Secondary Predicates in Biblical Hebrew

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Abstract

In this presentation I take some first steps toward a full description of secondary predicates in Biblical Hebrew. Secondary predicates are phrases occurring under the scope of a main verb that share an argument with the verb and predicate something about that argument, either the subject or the object. I identify three kinds of secondary predicate in Biblical Hebrew: depictives, resultatives, and what I provisionally call 'purposives.' Depictives and resultatives may be from any non-finite word class, whereas purposives appear to be strictly nominal. Each type of secondary predicate should receive a distinct semantic representation. However, all three types share the same subject- and object-oriented syntactic structures. For syntactic structure I follow the unified approach to predication of Bowers (1993, 2001) to the effect that every kind of predication involves a Predication Phrase (PrP) structure. The head Pr may be phonologically null or it may be overt. In Biblical Hebrew the proclitic particles *bēth* and *lamed* may optionally realize Pr. *Bēth* is used to mark nominal predicates in copular clauses and in depictive and resultative secondary predicates. *Lamed* may mark resultative and purposive secondary predicates.

Contents

1   Introduction

This presentation represents some first steps toward a full description of secondary predicates in Biblical Hebrew. I will begin by summarizing the state of affairs as regards the traditional understanding in Biblical Hebrew studies of what linguists call secondary predicates. Then I will present some data, from which I will argue that Biblical Hebrew displays at least three distinct types of secondary predicates, namely depictives, resultatives, and what I am provisionally calling 'purposives.' Each of these three types should receive a distinct semantic representation, although they share the same syntactic structures. The two syntactic structures available for secondary predicates are not distinguished by semantic type, but rather by their basic orientation, whether subject- or object-oriented.

Finally, I will argue that Biblical Hebrew provides support for the unified approach to predication proposed by Bowers (1993, 2001). In particular, the proclitic particles *bēth* and *lamed*, which usually serve as the prepositions 'in' and 'to' respectively, are shown to optionally realize the head Pr of a Predication Phrase in certain circumstances. *Bēth* appears to realize Pr in both depictives and resultatives, as well as copular clauses. *Lamed* serves the same function in purposives and resultatives. Cross-linguistic support for this analysis can be found in Arabic, Egyptian, and Scottish Gaelic.

2   Traditional Understanding of Secondary Predicates in BH

Rothstein (2011, 1442) defines secondary predicates as follows:

> Secondary predicates are one place non-verbal predicate expressions which occur under the scope of a main verb. Crucially, they share an argument with the main verb, the subject of the secondary predicate being either the subject or the direct object of the matrix verb.

I am unaware of any work dedicated specifically to secondary predicates in Biblical Hebrew. Nevertheless, the basic concept has not gone completely unnoticed. Perhaps the earliest mention available in English is also the most impressive. The classic dictionary Brown-Driver-Briggs, dating to 1906, has a single mention of the phrase 'secondary predicate.'[1] This mention is located under the entry for the particle *bēth*, where they explain that *bēth* may be used to introduce a primary predicate – that is, in a copular clause – or a secondary predicate. Among their examples are (1) and (2) for primary and secondary predicates respectively, examples which

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1. BDB 1906, 89.

are classic in the treatment of the so-called *bēth essentiae*,[2] which I believe is better called *bēth of predication*.[3] Notice that in both cases the *bēth of predication* marks a noun phrase predicate, something that seems to characterize its general usage.

(1) *Bēth* Marking Copular Predicate:

וְשֵׁם הָאֶחָד אֱלִיעֶזֶר כִּי־אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי בְּעֶזְרִי

wə-šēm	hā-ʾeḥād	ʾĕlîˁezer	kî	ʾĕlōhê	ʾāb-î	bə-ˁezr-î
and-name	the-one	Eliezer	because	God	father-my	PRED-help-my

'And the name of the (other) one (was) Eliezer, because "The God of my father (was) my help."' (Exod 18:4)

(2) *Bēth* Marking Depictive SP:

וָאֵרָא אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שַׁדָּי

wā-ʾērāʾ	ʾel=ʾabrāham	ʾel=yiṣḥaq	wə-ʾel=yaʾăqōb
and-1SG.PST.appear	to=Abraham	to=Isaac	and-to=Jacob

bə-ʾel šaddai
PRED-El Shaddai
'I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El Shaddai.' (Exod 6:3)

In making these identifications, Brown-Driver-Briggs demonstrates strong intuitions, but they do little to define secondary predication. A more useful definition – though under a different name – is available from Joüon (1947) from at least the 1947 second edition of his Biblical Hebrew grammar. In his description of the accusative in Biblical Hebrew, Joüon introduces what he calls a 'predicate accusative of state,'[4] which he describes as the addition of a complementary phrase to a verbal proposition which expresses a state or quality of the subject or object. This definition is essentially the same as that given by contemporary linguists for depictive secondary predicates,[5] and indeed I find that most of Joüon's listed examples can be classified as depictives.

