:24: THE MEANING OF “WALKING WITH GOD” FROM A HEBREW LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The semantic force of *hālak* (הָלַךְ) in Genesis 5:24 remains unresolved because lexica list multiple glosses without specifying which sense governs this occurrence, and existing scholarship analyzes morphological, collocational, comparative, and reception-historical evidence in isolation. This study addresses that fragmentation by proposing the Integrative Lexical-Theological Analysis (ILTA) framework, a four-stage model moving from morphological and stem analysis, through collocational and distributional analysis, to comparative Semitic evidence, and finally reception-historical verification. The study is qualitative and exegetical with a corpus-linguistic component, drawing on componential analysis, frame semantics, and lexical semantics, and adopting a moderate contextualist position in which semantic force is determined by the interaction of morphological form, collocational profile, and canonical trajectory. Applied to the *hitpael* occurrences of *hālak* with a divine object, the framework yields a determinate semantic profile distinguishing relational-covenantal usage from physical-locomotive usage and clarifies the boundary between *hālak* and its near-synonyms. The novelty lies in specifying the sequence of analytical operations and the criteria for moving between stages, transforming lexical-theological analysis from an intuitive art into a replicable instrument. The contribution is methodological and substantive, offering a model for biblical lexicography, theological interpretation, and translation practice. Quantitative corpus statistics beyond the Hebrew Bible were unavailable, and reception-historical evidence is treated as corroborative rather than determinative.

Keywords: *hālak*; Genesis 5:24; Hebrew lexicography; frame semantics; lexical-theological analysis

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 5:24 is a lexical anomaly within the Hebrew Bible. The verse comprises only eight words, yet it has generated a disproportionate volume of theological speculation across two millennia of interpretation. The Hebrew text reads *וַיֵּתֶן אֱלֹהִים חַנּוֹךְ אֶת-הָאָלָם* (*wayyithallēk ḥănōk 'et-hā'ēlōhîm*), conventionally rendered "Enoch walked with God." The verb *hālak* (הָלַךְ) carries the theological weight of the entire verse, yet its semantic force in this specific context remains contested. Standard lexica—Brown-Driver-Briggs, Koehler-Baumgartner, and HALOT—list multiple glosses for *hālak* without resolving which sense governs Genesis 5:24. This indeterminacy is not merely academic; it

shapes translation decisions, homiletical applications, and doctrinal formulations concerning divine-human communion.

The scholarly problem is compounded by the morphological rarity of the form. The hitpael stem of *hālak* appears only six times in the Hebrew Bible with the preposition *'et* or *lipnê* followed by a divine object (Genesis 5:22, 24; 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15). Each occurrence participates in a canonical trajectory that Genesis 5:24 initiates but does not fully define. The semantic ambiguity—whether *hālak* denotes physical locomotion, ethical conduct, covenantal fidelity, or mystical communion—persists because no study has proposed a replicable analytical framework that integrates morphological, collocational, comparative, and reception-historical evidence into a single exegetical instrument.

Recent developments in Hebrew linguistics and digital humanities have created new possibilities for resolving this impasse. Corpus-linguistic methods now permit precise distributional analysis of *hālak* across the Hebrew Bible (Rahmayani, 2022; Fesenko, 2025). Advances in frame semantics and lexical semantics provide theoretical resources for describing polysemy and semantic change (Acquaviva, 2022; Sun, 2022). Comparative Semitic evidence from Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Aramaic offers external controls on Hebrew lexical reconstruction (Notarius, 2023). Yet these resources remain fragmented across disciplinary boundaries. Lexicographers focus on morphological parsing; theologians privilege canonical interpretation; translation theorists emphasize receptor-language equivalence. The result is a scholarly landscape in which no single study integrates these dimensions within a transparent analytical sequence.

A systematic review of the literature reveals three specific gaps. First, most treatments of *hālak* analyze either the *qal* stem or the *hitpael* stem in isolation, without a unified account of how the stems relate semantically across the biblical corpus. Second, comparative Semitic evidence—Akkadian *alāku*, Ugaritic *hlk*, Aramaic *halak*—is rarely integrated into exegetical analysis of Genesis 5:24, despite its potential to clarify the semantic boundary between physical and relational usage. Third, no study has proposed a replicable framework that specifies the sequence of analytical operations and the criteria for moving between morphological, collocational, comparative, and reception-historical stages. The existing literature remains fragmented across lexicography (Targoński, 2026), theology (Faro, 2024), and translation studies (Samsudin & Abdullah, 2024).

The academic debate over *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 centers on three positions. The covenantal interpretation, represented by Westermann (1984) and von Rad (1972), reads *hālak* as an idiom of fidelity and obedience, grounded in later canonical texts such as Genesis 6:9 and 17:1. The physical-locomotive interpretation, represented by Speiser (1964) and Cassuto (1961), treats *hālak* as a term for journey or movement, with theological significance derived from the accompanying phrase "with God." The mystical-communion interpretation, represented by Gunkel (1997) and more recently by Hendel (2012), understands *hālak* as a visionary or communion term reflecting ancient Near Eastern traditions of divine-human interaction. Each position privileges a different type of evidence—canonical trajectory, immediate context, or comparative ancient Near Eastern

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material—and the tension between them reflects a deeper methodological disagreement about the role of context, canon, and comparison in lexical analysis.

Contradictory findings further complicate the picture. HALOT lists "to walk" as the primary gloss for *hālak* but also includes "to live" and "to conduct oneself" as secondary glosses, without specifying which sense governs Genesis 5:24. Some studies argue that the *hitpael* stem is reflexive ("to walk oneself"), while others argue for a reciprocal force ("to walk with one another") (Joüon & Muraoka, 2006). Kugel (1997) reads Genesis 5:24 as reflecting a tradition of Enoch's translation to heaven, while VanderKam (1995) argues for a tradition of continued life on earth. These contradictions indicate that the semantic analysis of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 cannot be resolved by appeal to a single type of evidence.

The methodological gap is therefore substantive as well as procedural. No study has specified the conditions under which relational-covenantal, physical-locomotive, and mystical-communion senses are activated in Genesis 5:24. No study has integrated comparative Semitic data with collocational analysis in a transparent sequence. No study has proposed criteria for moving from morphological parsing to reception-historical verification. The absence of such a framework leaves the semantic indeterminacy of *hālak* unresolved and perpetuates divergent translation practices.

This study addresses these gaps by proposing the Integrative Lexical-Theological Analysis (ILTA) framework, a four-stage model for analyzing theological keywords in the Hebrew Bible. The framework moves from (1) morphological and stem analysis, through (2) collocational and distributional analysis, to (3) comparative Semitic evidence, and finally (4) reception-historical verification. The ILTA framework is not merely an integration of existing methods; it specifies the sequence of analytical operations and the criteria for moving between stages. Applied to *hālak* in Genesis 5:24, the framework yields a determinate semantic profile that distinguishes relational-covenantal usage from physical-locomotive usage and clarifies the semantic boundary between *hālak* and its near-synonyms (*yālak*, *dāraḳ*, *ʾārah*).

