Argument Sharing Secondary Predicates in Biblical Hebrew

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Abstract

In this presentation I assume ongoing work which argues that the traditional Biblical Hebrew accusative must be broken down into three categories: arguments, modifiers, and secondary predicates. On the basis of my data from the Pentateuch, I challenge common assumptions about secondary predicates, defining a secondary predicate as any non-finite predicate that occurs under the scope of a primary predication of any kind, whether by adjunction or as a complement. Here I focus on the subset of adjoined secondary predicates in which the secondary predicate shares its subject argument with an argument of the primary predication, either the subject or the object. I describe five kinds of argument sharing secondary predicate in Biblical Hebrew: depictives, circumstantials, transitive resultatives, explicit creation productives, and capacitives. For each of these types I use an informal semantic representation to distinguish its particular semantics. Then, using Hebrew examples, I demonstrate that four of the five types may be optionally marked by one of the particles בְּ or לְ, with the particle contributing little or nothing to the meaning. I suggest that this optionality of the particles supports the generalized theory of predication advanced by Bowers (1993, 2001), where every predication is assumed to have a Predication (Pr) head, and where this head may be overt or phonologically null. In this Predication Phrase (PrP) structure, בְּ and לְ are assumed to be realizations of the Pr head when they mark a predicate. Finally, I point out that since some argument sharing secondary predicates are subject-oriented and some are object-oriented, only the object-oriented ones are actually accusatives.

Contents

1   Introduction

This presentation on secondary predicates in Biblical Hebrew represents a portion of a broader project to reappraise the Hebrew accusative using modern linguistic theory. Whereas the standard grammars tend to subdivide the accusative into two categories – for example, into objects and adverbials, or else into complements and adjuncts – I have argued elsewhere that we need at least three categories: Arguments, Modifiers, and Secondary Predicates (Boulet 2018a).

Most linguistic work on secondary predicates is at least loosely compatible with Rothstein's (2011, 1442) definition, which states that:

> 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.

Typical English examples would be (1) and (2), which contain a depictive and resultative secondary predicate respectively, and where the subscript i marks co-indexation:

(1)   Depictive: *Esau ate the stew$_i$ hot$_i$.*

(2)   Resultative: *Moses painted the lintel$_i$ red$_i$.*

Why the adjectives *hot* and *red* are considered secondary predicates is made clear if we decompose the clauses into two parts. Clause (1) can be broken down into (3):

(3)   *Esau ate the stew$_i$ hot$_i$.*
      = Esau ate the stew.
           AND (While Esau ate it) The stew (was) hot.

Similarly, clause (2) can be broken down into (4):

(4)   *Moses painted the lintel$_i$ red$_i$.*
      = Moses painted the lintel.
           AND (After Moses painted it) The lintel (was) red.

At the most basic level, then, secondary predication is a case in which two predications are combined to form a single complex clause. In some cases, like those above, the equivalent statement could instead be made using two separate clauses, though this alternative is generally less efficient.

But so much for English. The Biblical Hebrew data that I have collected from the Pentateuch challenges three statements in Rothstein's definition (see Boulet, n.d.):

1. First, that secondary predicates are "non-verbal" predicates, since Biblical Hebrew participles can function as secondary predicates;

2. Second, that secondary predicates must "occur under the scope of a main verb" since in Biblical Hebrew the primary predicate can be a copular predication, even a null copula;

3. And third, that secondary predicates must "share an argument" with the main predicate, since there are both complement and adjoined varieties of secondary predication that share no argument.

I therefore define secondary predication according to the definition in (5):

(5)   A secondary predicate is any non-finite predicate that occurs under the scope of another, primary predicate, whether by adjunction or as a complement.

Today I am focusing on argument sharing secondary predicates. Reference to Figure 1 will show how argument sharing secondary predicates fit into my system. At the first juncture, secondary predicates may be adjuncts or complements. The adjoined secondary predicates may be divided into those that share an argument with the primary predication and those that do not. As I will show, argument sharing corresponds to specific syntactic and semantic situations. In particular, the semantic decomposition that I used in examples (3) and (4) can serve as a test for argument sharing secondary predicates.