By 'depictive,' I mean a phrase which specifies the state of the subject or object of the main verb while that main event is ongoing. This is in contrast to 'resultatives,' which also specify the state of a shared argument, but one which holds as a result of the main event.

Finally, I am also aware of the more recent ETCBC database where some secondary predicates are tagged with the term 'predicative adjunct.'[6] However, they

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2. See for example Joüon 1923; Jenni 1997.

3. See Boulet 2018.

4. Or, *accusatif prédicatif d'état; see* Joüon 1947, §126a.

5. Cf. Rothstein 2011.

6. My access to this database has been through the ETCBC syntax module for OakTree software's Accordance program. ETCBC stands for the Eep Talstra Center for Bible and Computer, previously known as the Werkgroep Informatica Vrije Universiteit (WIVU).

provide no definition for this term, nor are they systematic in their tagging. I am aware of many examples similar to their own that they have not tagged. Neither do they distinguish between different types of secondary predicates. Depictives, resultatives, and purposives all receive the same label.

3   Some BH Data

Let me now present some data. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Biblical Hebrew attests depictives and resultatives, as do many languages. Joüon (1947, §126a) noted decades ago that BH depictives may be substantives, adjectives, or participles, as in example (3):

(3)   Depictives:

    a. Substantive:

<div dir="rtl">

וַאֲרָם֙ יָצְא֣וּ גְדוּדִ֔ים
</div>

wa-ʾărām yāṣəʾ-û   <u>gədûd-îm</u>
and-Aram go.out.PFV-3PL <u>raider-MPL</u>
'And Aram went out (as) raiders.' (2 Kgs 5:2)

    b. Adjective:

<div dir="rtl">

אֲנִי֙ מְלֵאָ֣ה הָלַ֔כְתִּי וְרֵיקָ֖ם הֱשִׁיבַ֣נִי יְהוָ֑ה
</div>

ʾănî <u>məlēʾ-â</u>   hālak-tî   wə-<u>rêqām</u>   hĕšîba-nî
I   <u>full.ADJ-FSG</u> go.PFV-1SG and-<u>empty.ADV</u> CAUS.return.PFV.3MSG-1SG
yhwh
YHWH
'I went (out) full, but the LORD brought me back empty.'[7] (Ruth 1:21)

    c. Participle:

<div dir="rtl">

וַיִּשְׁמַ֨ע מֹשֶׁ֜ה אֶת־הָעָ֗ם בֹּכֶה֙ לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָ֔יו אִ֖ישׁ לְפֶ֣תַח אָהֳל֑וֹ
</div>

way-y-išmaᶜ   mōšê ʾet=hā-ᶜām   <u>bōkê</u>   lə-mišpəhōtāy-w
and-3M.PST-hear.SG Moses DOM=the-people.MSG <u>weep.PTCP.MSG</u> by-clans-3MSG
ʾîš lə-petaḥ   ʾohŏl-ô
man at-entrance tent-3MSG
'And Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, (each) man at the entrance of his tent.' (Num 11:10)

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7. Traditionally *rêqām* is labelled 'adverb' due to the *-ām* ending, but the dictionaries list the adjectival meaning 'empty.'

Comparing (2) and (3a), as well as other examples, I suggest that proclitic *bēth* is optionally used to mark substantive depictives. Adding number (1), which marks the predicate of a null copula, and number (4), which could be interpreted as a resultative, I propose further that *bēth* may be optionally employed as a nominal predicate marker in general.

(4) *Bēth* Marking Resultative SP:

<div dir="rtl">

נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ

</div>

na°ăsê   ᵓādām bə-ṣalmē-nû   ki-dmûtē-nû
1PL.IPFV.make human PRED-image-our as-likeness-our
'Let us make humanity our image after our (own) likeness.' (Gen 1:26)

From my own data I can show that resultatives may also be from any of the three categories listed by Joüon, as in, for example, Gen 6:4, Exod 37:29, and Exod 39:9 respectively. We may therefore extend from depictives to resultatives the claim by Schultze-Berndt and Himmelmann (2004, 124) that depictives may be from any word class that can serve as non-finite predicates.