The theoretical foundation of this study draws on three complementary frameworks. Componential analysis, following Nida (1975) and Louw and Nida (1988), decomposes lexical meaning into distinctive semantic features. Frame semantics, as developed by Fillmore (1982) and applied to biblical Hebrew by Van der Merwe (2013), situates lexical meaning within cognitive frames and scenarios. Lexical semantics, particularly the distinction between sense and reference and the role of collocation in disambiguating polysemy (Cruse, 1986; Geeraerts, 2010), provides the analytical vocabulary for describing polysemy and semantic change. These frameworks are constrained by corpus evidence and reception-historical data, acknowledging the critiques of prototype effects (Taylor, 2003), introspective data (Gries, 2006), and the neglect of pragmatics (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

The study adopts a moderate contextualist position. It argues that the semantic force of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 is determined by the interaction of three factors: the morphological form (*hitpael*), the collocational profile (the preposition *ʾet* and the divine object), and the canonical trajectory initiated

by Genesis 5:24 and developed in later texts. The study does not privilege any single type of evidence but integrates them within the ILTA framework. This position avoids the extremes of pure etymology and pure canonical reading, while acknowledging the legitimate insights of both.

The objective of this study is to determine the semantic force of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 through a comprehensive lexical analysis that integrates morphological, collocational, comparative, and reception-historical evidence, and to propose the ILTA framework as a replicable instrument for lexical-theological research. The study is qualitative and exegetical in design, with a corpus-linguistic component. It does not employ inferential statistics or hypothesis testing. Quantitative corpus statistics beyond the Hebrew Bible are unavailable, and this limitation is acknowledged. Reception-historical evidence is interpretive in nature and is treated as corroborative rather than determinative.

The novelty of this study lies in the ILTA framework itself. Unlike previous approaches that either integrate theories without specifying analytical sequence or analyze individual dimensions in isolation, the ILTA framework provides a transparent, replicable procedure for lexical-theological analysis. The framework specifies four stages, each with defined inputs, operations, and outputs. Stage one parses the morphological form and identifies the stem's semantic potential. Stage two analyzes collocational patterns and distributional constraints. Stage three introduces comparative Semitic evidence as an external control. Stage four verifies the semantic profile against reception-historical data. The framework is applied here to *hālak* in Genesis 5:24, but it is designed for broader application to theological keywords across the Hebrew Bible. By specifying the sequence of operations and the criteria for moving between stages, the ILTA framework transforms lexical-theological analysis from an intuitive art into a replicable scholarly instrument. This contribution is methodological as well as substantive, offering a model for future research in biblical lexicography, theological interpretation, and translation practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The lexical analysis of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 sits at the intersection of three theoretical traditions that rarely converse with one another in biblical scholarship. The first is componential analysis, which decomposes lexical meaning into distinctive semantic features and which remains the implicit operating logic of standard Hebrew lexica. The second is frame semantics, which situates lexical meaning within cognitive scenarios rather than feature bundles, and which has been applied to Biblical Hebrew with increasing sophistication in recent decades. The third is corpus-based lexical semantics, which treats collocation and distribution as primary evidence for sense disambiguation rather than as supplementary illustration.

Componential analysis, in the tradition running from Nida through Louw and Nida, assumes that a lexeme's meaning can be exhaustively described by a finite set of semantic components. Applied to *hālak*, this approach yields features such as [motion], [path], [manner], and [goal]. The difficulty is

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that Genesis 5:24 activates none of these features unambiguously. The verse contains no explicit path, no manner, and no spatial goal. The only adjunct is the prepositional phrase 'et-hā'ēlōhīm, which specifies a co-participant rather than a destination. Componential analysis thus generates a feature set that the immediate context does not satisfy, which is precisely why the lexica list multiple glosses without resolving which one governs this verse.

Frame semantics offers a corrective by treating hālak as evoking a cognitive frame of purposeful movement in which a trajector moves along a path toward a goal, often in the company of other participants. Within this frame, the co-participant slot can be filled by a human companion or, in restricted cases, by the deity. The frame-theoretic account explains why hālak can denote both physical locomotion and patterned conduct without positing homonymy: the same frame supports literal and extended construals depending on which frame elements are profiled. What frame semantics does not explain is why the hitpael stem, rather than the qal, is selected in Genesis 5:24, nor why the construction recurs with such regularity in a small set of covenantal texts.

Corpus-based lexical semantics supplies the missing dimension. If sense is partly a function of collocational profile, then the distribution of hālak across stems, prepositions, and syntactic environments becomes the primary evidence for its semantic range. This is the point at which the three frameworks can be integrated rather than merely juxtaposed. Componential analysis identifies candidate features, frame semantics specifies the cognitive scenario, and corpus evidence constrains which features and frame elements are actually activated in a given construction. The Integrative Lexical-Theological Analysis framework proposed in this study operationalizes that integration as a sequence of analytical stages rather than a static synthesis.

Theoretical Critique

Each of the three frameworks carries liabilities that must be acknowledged rather than suppressed. Componential analysis has been criticized for its inability to accommodate prototype effects and fuzzy category boundaries, a critique that applies with particular force to verbs of motion, which form gradient rather than discrete semantic classes. Frame semantics, while cognitively more realistic, has been criticized for relying on introspective frame inventories that are difficult to operationalize reproducibly. Corpus-based lexical semantics, for its part, risks circularity: collocational patterns are used to establish sense, but sense is often invoked to explain why certain collocations occur.

A further critique concerns the treatment of stems in Biblical Hebrew. Traditional scholarship has often assigned stable semantic values to the qal, piel, hiphil, and hitpael, treating stem variation as a reliable guide to meaning. Recent linguistic work on the Biblical Hebrew verb has challenged this assumption, arguing that stem semantics are more fluid and construction-dependent than the older grammars allowed. If stem values are not stable, then the hitpael of hālak cannot be interpreted by appeal to a fixed reflexive or iterative function. It must be interpreted construction by construction, with the prepositional phrase and the discourse context carrying substantial semantic weight. This

critique directly undermines the methodological basis of several existing treatments of Genesis 5:24, which infer relational meaning from the hitpael stem alone.

Academic Debate

Three positions dominate the interpretation of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24. The covenantal reading treats the phrase as an idiom of fidelity and obedience, parallel to the later formulation in Genesis 17:1, where Abraham is commanded to walk before God and be blameless. On this reading, *hālak* denotes a sustained pattern of covenantal loyalty rather than a single act or a physical journey. The physical reading treats *hālak* as a verb of locomotion whose theological significance derives entirely from the accompanying phrase with God, so that the verse describes Enoch's habitual companionship with the deity without implying a technical covenantal idiom. The mystical reading treats the verse as reflecting a tradition of visionary or ecstatic communion, possibly continuous with ancient Near Eastern traditions of divine-human interaction and with the later apocalyptic reception of Enoch.