Figure 1: Argument Sharing Secondary Predicates
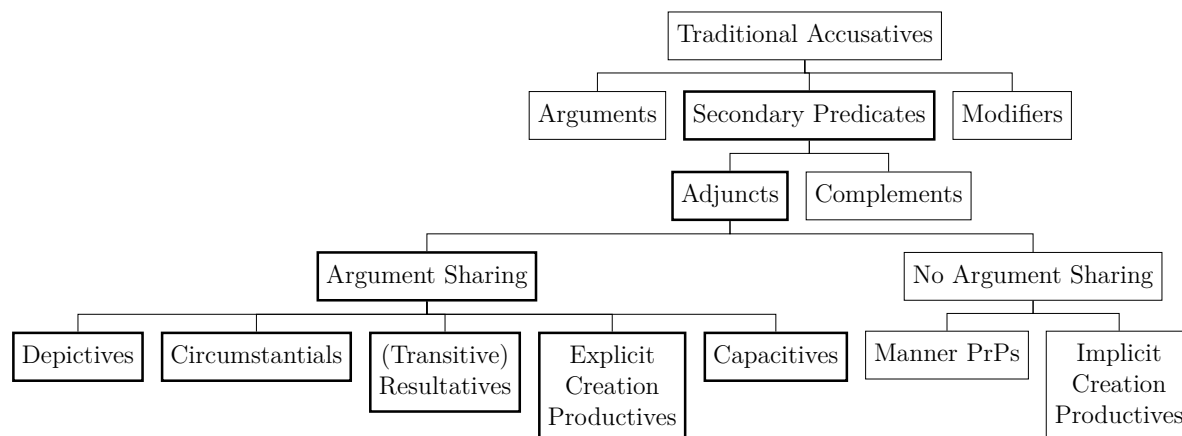
I maintain that it is well worth it for biblical studies to recognize secondary predicates as a distinct category. With regard to theoretical matters, I will show that some of the noun phrases previously taken to be accusatives are actually nominatives, rather like the 'predicate nominative' of Waltke and O'Connor (1990, §8.3), only incorporated into a complex predication. In terms of interpretation, the categories that I will present here will allow translators and commentators to better understand

the role of certain phrases in complex predications. This better understanding will enable scholars to 1) more confidently analyze the boundaries between clauses, and 2) recognize the equivalence of marked and unmarked variants of certain types of secondary predicates.[1]

2 Argument Sharing Secondary Predicates

Although some scholars prefer to see all secondary predicates as subtypes of main categories like depictives and resultatives (e.g. Rothstein 2011), I argue that distinctions in either syntax or semantics need to be recognized (Boulet, n.d.). Even subtle distinctions in the semantic representation of two secondary predicates can lead to superior biblical interpretation. In this paper I present five distinct types of argument sharing secondary predicates: depictives, circumstantials, resultatives, explicit creation productives, and capacitives. Argument sharing secondary predicates share a common syntax, which distinguishes them from non-sharing adjunct and complement secondary predicates. However, the five types can be distinguished semantically using formal or informal means of representation. Here, I use an informal system of English translation and semantic tags.[2]

2.1 Depictives

Depictives specify the state of one of the primary predication's arguments, either the subject or the object, at the time that the primary event unfolds. Thus, recalling example (1), we may say that in the sentence *Esau ate the stew$_i$ hot$_i$*, the adjective *hot* specifies that the stew was hot at the time of the eating event. The stew may have been hot or cold at some time before the eating, or even after the eating. But at the time of eating, the stew was hot.

   Accordingly, the semantics of example (1) can be represented according to (6), which features two kinds of semantic tag. The first tag, '(while)' in brackets, makes explicit the relationship between the primary and secondary predications, namely that the two 'events' represented by those predications occur concurrently.[3] The second tag, 'BE' in small caps, states that the secondary predication is a static predication (or state) that involves no change.

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   1. Some Biblical Hebrew secondary predicates may be optionally marked by the particles בְּ and לְ; see more on this below.