(5) Resultatives:

   1. Substantive: Gen 6:4

   2. Adjective: Exod 37:29

   3. (Passive) Participle: Exod 39:29

I have one example, number (6), that may perhaps be a prepositional phrase resultative, and your input on this case would be welcome:

(6) Resultative PP (?):

<div dir="rtl">

וַיִּצְבֹּר יוֹסֵף בָּר כְּחוֹל הַיָּם הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד

</div>

way-yiṣbōr   yôsēp bār kə-ḥôl hay-yām harbê məᵓōd
and-3MSG.PST.heap.up Joseph grain as-sand the-sea abundant much
'And Joseph heaped up grain like the sand of the sea, very abundant.' (Gen 41:49)

That is, it would be a resultative according to the interpretation that the result of Joseph's act of heaping was that the grain was like the sand of the sea for abundance.

In addition to the cases already presented, there is a relatively large collection of secondary predicates that seem to me to fit uncomfortably under the categories depictive or resultative. I am tentatively calling these 'purposives,' due to the fact that they seem to share a sense of intent or purpose. That is, the event described by

the main verb seems to be done specifically to produce a particular state in either the subject or the object. Purposives share some interesting features. First, they are exclusively nominal. Second, they may be optionally marked by the proclitic particle *lamed*. For instance, consider the pair in example (7):

(7) a. Unmarked:

וְיַ֫יִן לַנֶּ֫סֶךְ שְׁלִשִׁ֥ית הַהִ֖ין תַּקְרִ֑יב רֵֽיחַ־נִיחֹ֖חַ לַיהוָֽה

wə-yayin l-an-nesek   šəlīšît ha-hin t-aqrîb
and-wine for-the-drink.offering third the-hin 2.IPFV-offer.MSG
rêaḥ=nîḥōaḥ   l-yhwh
aroma=appeasement for-YHWH
'And (regarding) wine for the drink offering, you will offer the third part of a hin (as) a pleasing aroma for the LORD.' (Num 15:7)

  b. Marked with *lamed*:

וְהִקְטִ֤יר הַחֵ֫לֶב֙ לְרֵ֣יחַ נִיחֹ֔חַ לַיהוָֽה

wə-hiqṭîr   ha-ḥēleb lə-rêaḥ nîḥōaḥ
and.IRR-offer.by.burning.3MSG the-fat   as-aroma appeasement
l-yhwh
for-YHWH
'And he will offer the fat as a pleasing aroma for the LORD.' (Lev 17:6)

Purposives are often object-oriented and might be taken by some to be resultatives. However, consider example (8):

(8) Subject-Oriented Purposive:

וְהָיָה֙ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֔וּא שֹׁ֣רֶשׁ יִשַׁ֗י אֲשֶׁ֤ר עֹמֵד֙ לְנֵ֣ס עַמִּ֔ים אֵלָ֥יו גּוֹיִ֖ם יִדְרֹ֑שׁוּ

wə-hāyâ   b-ay-yôm ha-hûʾ šōreš yišāy ʾăšer ʿōmēd
and-3MSG.IRR.be in-the-day the-that root Jesse who stand.PTCP
lə-nēs ʿammîm ʾēl-āyw gôyîm yidrōšû
for-sign nations to-him peoples 3PL.IPFV.seek
'And on that day the root of Jesse, who stands as a sign (for) nations – him the peoples will seek.' (Isa 11:10)

Here *lənēs ʿammim* is a subject-oriented secondary predicate that is unlikely to be a resultative. One may argue that it is a depictive, and that *lamed*, like *beth*, is a general predicate marker. If so, then it may be that in Biblical Hebrew the choice of particle is conditioned by the main verb, just as Gardiner (1957, §84) suggests for the particles *m* and *r* in Egyptian. At the moment, however, I believe that examples (7)

and (8) have more in common with each other than either one has with resultatives or depictives. It is for that reason that I suggest the category 'purposive.'

Note, however, that *lamed* seems also to be used to mark some resultatives. In (9), Laban's meager estate, which is the referent of the null subject pronoun in the second clause, becomes an abundance as a result of Jacob's involvement.