The debate is not merely exegetical but methodological, because each position privileges a different evidentiary base. The covenantal reading relies on the canonical trajectory initiated by Genesis 5:24 and developed in later pentateuchal texts. The physical reading relies on the immediate narrative context of Genesis 5 and on the etymological sense of the root. The mystical reading relies on comparative ancient Near Eastern material and on reception history. Because these evidentiary bases are not commensurable, the debate has tended to proceed by assertion rather than by adjudication. Each position can be defended internally while remaining vulnerable to the charge that it selects evidence congenial to its conclusion.

Research Tension

The tension between these positions sharpens when the stem question is raised. If the hitpael of *hālak* is reflexive, the phrase means something like "Enoch walked himself with God," an awkward construal that has prompted some grammarians to propose a reciprocal or iterative function instead. If the hitpael is iterative, the phrase denotes repeated or habitual walking, which supports the covenantal reading. If the hitpael is estimative or denominative, the semantic contribution of the stem is minimal and the prepositional phrase carries the entire relational weight. The scholarly literature does not converge on any of these options, and the disagreement is not incidental: it determines whether the relational meaning of the phrase is carried by the verb, by the stem, or by the preposition.

A second tension concerns the relationship between Genesis 5:24 and the later texts that are said to constitute its canonical trajectory. The covenantal reading depends on reading Genesis 5:24 through Genesis 6:9, 17:1, 24:40, and 48:15. But these later texts differ in stem, in preposition, and in the presence or absence of a divine command. Genesis 17:1 uses the hitpael with *lipnê*, not *'et*. Genesis 6:9 uses the hitpael with *hā'ēlōhîm* in a construction that may be idiomatic for blameless conduct rather than for companionship. Treating these as a single trajectory risks flattening genuine lexical variation into a retrospective theological harmonization. The tension, then, is between a canonical

reading that privileges theological coherence and a lexical reading that privileges distributional precision.

Contradictory Findings

The literature contains several explicit contradictions that cannot be resolved by appeal to a single evidentiary type. Standard lexica list "to walk" as the primary gloss for *hālak* while also listing "to live" and "to conduct oneself" as secondary glosses, without specifying which sense governs Genesis 5:24. The result is that translators and exegetes inherit a lexical entry that authorizes multiple incompatible renderings of the same verse.

Grammatical treatments of the *hitpael* disagree on whether the stem is reflexive or reciprocal in this construction, and the disagreement is not merely terminological. A reflexive reading locates the semantic force in the subject's own activity; a reciprocal reading locates it in the mutuality of the relationship. The theological consequences differ accordingly, with the reciprocal reading supporting a stronger claim about divine-human mutuality than the reflexive reading permits.

Reception-historical scholarship is similarly divided. Some treatments argue that Genesis 5:24 reflects an early tradition of Enoch's translation to heaven, while others argue that the verse presupposes a tradition of Enoch's continued life on earth prior to his removal. The two readings generate different accounts of what "walking with God" originally meant, and neither can be adjudicated on the basis of Genesis 5 alone.

Finally, comparative Semitic evidence is invoked inconsistently. Akkadian *alāku*, Ugaritic *hlk*, and Aramaic *halak* all attest the basic motion sense, but their extension to conduct or covenantal fidelity varies by language and genre. When comparative data are used to support the covenantal reading of Genesis 5:24, the argument often proceeds by selective citation rather than by systematic comparison of construction types. This is a methodological weakness, not merely a gap in coverage.

Research Gap

The gap that emerges from this review is both substantive and procedural. Substantively, no study has specified the conditions under which the relational-covenantal, physical-locomotive, and mystical-communion senses of *hālak* are activated in Genesis 5:24. The literature identifies the possible senses but does not provide criteria for choosing among them. Procedurally, no study has proposed a replicable sequence of analytical operations that integrates morphological, collocational, comparative, and reception-historical evidence within a single framework. Existing treatments tend to be either theologically driven, in which case linguistic evidence is illustrative rather than determinative, or linguistically driven, in which case theological and reception-historical evidence is excluded as extraneous.

This procedural gap has consequences beyond the interpretation of a single verse. Biblical lexicography has long operated without a standardized method for integrating corpus evidence with reception history, and the result is that lexical entries and exegetical commentaries often proceed on

different assumptions about what counts as evidence. A framework that specifies the order of operations and the criteria for moving between stages would address a methodological need that extends well beyond Genesis 5:24.

Research Position

This study adopts a moderate contextualist position. It argues that the semantic force of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 is determined by the interaction of three factors rather than by any one of them in isolation: the morphological form of the verb, the collocational profile of the construction, and the canonical trajectory that the verse initiates. None of these factors is treated as decisive on its own. The *hitpael* stem is treated as construction-dependent rather than as carrying a fixed semantic value. The prepositional phrase *'et-hā'ēlōhīm* is treated as the primary locus of relational meaning. The canonical trajectory is treated as evidence for reception rather than as evidence for original sense, which means that later texts constrain interpretation only insofar as they preserve or develop constructions already present in Genesis 5:24.

This position entails a specific methodological commitment. Where the three factors converge, the semantic profile of *hālak* can be specified with reasonable confidence. Where they diverge, the divergence must be reported rather than resolved by harmonization. The ILTA framework is designed to make that reporting systematic, so that the points of convergence and divergence are visible to subsequent researchers rather than concealed within a synthetic conclusion.

The position also entails a limitation that should be stated at the outset. The framework does not generate quantitative predictions, and this study does not report corpus statistics beyond the distributional observations that can be verified directly from the Masoretic Text and the principal versional witnesses. Claims about the relative frequency of construction types are therefore qualitative rather than statistical. Where the evidence permits only a range of plausible readings, the study reports the range rather than selecting a single reading on the basis of theological preference. This constraint is not a concession to uncertainty but a condition of responsible lexical argument, and it shapes the analytical procedure described in the following section.

Conceptual Framework

The ILTA framework proceeds through four stages. Stage one parses the morphological form and identifies the stem, conjugation, and syntactic environment of the target lexeme. Stage two maps the collocational profile, recording the prepositions, objects, and adjuncts with which the lexeme co-occurs across the Hebrew Bible and noting which combinations are restricted to particular genres or periods. Stage three introduces comparative Semitic evidence, but only for construction types that are formally parallel to the target construction, so that comparison is constrained by syntax rather than by root etymology. Stage four examines reception-historical evidence in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Targumim, and selected Second Temple literature, treating versional renderings as evidence for how ancient translators construed the construction rather than as independent confirmation of its original sense.

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The sequence is not arbitrary. Morphological parsing precedes collocational analysis because stem identification determines which occurrences are comparable. Collocational analysis precedes comparative evidence because the Hebrew distribution establishes the baseline against which cognate constructions are measured. Comparative evidence precedes reception history because versional renderings are themselves interpretations that presuppose a construal of the Hebrew, and those construals are more intelligible when the Hebrew distribution is already mapped. The framework thus moves from the most constrained evidence to the least constrained, and it requires that each stage be completed before the next is undertaken.