   2. In Boulet (n.d.) I use both the informal system and a formal variation of Neo-Davidsonian representation.

   3. Some linguists prefer the term 'eventuality.' In either case, I use the terms broadly to include actions, changes, and states.

(6)   *Esau ate the stew$_i$ hot$_i$.*
      = Esau ate the stew (while) the stew BE hot.

In English, depictives tend to be realized by adjectives. Biblical Hebrew, on the other hand, allows noun phrases and participles in addition to adjectives.[4] The following underlined examples are object-oriented depictives from the adjective (7), noun (8), and participle (9) categories respectively.

(7)   וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת־דִּבָּתָם רָעָה אֶל־אֲבִיהֶם

      Lit: 'And Joseph brought their report <u>bad</u> to their father.' (Gen 37:2)

(8)   וְלָבַשׁ הַכֹּהֵן מִדּוֹ בַד

      'And the priest shall put on his garment (being) <u>linen</u>.' (Lev 6:3)

(9)   וַיַּשִּׂיגוּ אוֹתָם חֹנִים עַל־הַיָּם כָּל־סוּס רֶכֶב פַּרְעֹה וּפָרָשָׁיו וְחֵילוֹ עַל־פִּי הַחִירֹת לִפְנֵי בַּעַל צְפֹן

      'And all of Pharaoh's chariotry and his horsemen and his army overtook them <u>camping by the sea</u> near Pi Hahiroth, in front of Baal Tsaphon.' (Exod 14:9)

Biblical Hebrew depictives may be unmarked, as in the above examples, or they may be marked by the particle בְּ. This is the use of בְּ traditionally called the *bēth essentiae*, but which I have called the *bēth of predication* (Boulet 2018b). Two examples are given below: number (10) with a noun phrase depictive and number (11) with an adjective.

(10)   בְּשִׁבְעִים נֶפֶשׁ יָרְדוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ מִצְרָיְמָה

       'Your ancestors went down to Egypt (as) <u>seventy persons</u>.' (Deut 10:22)

(11)   וְלֹא־בִעַרְתִּי מִמֶּנּוּ בְּטָמֵא

       Lit: 'And I have not removed (anything) from it <u>unclean</u>.' (Deut 26:14)

Using the same informal representation as in (6), example (11) can be represented as in (12):

(12)   I have not removed [anything] from it (while) I BE unclean.

The particle בְּ contributes nothing to the meaning; it serves only to mark the predicate.[5] Just as in the unmarked cases above, the *bēth*-marked depictive serves to specify a secondary predication which overlaps in time with the primary event.

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4. This was recognized by Joüon (1947, §126a) in his description of the *accusatif prédicatif d'état* (or 'predicative accusative of state').

5. The *bēth of predication* can mark the predicate in copular clauses as well as in secondary predicates (Boulet 2018b).

2.2 Circumstantials

Circumstantials superficially resemble depictives, but they can – and should – be distinguished semantically.[6] Like depictives, circumstantials specify a state of affairs that overlaps temporally with the primary event. The difference between them is that circumstantials impose a condition on the primary event. For example, consider (13):

(13)   Esau eats stew$_i$ hot$_i$ (but not cold).

Just as in (1), the eating of the stew by Esau occurs while the stew is hot. However, in (13) the temperature of the stew is a condition. Esau is happy enough to eat hot stew, but he refuses to eat stew if it is not hot. The informal semantic representation of (13) is as in (14):

(14)   Esau eats stew (if) stew BE hot.