(9)   *Lamed* Marking Resultative SP:

<div dir="rtl">

כִּֽי מְעַט֩ אֲשֶׁר־הָיָ֨ה לְךָ֤ לְפָנַי֙ וַיִּפְרֹ֣ץ לָרֹ֔ב

</div>

kî	məꜥaṭ	ꜣăšer=hāyâ	lə-ka	ləpān-ay	way-yiprōṣ	lā-<u>rōb</u>
for	little	which=was	to-you	before-me	and-3MSG.PST.burst	to-<u>abundance</u>

'For what was yours (was but) little before me, but (then) it burst into abundance.' (Gen 30:30)

A final observation about secondary predicates is that they are, as a rule, never determined by the article *ha-*, although they may be determined by a pronoun suffix or by a proper noun. If anyone knows why that is, please let me know.

4   The Semantics of BH Secondary Predicates

If there are indeed three kinds of secondary predicate, then each type should be distinguishable in the semantic representation. The following is by no means a finished analysis, but it serves to communicate my general direction. Given a situation involving the eventualities e_1 and e_2, where e_1 is the event specified by the main verb and e_2 is the state specified by the secondary predicate, consider the general case in (10a), ignoring thematic relations. What (10a) communicates is that 'there exists two events e_1 and e_2 such that e_1 is the main event and e_2 is a secondary predicate and there exists some relationship between e_1 and e_2.'

(10)   a. $\exists e_1 \exists e_2[\text{main-event}(e_1) \ \& \ \text{secondary-predicate}(e_2) \ \& \ \text{Relationship}(e_x, e_y)...]$

   b.   Definitions of Relationship(e_x, e_y):

        1.   Depictive: Comtemporaneous(e_2, e_1)
           = 'state e_2 holds contemporaneously with event e_1'

        2.   Resultative: Cause(e_1, e_2)
           = 'event e_1 is the cause of state e_2'

        3.   Purposive: Underlying-Purpose(e_2, e_1)
           = 'state e_2 is the underlying purpose motivating event e_1'

Each kind of secondary predicate has its own distinct relationship to the main event. Depictives are states which hold contemporaneously with the main event. Resultatives are states which hold as a result of the main event. One can also state that with a resultative the main event is the cause of the resulting state. Purposives may be understood as the semantic opposite of resultatives. With a purposive, the main event occurs in order to realize a state. One can state that a purposive is the underlying purpose motivating the main event.

5   The Syntax of BH Secondary Predicates

The data presented here lends support to the unified approach to predication proposed by Bowers (1993, 2001). Bowers argues that every predication, whether copular, verbal, or secondary, involves a functional Predication Phrase structure like the one in (11).

(11)   Predication Phrase: Basic Structure

                PrP
         XP   Pr
    Subject   Pr   XP
               Predicate
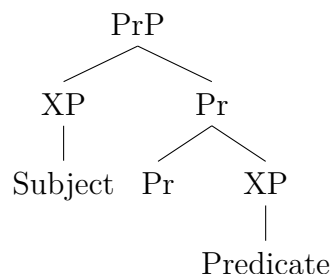
The head of the Predication Phrase, Pr, may be phonologically null or it may be overt. I have already shown that in Biblical Hebrew the particles *bēth* and *lamed* may be optionally employed to mark a nominal predicate. As such, both *bēth* and *lamed* can be interpreted as the explicit realization of the functional head Pr.

I believe this analysis can be supported by cross-linguistic data. According to Gardiner (1957), the Egyptian prepositions *m*, meaning 'in,' and *r*, meaning 'to,' are both used to mark predicates. It is remarkable that Egyptian employs prepositions for this purpose that are exact analogues of Biblical Hebrew *bēth* and *lamed*. Several scholars have already noted that the Arabic proclitic *bi*, a cognate of *bēth*, is used the same way.[8] Even outside the Afro-Asiatic family the preposition meaning 'in' is known to have been grammaticalized as a predicate marker in certain environments, in particular the Scottish Gaelic preposition *ann*[9] and the Irish preposition *ina*.[10]

When translating the *bēth* or *lamed* of predication into English, the particles may not contribute any specific semantics to the clause, being merely syntactic markers.


8. E.g. Manross 1954; Gordon 1981.
9. Adger and Ramchand 2003, 332.
10. Chung and McCloskey 1987, 179, n. 4.

It is not surprising that they are frequently, if not always, best glossed using one of the standard strategies available to English for encoding secondary predicates. These include the unmarked option, as well as the marked options *as*, *for*, and *to be*.[11]

Although I am proposing three distinct semantic types of secondary predicate, all three types share the same syntactic structures proposed by Bowers. Subject-oriented predicates, like the PrP_2 in example (12), adjoin within the main predication PrP_1, where it has access to the subject. Bowers suggests that the subject position of PrP_2 is controlled by PRO.