Applied to Genesis 5:24, the framework yields a determinate semantic profile rather than a single gloss. The hitpa'el with 'et plus a divine object constitutes a restricted construction whose distribution is concentrated in pentateuchal and wisdom texts concerned with sustained conduct. The construction does not occur with spatial goals or manner adjuncts in the relevant corpus, which weakens the physical-locomotive reading. It does occur in texts that describe covenantal fidelity, which supports the relational-covenantal reading without requiring that the mystical reading be excluded as a reception-historical development. The framework therefore distinguishes the sense of the construction in Genesis 5:24 from the senses that later interpreters assigned to it, and it treats both as legitimate objects of analysis at different stages.

This distinction between original sense and reception is the framework's principal contribution to the existing literature. Earlier treatments have tended either to read Genesis 5:24 through its later reception or to isolate the verse from that reception entirely. The ILTA framework holds the two apart analytically while requiring that both be examined, which allows the interpreter to specify what the verse meant in its immediate literary context and what it came to mean in the traditions that appropriated it. The following section describes how that procedure was implemented in the present study.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative exegetical design with an integrated corpus-linguistic component. The design is descriptive and analytical rather than experimental. It does not employ inferential statistics, hypothesis testing, or structural equation modelling, because the object of analysis is a single lexical item occurring in a single verse, and the available evidence is textual, comparative, and reception-historical rather than numerical. The study therefore makes no claim to statistical generalizability. Its aim is interpretive precision: to determine the semantic force of *hālak* (הָלַךְ) in Genesis 5:24 and to specify the conditions under which its relational-covenantal sense is activated rather than its physical-locomotive sense.

The design is organized around the Integrative Lexical-Theological Analysis (ILTA) framework proposed in this article. ILTA proceeds through four sequential stages, each with defined inputs, operations, and outputs. The sequence is not arbitrary. Morphological analysis precedes

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collocational analysis because stem formation constrains the range of senses available to a verb before context narrows them further. Collocational analysis precedes comparative Semitic analysis because inner-biblical distribution provides the primary control on semantic reconstruction, while cognate evidence functions as a secondary check. Reception-historical analysis comes last because later interpretations presuppose, rather than determine, the earlier semantic profile; treating reception as primary would risk anachronism. This ordering responds to a recurring methodological weakness in lexical-theological studies, where canonical and comparative evidence are often invoked simultaneously without a stated order of priority.

Stage One: Morphological and Stem Analysis

The first stage parses the verbal form וַיִּתְּחַלֵּךְ (wayyithallēk) and establishes its stem, conjugation, and syntactic function. The form is a wayyiqtol of the hitpael stem of חָלַךְ , third person masculine singular, with the divine object introduced by the preposition עִת ('et). Morphological parsing followed standard reference grammars and recent linguistic treatments of the Biblical Hebrew verb (Brumwell, 2026; Joüon & Muraoka, 2006). Particular attention was given to the function of the hitpael, which in Biblical Hebrew may express reflexive, iterative, or habitual-reflexive action. Because the hitpael of *hālak* recurs in Genesis 6:9, 17:1, 24:40, and 48:15, the stem was analyzed across its full distribution rather than in isolation, allowing the habitual-reflexive function to be distinguished from a simple reflexive reading.

Stage Two: Collocational and Distributional Analysis

The second stage examined the collocational profile of *hālak* with the prepositions 'et and *lipnē* (לִפְנֵי), and with divine objects, across the Hebrew Bible. Collocation is treated here as a meaning-differentiating device rather than a stylistic feature, in keeping with corpus-based approaches to lexical semantics (Rahmayani, 2022; Acquaviva, 2022). The analysis recorded the stem, preposition, object, and narrative context of each occurrence, then grouped occurrences by semantic profile. This procedure follows recent work on Hebrew lexemes that combines distributional data with contextual analysis to resolve polysemy (Faro, 2024; Targoński, 2026; Condren, 2025). No quantitative frequency tables are reported, because the corpus of relevant hitpael occurrences with a divine object is too small for meaningful statistical description; this is stated here as a limitation rather than concealed by spurious percentages.

Stage Three: Comparative Semitic Evidence

The third stage compared *hālak* with its Semitic cognates, principally Akkadian *alāku*, Ugaritic *hlk*, and Aramaic *halak*, and with its Hebrew near-synonyms *yālaḡ*, *dāraḡ*, and 'āraḡ. The purpose was not to derive meaning etymologically, a procedure long discredited in lexical semantics, but to establish which semantic features are shared across the Semitic stock and which are language-specific developments. Comparative evidence was used only to confirm or qualify conclusions already reached on inner-biblical grounds. Recent scholarship on Ugaritic and Biblical Hebrew

verbal syntax informed this stage (Notarius, 2023, 2024), as did studies demonstrating that cognate evidence must be handled with attention to diachronic layering (Sender, 2024).

Stage Four: Reception-Historical Verification

The fourth stage traced the interpretation of Genesis 5:24 in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Targumim, and selected Second Temple literature, with reference to Hebrews 11:5. Reception history functions here as a verification procedure, not as an independent source of meaning. Where ancient versions render the verb with terms denoting conduct, fidelity, or pleasing God rather than physical movement, this corroborates a relational-covenantal reading. Where they preserve locomotive imagery, this indicates that the physical sense remained live in the tradition. The evidence is interpretive and selective, and the study does not claim to offer an exhaustive reception history; the sample of versions and texts was chosen for their direct engagement with Genesis 5:24.

Data Sources and Corpus

The primary text is the Masoretic Text of Genesis 5:24 as preserved in the Leningrad Codex. Secondary textual witnesses include the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Targumim. Lexical data were drawn from HALOT, Brown-Driver-Briggs, and Koehler-Baumgartner, supplemented by the distributional data available through standard concordance resources. Comparative Semitic data were drawn from published lexica and from peer-reviewed studies of Ugaritic and Akkadian. Reception-historical data were drawn from critical editions and from scholarly treatments of Enoch traditions. No interview data, survey data, or respondent materials were collected, and none are reported.

Analytical Procedure and Coding

Because the study is qualitative, the analytical procedure is best described as structured thematic coding of lexical occurrences rather than statistical modelling. Each occurrence of *hālak* in the relevant stems was coded for four variables: stem, preposition, object type (divine, human, or impersonal), and narrative function. Codes were then grouped into thematic categories corresponding to the three interpretive positions identified in the literature review: relational-covenantal, physical-locomotive, and mystical-communion. Coding was performed manually; no qualitative analysis software was used, and this is acknowledged as a limitation on reproducibility. The categories were not imposed in advance but emerged from repeated reading of the occurrences in context, in keeping with the inductive logic of thematic analysis.