The conditional nature of circumstantials means that they are compatible with verbs of particular tense, aspect, or modality. In Biblical Hebrew circumstantials occur with jussives, imperfects, and irreal perfects (also called *wəqāṭal*). Within my corpus, most of these occur within the legal prescriptions of the Pentateuch where God stipulates that rituals are to be done a certain way. Example (15) from Exodus 12 is typical:

(15)   אַל־תֹּאכְל֤וּ מִמֶּ֙נּוּ֙ נָ֔א וּבָשֵׁ֥ל מְבֻשָּׁ֖ל בַּמָּ֑יִם כִּ֣י אִם־צְלִי־אֵ֔שׁ רֹאשֹׁ֥ו עַל־כְּרָעָ֖יו וְעַל־קִרְבֹּֽו

      'Don't eat any of it <u>raw</u> or <u>boiled in water</u>, but only <u>roasted in fire</u>,
      (including) its head, as well as its legs and its innards.' (Exod 12:9)

This sentence is from the instructions for eating the Passover lamb. It includes three circumstantials: the adjective **נָ֔א**, the participial phrase **בָשֵׁל מְבֻשָּׁל בַּמָּיִם**, and the noun phrase **צְלִי־אֵשׁ**.[7] The first two set negative conditions on the consumption of the lamb, and the last one sets a positive condition. The relevant portion of Exodus 12:9 can be represented as in (16):

(16)   Do not eat it (if) it BE raw or boiled in water.
      AND Only [eat it] (if) it BE roasted in fire.

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6. But see Rothstein (2011) who prefers to analyze circumstantials as a subtype of depictives.

7. The final portion, **רֹאשֹׁו עַל־כְּרָעָיו וְעַל־קִרְבֹּו** could potentially also be taken as a circumstantial, though I have taken it here to be in apposition to the object pronoun 'it.'

2.3   Resultatives

Classic resultatives describe a state of one of the arguments of the primary predication that is directly caused by that primary event.[8] Resultatives therefore have a temporal extension that is subsequent to the runtime of the primary event. They also represent a change predication, which is represented by the tag 'BECOME' in small caps, instead of the static tag 'BE' used with depictives and circumstantials.

Example (2), which reads *Moses painted the lintel$_i$ red$_i$*, is a resultative. Moses was engaged in a painting action, and the result of Moses' painting is that the lintel changed colour. Accordingly, sentence (2) can be represented as in (17):

(17)   *Moses painted the lintel$_i$ red$_i$*
       = Moses painted the lintel (causing) the lintel BECOME red.

As with depictives, English resultatives tend to be adjectives. So far all of my Biblical Hebrew resultative examples are nominal. Resultatives may be unmarked, as is the case of צִפּוּי לַמִּזְבֵּחַ in (18):

(18)   וַיְרַקְּעוּם צִפּוּי לַמִּזְבֵּחַ
       'And they hammered them (into) <u>an overlay for the altar</u>.' (Num 17:4)

Or, resultatives may be marked by לְ, like לְעָפָר in (19):

(19)   וָאֶכֹּת אֹתוֹ טָחוֹן הֵיטֵב עַד אֲשֶׁר־דַּק לְעָפָר
       'And I beat it – grinding (it) well until fine – into <u>dust</u>.' (Deut 9:21)

Example (18) may be represented semantically as in (20):

(20)   They hammered them (causing) them BECOME an overlay for the altar.

That is to say, Eleazar's men took the the censers involved in Korah's rebellion (see Numbers 16) and they beat them out with the result that they were changed into an overlay for the altar.

2.4   Explicit Creation Productives (ECPs)

Explicit creation productives (or ECPs) are superficially like resultatives, and indeed, they have sometimes been treated as if they were resultatives. However, Rapoport (2018) has shown that they only seem to be resultative because the inherent semantics of the verb suggest a result. Specifically, ECPs occur with verbs of 'explicit' creation.

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8. In Boulet (n.d.) I distinguish between transitive and intransitive resultatives. The resultatives treated in this presentation are transitive resultatives. Intransitive resultatives do not share an argument. Structurally, they are complements, though they are optional complements.

English verbs of explicit creation are those like *make*, *create*, and *build*. Likewise, typical Hebrew verbs of explicit creation are עָשָׂה, בָּרָא, and בָּנָה. The objects of such verbs are produced, rather than simply acted upon. An example of an ECP in English is the adjective *strong* in (21):

(21)   The contractor built the house$_i$ strong$_i$.