(12)   Subject-Oriented SP:
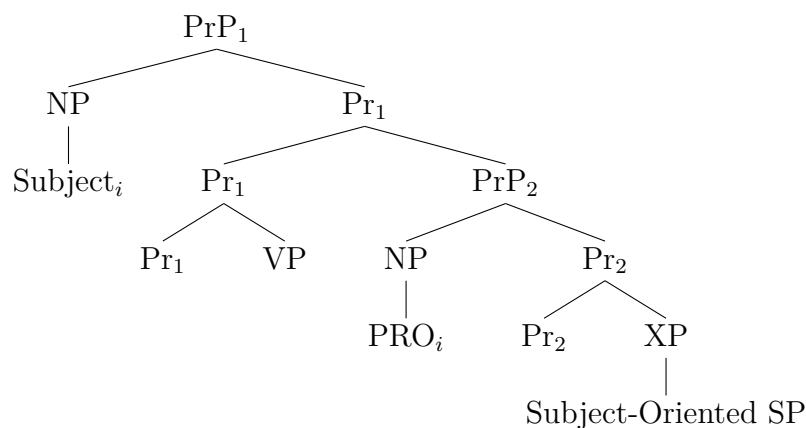
Object-oriented secondary predicates are merged as the complement of V, as in example (13).

(13)   Object-Oriented SP:

_____
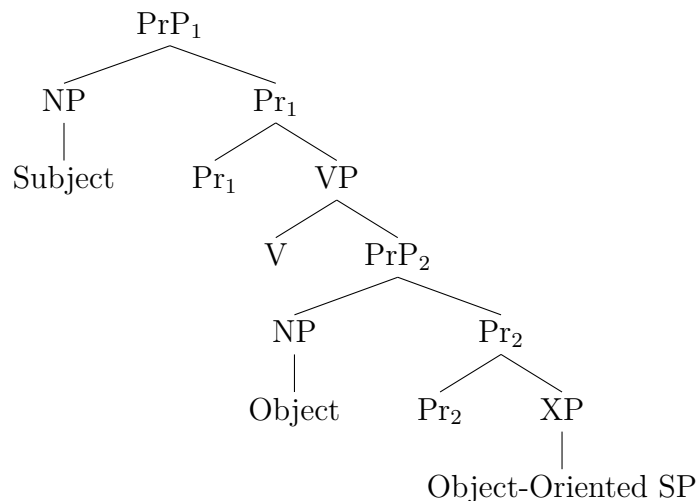
11. D'hoedt and Cuyckens 2017, 16-17.

I believe some trivalent verbs, such as *śîm*, roughly 'to set,' may select a Predication Phrase as complement. But other, typically bivalent verbs like *ʿāśâ*, meaning 'to do,' or 'make,' can also occur with this same structure. This can be explained if, as argued by Åfarli (2007), languages can have distinct syntactic frames which allow productivity of the structure with new verbs, so long as those verbs are semantically compatible with the structure. That is, I suggest that Biblical Hebrew has a frame for at least the object-oriented secondary predicates that allows typically bivalent verbs to occur as though they were trivalent.

A final note concerning the Predication Phrase structure. One strength of this structure is that it allows straightforward mapping from syntax to semantics. Each Pr head in the tree is taken to introduce an event variable in the semantic representation.[12] Thus, the event variables e_1 and e_2 from example (10a) are introduced by PrP_1 and PrP_2 in (12) or (13) respectively. Each event variable can be modified by adjoining modifiers within the corresponding Predication Phrase.

6   Conclusion

In conclusion, let me summarize the main points of this study. Regarding secondary predicates in Biblical Hebrew I have found the following:

1. First, there are three types of secondary predicate, namely depictives, resultatives, and purposives.

2. Second, depictives and resultatives are attested from various non-finite word classes, including nouns, adjectives, participles, and, perhaps, prepositional phrases. Purposives, however, are strictly nominal.

3. Third, in general secondary predicates are never determined by the article, but may be determined by a pronoun suffix or by a proper noun.

4. Fourth, secondary predicates may be optionally marked by the proclitic particles *bēth* or *lamed*; *bēth* for depictives and resultatives and *lamed* for purposives and resultatives.

I have followed Bowers (1993, 2001) in employing a unified approach to predication. Within this approach the optional particles *bēth* and *lamed* can be analysed as overt realizations of the functional head Pr. A further advantage of this approach is that it allows straightforward mapping from syntax to semantics in that each Pr head is taken to introduce an event variable.

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12. Cf. Cuervo 2003.

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