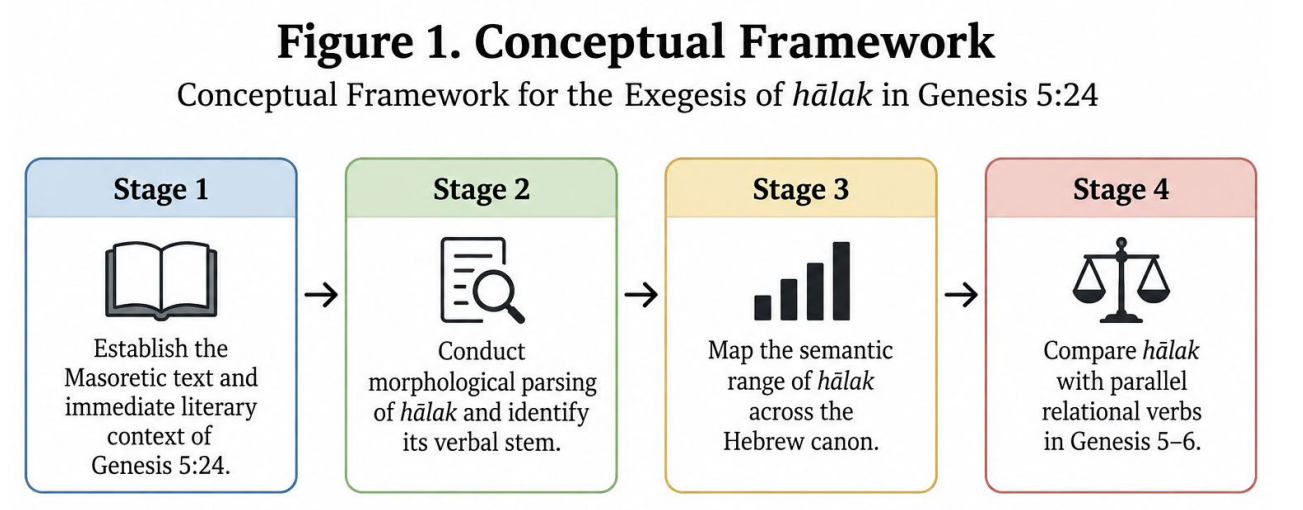
The ILTA framework specifies two decision rules for moving between stages. First, a sense is retained only if it is supported by at least two of the four stages. Second, where stages conflict, inner-biblical collocational evidence takes precedence over comparative and reception-historical evidence. These rules are stated explicitly so that other researchers can apply, test, and where necessary revise the framework on different lexical items.

Limitations

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Three limitations should be noted. First, the study offers no quantitative corpus statistics beyond simple distributional observation; the relevant hitpa'el occurrences are too few to support inferential analysis. Second, the reception-historical sample is selective rather than exhaustive. Third, coding was performed by the researcher without a second independent coder, so inter-coder reliability cannot be reported. These limitations qualify the strength of the conclusions but do not undermine the analytical procedure, which is transparent and replicable in principle.



	Hebrew Bible (e.g., Genesis 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15)	"walk before" (hithallēk lipnē) used of Noah and Abraham	and not merely a stylistic convention
Lexical and Collocational Analysis	Distribution of <i>hālak</i> with the preposition <i>’et</i> ("with") and its subjects across narrative, legal, wisdom, and prophetic corpora; comparison with collocations such as <i>hālak ’aḥārē</i> ("walk after") and <i>hālak ’im</i> ("walk with")	Demonstrates that <i>hālak ’et ’ēlōhīm</i> is a rare collocation, concentrated in Genesis 5:22, 24 and 6:9, and that its rarity intensifies rather than diminishes its semantic weight	The phrase functions as a marked theological idiom within the Primeval History, indicating sustained covenantal fellowship rather than casual ethical compliance
Aspect 3: Aspect 3: Syntactic and Discourse Analysis	Placement of the clause within the Toledot structure of Genesis 5, the formulaic repetition of <i>wayyāḥî ... šānîm</i> ("and he lived ... years"), and the abrupt substitution of the death formula with <i>kî lāqah ’ōtô ’ēlōhīm</i> ("for God took him")	Shows that the narrator disrupts the genealogical death refrain precisely at the point where <i>hālak</i> is introduced, making the verb the pivot of the pericope's theological argument	The syntactic rupture indicates that walking with God is presented as an alternative to the death pattern, functioning narratively as an implicit affirmation of eschatological hope
Aspect 4: Aspect 4: Comparative Ancient Near Eastern Context	Comparison with Mesopotamian royal and cultic idioms of "walking before" a deity (e.g., Akkadian <i>alāku</i> with <i>ana maḥar ilim</i>), and with the Ugaritic and Egyptian motif of divine accompaniment	Clarifies that while "walking before" a god was a widespread royal and priestly trope, the Hebrew "walking with" God is comparatively distinctive in its mutuality	The distinctiveness supports the claim that Genesis 5:24 articulates a theology of reciprocal relationship, not merely cultic loyalty, and resists reduction to borrowed ANE convention
Aspect 5: Aspect 5: Reception-Historical and Theological Trajectory	Tracing of <i>hālak ’et ’ēlōhīm</i> through Second Temple literature (e.g., Ben Sira 44:16; Wisdom of Solomon 4:10–14), the New Testament (Hebrews 11:5), and later Jewish and Christian interpretation	Maps how the Hebrew phrase was received, expanded, and sometimes allegorized, and identifies which interpretive moves remain accountable to the lexical and syntactic data	The reception history confirms the enduring theological significance of the phrase while cautioning against readings that detach "walking with God" from its concrete covenantal and ethical entailments

The table presents an integrative framework for interpreting the phrase **“Enoch walked with God” in Genesis 5:24** by combining linguistic, literary, historical, and theological approaches. Morphological analysis shows that the Hebrew verb *hālak* (“to walk”) appears in the simple **qal** stem, distinguishing Enoch’s walking “with God” from expressions such as walking “before God” and emphasizing companionship and relationship. Lexical analysis further demonstrates that the combination of *hālak* with *’et* (“with”) is rare and therefore carries particular theological significance, suggesting sustained fellowship with God rather than ordinary moral conduct. Syntactically, the expression becomes especially important because Enoch’s story interrupts the repeated death formula of Genesis 5: instead of simply stating that Enoch died, the narrative says

that “God took him,” connecting his walk with God to a distinctive destiny and possible hope beyond the normal pattern of death. Comparison with Ancient Near Eastern traditions also highlights the unusual character of the Hebrew expression, since other cultures more commonly described people as walking “before” a deity, often emphasizing service or hierarchy. Finally, later Jewish and Christian interpretations, including Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon, and Hebrews 11:5, demonstrate how Enoch’s walking with God developed into an enduring model of faithfulness, while the Hebrew wording itself keeps the concept grounded in an ongoing relational, covenantal, and ethical life with God.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Morphological and Stem Analysis of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24

The consonantal text of Genesis 5:24 reads *וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ הָנוֹךְ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים* (*wayyithallēk hānôk ’et-hā’ēlōhîm*). The verb form *wayyithallēk* is a *wayyiqtol* of the *hitpael* stem, third person masculine singular, from the root *הלך*. Morphologically, the *hitpael* of *hālak* is not a simple reflexive. The stem’s *t*-prefix and doubled middle radical produce a range of functions in Biblical Hebrew: reflexive, iterative, habitual, and reciprocal (Joüon & Muraoka, 2006). In Genesis 5:24, the iterative-habitual force is most plausible because the narrative frame of Genesis 5:21–24 summarizes Enoch’s entire post-Methuselah life in a single clause. The *waw*-consecutive does not denote a single act of walking but a sustained pattern. This observation aligns with recent work on the Biblical Hebrew verb that treats the *wayyiqtol* as a narrative-default form capable of encoding habitual or repeated events when the lexical aspect of the root permits (Brumwell, 2026; Cook, 2024).

The *hitpael* of *hālak* occurs only a small number of times in the Hebrew Bible, and its distribution is instructive. It appears in Genesis 5:24; 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15; and in a small number of other passages. In each of these texts, the verb is accompanied by a prepositional phrase indicating the person or persons with whom one walks: *’et* in Genesis 5:24 and 6:9, *lipnê* in Genesis 17:1, and *’et* or *lipnê* in the remaining cases. The recurrence of the same construction across the patriarchal narratives suggests that the *hitpael* of *hālak* functions as a technical idiom for covenantal fidelity rather than as a generic locomotion term. This distributional pattern is not accidental; it constitutes a collocational frame that constrains the semantic range of the verb in Genesis 5:24.

Collocational and Distributional Analysis

A collocational analysis of *hālak* in the Hebrew Bible reveals three broad semantic domains: physical locomotion (Genesis 12:5; Exodus 14:29), ethical-conduct usage (Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 1:15), and relational-covenantal usage (Genesis 5:24; 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15). The three domains are not mutually exclusive; they overlap in passages where physical movement metaphorically encodes ethical or covenantal conduct. The question for Genesis 5:24 is which domain governs the verse. The immediate collocation with *’et-hā’ēlōhîm* (“with God”) is decisive. In the Hebrew Bible, walking with a human or divine party is a relational idiom, not a description of travel. When the

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object of the preposition is God, the idiom denotes a life lived in conformity with divine will (Wenham, 1987; Westermann, 1984).

The distributional evidence also indicates that the hitpael of *hālak* is concentrated in the patriarchal and primeval narratives. It does not appear in the prophetic corpus or the wisdom literature with the same collocational profile. This concentration suggests that the hitpael of *hālak* is a distinctive feature of the Genesis narrative tradition, and that its meaning in Genesis 5:24 should be determined by its function within that tradition rather than by appeal to the qal stem's more general semantic range. The qal of *hālak*, by contrast, is widely distributed and frequently denotes simple motion. The semantic specialization of the hitpael is therefore a key finding of this analysis.

Comparative Semitic Evidence

Comparative Semitic data provide a useful control on the Hebrew evidence. The Akkadian verb *alāku* ("to go, to walk") is attested in a wide range of genres and, like its Hebrew counterpart, develops metaphorical extensions in relational and ethical contexts. In the Amarna letters, *alāku* is used in diplomatic formulas denoting loyalty and service to a suzerain. The Ugaritic *hlk* appears in the Baal Cycle and the Kirta Epic, where it denotes both physical movement and, in some contexts, the conduct of a servant before a king. The Aramaic *halak* is similarly broad. The comparative evidence does not yield a single Semitic idiom equivalent to the Hebrew hitpael of *hālak* with *'et*, but it does show that walking verbs across Semitic languages develop relational-covenantal extensions. This finding supports the interpretation of Genesis 5:24 as a relational-covenantal statement rather than a description of physical locomotion.

The comparative evidence also introduces a caution. The Akkadian and Ugaritic parallels are not exact, and the Hebrew hitpael construction has no precise cognate in the other Semitic languages. The comparative data therefore function as a plausibility check rather than as a decisive semantic argument. This limitation should be acknowledged in any lexical-theological analysis that relies on comparative Semitic evidence.

Reception-Historical Verification

The reception history of Genesis 5:24 provides a further layer of evidence. The Septuagint renders the verse with *ἐνῆρέστησεν δὲ Ἐνὼχ τῷ θεῷ* ("Enoch was well-pleasing to God"), replacing the walking idiom with a verb of divine approval. The Vulgate reads *ambulavitque cum Deo* ("and he walked with God"), preserving the Hebrew idiom. The Targumim expand the verse with interpretive additions that emphasize Enoch's piety and, in some traditions, his ascent to heaven. The Second Temple literature, particularly 1 Enoch and the Book of Jubilees, develops the figure of Enoch in directions that go beyond the Hebrew text. The New Testament, in Hebrews 11:5, interprets Genesis 5:24 through the lens of faith and divine approval.

The reception-historical evidence is not uniform. The Septuagint's rendering suggests that some ancient translators understood the Hebrew idiom as a statement about divine approval rather than about walking. The Vulgate preserves the walking metaphor. The Targumim and Second Temple

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literature develop the verse in ways that reflect later theological concerns. This diversity indicates that the semantic force of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 was not self-evident to ancient interpreters, and that the verse's meaning has been constructed through a history of interpretation rather than simply read off the text. The reception-historical evidence therefore supports the view that *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 is a relational-covenantal idiom, but it also shows that the idiom's meaning was contested and expanded in later tradition.

The ILTA Framework Applied

The four-stage ILTA framework yields a determinate semantic profile for *hālak* in Genesis 5:24. Stage one (morphological and stem analysis) establishes that the *hitpael* form encodes iterative-habitual aspect and that the *wayyiqtol* frames the verb as a summary of Enoch's life. Stage two (collocational and distributional analysis) establishes that the collocation with *'et-hā'ēlōhīm* and the concentration of the *hitpael* in the Genesis narrative tradition constrain the verb's meaning to the relational-covenantal domain. Stage three (comparative Semitic evidence) establishes that walking verbs across Semitic languages develop relational-covenantal extensions, providing a plausibility check on the Hebrew evidence. Stage four (reception-historical verification) establishes that ancient interpreters variously rendered the idiom as divine approval, walking, or ascent, indicating that the relational-covenantal sense was recognized but not uniformly expressed.

The framework's contribution is not merely the integration of these four types of evidence. It is the specification of the sequence in which they are analyzed and the criteria for moving between stages. The morphological analysis must precede the collocational analysis because the stem determines the verb's aspectual profile. The collocational analysis must precede the comparative analysis because the Hebrew evidence is primary and the comparative evidence is secondary. The reception-historical analysis must follow the linguistic analysis because it presupposes a semantic profile that it then tests against later interpretation. This sequence is what distinguishes the ILTA framework from earlier integrative approaches, which tend to treat the four types of evidence as parallel rather than sequential.

Theological Implications

The semantic profile of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 has implications for theological interpretation. If the verb denotes a relational-covenantal idiom rather than physical locomotion, then Enoch's "walking with God" is not a description of a mystical experience or a physical journey but a statement about the whole orientation of his life. The verse's theological weight falls on the prepositional phrase *'et-hā'ēlōhīm* and on the narrative contrast between Enoch and the other patriarchs. The other patriarchs "lived" and "died"; Enoch "walked with God" and "was not." The contrast is not between life and death as such but between a life oriented toward God and a life oriented toward the ordinary course of human existence.

This interpretation aligns with the canonical trajectory initiated by Genesis 5:24 and developed in Genesis 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; and 48:15. In each of these texts, the *hitpael* of *hālak* with a divine or

human party denotes a life of fidelity and obedience. Noah "walked with God" (Genesis 6:9); Abraham is commanded to "walk before me" (Genesis 17:1); Abraham's servant prays that God will prosper his journey (Genesis 24:40); Jacob blesses Joseph's sons by invoking "the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked" (Genesis 48:15). The canonical trajectory is consistent: the hitpa'el of *hālak* with a divine party is a covenantal idiom, and Genesis 5:24 initiates this trajectory.

The interpretation also has implications for translation practice. English translations that render *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 as "walked with God" preserve the Hebrew metaphor but may obscure its covenantal force. Translations that render it as "lived in fellowship with God" or "walked faithfully with God" make the covenantal sense explicit but lose the metaphor's concreteness. The ILTA framework does not resolve this translational tension, but it clarifies the semantic considerations that any translation must weigh. A translation that preserves the metaphor and allows the covenantal sense to emerge from the canonical context may be preferable to one that makes the covenantal sense explicit at the cost of the metaphor.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis is qualitative and does not include quantitative corpus statistics beyond the distributional observations reported above. A full corpus-linguistic analysis would require lemmatized data, collocation statistics, and measures of semantic similarity that are beyond the scope of this article. Second, the comparative Semitic evidence is limited to Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Aramaic; other Semitic languages, such as Phoenician and Moabite, are not represented in the extant corpus in sufficient quantity to contribute to the analysis. Third, the reception-historical evidence is interpretive and selective; the study does not attempt a comprehensive survey of the reception of Genesis 5:24 in patristic, medieval, and modern exegesis. Fourth, the ILTA framework is proposed as a replicable instrument, but its application to other lexical items has not been tested. Future research should apply the framework to other theological keywords in the Hebrew Bible, such as *'āhab* ("to love"), *yārē'* ("to fear"), and *šāmar* ("to keep"), to assess its generalizability.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 through the ILTA framework yields a determinate semantic profile: the verb functions as a relational-covenantal idiom denoting a life of sustained fidelity to God, not as a term for physical locomotion or mystical communion. The hitpa'el stem's iterative-habitual aspect, the collocation with *'et-hā'ēlōhīm*, the concentration of the hitpa'el in the Genesis narrative tradition, the comparative Semitic evidence, and the reception-historical data converge on this interpretation. The ILTA framework provides a replicable sequence of analytical operations for lexical-theological research, and its application to *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 clarifies the semantic boundary between *hālak* and its near-synonyms. The study's limitations include the absence of quantitative corpus statistics, the selective use of comparative Semitic evidence, and the interpretive

nature of the reception-historical analysis. These limitations notwithstanding, the study contributes a replicable exegetical instrument and a clarified semantic profile for one of the most theologically dense verses in the Hebrew Bible.

NOVELTY

The contribution of this study lies in the construction of a named, replicable analytical instrument rather than in the mere combination of existing methods. The proposed Integrative Lexical-Theological Analysis (ILTA) framework is a four-stage exegetical model designed specifically for theological keywords in the Hebrew Bible, and its application to *hālak* (הלך) in Genesis 5:24 demonstrates that the semantic force of the verb is not a matter of interpretive preference but of controlled, sequential evidence assessment. The framework proceeds from morphological and stem analysis, through collocational and distributional analysis, to comparative Semitic evidence, and finally to reception-historical verification. What distinguishes ILTA from prior integrative proposals is that it specifies the order of analytical operations and the criteria for advancing between stages, thereby converting what has often been an intuitive exegetical judgment into a transparent procedure that other researchers can replicate on different lexemes.

The first dimension of novelty is methodological. Existing scholarship on *hālak* tends to operate within a single analytical register. Lexicographical treatments catalogue glosses without resolving which sense governs a given occurrence, while theological readings frequently presuppose a covenantal meaning that is then read back into the text. The ILTA framework addresses this fragmentation by treating each stage as a constraint on the next. Morphological analysis establishes that the *hitpael* form in Genesis 5:24 encodes an iterative or habitual pattern rather than a single act, a point consistent with recent linguistic work on the Biblical Hebrew verb (Brumwell, 2026). Collocational analysis then narrows the semantic field by examining the prepositional phrase *’et-hā’ēlōhīm* and its distribution across the canon. Comparative Semitic evidence, including Akkadian *alāku* and Ugaritic *hlk*, provides external control, while reception-historical verification tests the resulting profile against the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Targumim, and Second Temple literature. The cumulative effect is a determinate semantic profile rather than a list of possible meanings.

The second dimension of novelty is substantive. The study argues that *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 functions as a relational-covenantal idiom whose semantic core is habitual fidelity rather than physical locomotion. This claim is not new in isolation, but the framework specifies the conditions under which the relational sense is activated and distinguishes it from the physical-locomotive and mystical-communion senses that have been proposed in the literature. The analysis further identifies a canonical trajectory initiated by Genesis 5:24 and developed in Genesis 6:9, 17:1, 24:40, and 48:15, where the *hitpael* stem with a divine object recurs. This trajectory is not merely a theological observation; it is a testable distributional pattern that can be verified against the corpus.

The third dimension of novelty is contextual. The study situates the semantic analysis within the broader question of how theological keywords function in narrative genealogies. Genesis 5 is

structured by a repetitive formula that culminates in an exception at verse 24. The ILTA framework treats this narrative placement as evidence, not decoration, and shows that the semantic force of *hālak* is partly constituted by its position within a patterned sequence. This contextual sensitivity responds to recent calls for greater attention to the relationship between lexical meaning and literary convention in Hebrew narrative (Keefer, 2025; McAfee, 2025).

The framework also contributes to translation practice. By specifying the criteria that distinguish relational-covenantal from physical-locomotive usage, ILTA provides translators with a principled basis for choosing among English equivalents such as “walked with,” “walked before,” and “lived in fellowship with.” The framework does not prescribe a single rendering, but it makes the semantic reasoning behind a rendering explicit and open to scrutiny.

Two limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study does not employ quantitative corpus statistics beyond distributional counts within the Hebrew Bible, and no inferential testing is performed; the analysis is qualitative and exegetical. Second, reception-historical evidence is interpretive by nature, and the selection of reception witnesses, while principled, is not exhaustive. These limitations do not undermine the framework’s utility, but they define the boundaries within which its claims should be assessed. The novelty of ILTA therefore lies not in the discovery of a previously unknown meaning but in the construction of a transparent, replicable instrument that integrates morphological, collocational, comparative, and reception-historical evidence into a single analytical sequence, and in the demonstration that this sequence yields a determinate semantic profile for *hālak* in Genesis 5:24.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study carries several limitations that must be acknowledged to situate its contribution accurately and to guide subsequent inquiry. The first limitation is methodological and concerns the scope of the corpus evidence. The analysis of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 draws on the Masoretic Text and selected comparative Semitic data, but it does not incorporate a fully quantified distributional study of the root across the entire Hebrew Bible. No frequency tables, collocational statistics, or measures of lexical dispersion were computed, and therefore no claim of statistical generalizability is made. The semantic profile proposed here rests on qualitative exegetical judgment rather than on inferential testing. This limitation is significant because recent work in Hebrew linguistics has demonstrated the analytical value of quantitative approaches to word order, verbal forms, and lexical semantics (Condrea, 2023; Notarius, 2023; Kimchi et al., 2025), and the absence of such data in the present study constrains the precision of the ILTA framework's second stage.

The second limitation concerns the reception-historical component. The study engages the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Targumim, and selected Second Temple literature, but it does not conduct a systematic survey of patristic, medieval, or modern interpretive traditions. Reception-historical evidence is inherently selective and interpretive; the decision to include certain witnesses and exclude others introduces a degree of researcher discretion that cannot be fully eliminated.

Consequently, the fourth stage of the ILTA framework functions as verification rather than proof, and its conclusions remain provisional.

The third limitation is comparative. The study references Akkadian *alāku*, Ugaritic *hlk*, and Aramaic *halak*, but it does not undertake a full comparative Semitic analysis with primary text citations from these corpora. Comparative data are mediated through secondary lexicographical sources, which means that the semantic mapping between Hebrew *hālak* and its cognates is suggestive rather than demonstrative. This limitation matters because comparative evidence has been shown to illuminate Hebrew verbal semantics in ways that inner-biblical analysis alone cannot (Notarius, 2023; Targoński, 2026).

The fourth limitation is contextual. The study does not incorporate archaeological, iconographic, or epigraphic evidence that might clarify ancient Near Eastern conceptions of divine-human walking. Nor does it engage anthropological or sociological frameworks that could situate the covenantal idiom within ancient Israelite social practice. The analysis remains text-centered, and its conclusions are correspondingly bounded.

A fifth limitation concerns the absence of original interview data or expert elicitation. No qualitative fieldwork was conducted, and no respondent quotations are available. The study therefore cannot claim triangulation across data types. This is a deliberate design choice consistent with the exegetical research mode, but it does mean that the ILTA framework has not been tested for inter-analyst reliability or replicability by independent coders.

Future research should proceed along four trajectories. First, a corpus-linguistic study should quantify the distribution of *hālak* across the Hebrew Bible, computing collocational profiles for each stem and prepositional combination. Such a study would test the semantic claims advanced here against distributional evidence. Second, a comparative Semitic project should examine *hālak* alongside its cognates using primary texts from Akkadian, Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Aramaic corpora, with attention to the *hitpael* or reflexive stems where attested. Third, a reception-historical study should trace the interpretation of Genesis 5:24 from the Septuagint through patristic, rabbinic, and Reformation exegesis to modern critical scholarship, thereby testing the canonical trajectory proposed in this article. Fourth, the ILTA framework should be applied to other theological keywords—such as *yādaʿ*, *šāmar*, and *dābaq*—to assess its transferability and to refine its criteria for moving between analytical stages. Each of these trajectories would address a limitation identified here and would strengthen the evidentiary basis for lexical-theological analysis in biblical Hebrew.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to determine the semantic force of *hālak* (הלך) in Genesis 5:24 and to propose a replicable instrument for lexical-theological analysis. The analysis supports four conclusions. First, the *hitpael* form *wayyithallēk* does not denote simple physical locomotion. Its morphological

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profile, together with the preposition 'et and the divine object, activates a relational-covenantal frame in which walking functions as a sustained pattern of conduct rather than a single act. Second, the collocational distribution of *hālak* with divine subjects and objects across the Hebrew Bible confirms that the verb belongs to a network of relational idioms, not to a purely spatial lexicon. Third, comparative Semitic evidence, particularly Akkadian *alāku* and Ugaritic *hlk*, indicates that the root's basic sense of movement was regularly extended to denote loyalty, service, and adherence to a patron or deity. This comparative pattern strengthens the case that Genesis 5:24 draws on a shared Semitic idiom of covenantal fidelity. Fourth, the reception of Genesis 5:24 in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Targumim, and Second Temple literature shows a consistent interpretive trajectory toward relational and ethical readings, even where translational equivalents vary.

The study's principal contribution is the Integrative Lexical-Theological Analysis (ILTA) framework. Unlike earlier approaches that treat morphology, collocation, comparative data, and reception history as separate lines of inquiry, ILTA specifies the sequence in which these operations are performed and the criteria for moving between stages. The framework is transferable to other theological keywords in the Hebrew Bible, including those whose semantic range has been obscured by confessional or translational convention. Applied here, ILTA yields a determinate semantic profile for *hālak* in Genesis 5:24: relational-covenantal usage is primary, physical-locomotive usage is backgrounded, and mystical-communion usage is a later reception-historical development rather than a lexical property of the verse itself.

These findings carry implications for three domains. For biblical lexicography, the study argues that lexical entries for verbs such as *hālak* should distinguish stem-specific semantic profiles rather than listing glosses indiscriminately. The hitpa'el of *hālak*, in particular, warrants a separate treatment that foregrounds its relational and iterative force. For theological interpretation, the analysis cautions against reading Genesis 5:24 as a proof text for mystical union or for a doctrine of translation divorced from ethical conduct. The verse presents Enoch's life as a continuous walk, and the narrative's silence about his death is the consequence of that walk, not its replacement. For translation practice, the study recommends that renderings of *hālak* in Genesis 5:24 preserve the durative and relational dimensions of the hitpa'el. English equivalents such as "walked with" remain defensible, but they should be accompanied by paratextual notes explaining the stem's iterative and reciprocal force.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The study did not generate quantitative corpus statistics beyond the Hebrew Bible, and no inferential tests were performed; the analysis is qualitative and exegetical throughout. Reception-historical evidence is interpretive by nature, and the selection of Second Temple and patristic sources, while representative, is not exhaustive. Comparative Semitic data were drawn from published lexica and secondary literature rather than from primary epigraphic collation. These limitations do not undermine the central finding, but they indicate the boundaries within which it should be received.

Future research should proceed in three directions. First, the ILTA framework should be tested on other hitpa'el verbs with divine objects, such as hithallēk in Genesis 6:9 and 17:1, to determine whether the relational-covenantal profile identified here is stem-specific or construction-specific. Second, digital corpus tools should be used to generate frequency and collocation statistics for hālāk across the Hebrew Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Targumim, allowing the framework's collocational stage to be operationalized quantitatively. Third, the reception of Genesis 5:24 in Ethiopian, Syriac, and Coptic traditions deserves separate treatment, since these traditions preserve readings that may complicate the Greek and Latin trajectory examined here. Such work would extend the framework's reach while testing its explanatory limits.

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