Rapoport (2018) has taken ECPs to be depictives rather than resultatives. However, I argue that they are distinct from both (Boulet, n.d.). Like resultatives, and unlike depictives, the runtime of an ECP coincides with the conclusion of the primary event, stretching forward from that point in time. If the event is building a house, then we can say that the product is only truly a house when the act of building is complete. With regard to (21), a half-built house could hardly be said to be a strong house.

On the other hand, like depictives, but unlike resultatives, an ECP is a static predicate (that is, BE), not a change predicate (or, BECOME). Example (21) does not involve a situation where a contractor worked on a weak house in order to change it into a strong house. Rather, the contractor started from scratch, and it was from the moment that building was complete and the product of building could be considered a house, that the house was strong. The consequence of the above arguments is that ECPs have a semantic representation distinct from that of both depictives and resultatives. The representation of (21) is (22):

(22)   The contractor built the house (such that) the house BE strong.

In Biblical Hebrew, explicit creation productives are mostly unmarked, but some few are marked with בְּ.[9] Example (23) has the unmarked ECP זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה:

(23)   זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם
        'Male and female, He created them.' (Gen 1:27b)

A similar example from the very same verse has an ECP marked with the *bēth of predication* (24):

(24)   בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ
        'Image of God, He created it [humanity].' (Gen 1:27a)

Both examples have the same syntax and the same basic semantics. The only significant difference is that in (23) the secondary predication is unmarked, while in (24) it is overtly marked by בְּ. *Bēth* contributes nothing to the meaning; it is merely a syntactic marker. In each case human beings are said to have been created such

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9. All those marked with בְּ identified so far occur in the early part of Genesis: Gen 1:26, 27 (x2); 5:1, 3; 9:6.

that, when their creation was complete, they were a certain way. Taken together, these clauses state that God created human beings to exist on the earth as 'male and female' and also as the 'representation of God.' The semantic representation of (24) is as in (25):

(25)   God created [humanity] (such that) it BE representation of God.

2.5   Capacitives

Capacitives express the specific role or capacity in which an argument of the primary predication participates in that primary predication. An English example would be (26), where the word *as* introduces the secondary predicate (see Bowers 1993, 2001):

(26)   Samson$_i$ served his people as judge$_i$.

The informal representation of (26) might be (27), though it does leave something to be desired:

(27)   Samson served his people (and) Samson BE judge.

At this point a formal Neo-Davidsonian event semantics is superior. The representation in (28) states that: there is a 'serving' event e_1 such that the Agent of e_1 is 'Samson' and the Patient of e_1 is 'his people,'[10] and there is also a stative event e_2 of 'being judge' such that the Holder of e_2 is 'Samson' and such that e_2 is the capacity in which the shared participant 'Samson' participates in e_1.[11]

(28) $\exists e_1[\text{serving}(e_1) \,\&\, \text{Agent}(e_1, \text{Samson}) \,\&\, \text{Patient}(e_1, \text{his people})$
$\&\, \exists e_2[\text{BE-judge}(e_2) \,\&\, \text{Holder}(e_2, \text{Samson}) \,\&\, \text{Capacity}(e_2, e_1)]]$

Hebrew capacitives function the same way, though most are object-oriented. They may be unmarked, or else marked with לְ with the same meaning. An unmarked example would be (29) from Genesis 26:

(29)   וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה֙ אֶת־יְהוּדִ֔ית בַּת־בְּאֵרִ֖י הַֽחִתִּ֑י וְאֶת־בָּ֣שְׂמַ֔ת בַּת־אֵילֹ֖ן הַֽחִתִּֽי
And he took (as) <u>wife</u> Judith, daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and (also) Basemath, daughter of Elon the Hittite.' (Gen 26:34)

We may compare the above to a marked example, number (30) from Genesis 12:

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10. Here Agent and Patient are meant in the proto-role sense of Dowty (1991).

11. One may also add the statement '$\&\, \text{T}(e_1) \subseteq \text{T}(e_2)$,' which means that the runtime of e_1 is a subset ($\subseteq$) of the runtime of e_2 (i.e. there is complete temporal overlap between the runtimes of e_1 and e_2).

(30)   וָאֶקַּח אֹתָהּ לִי לְאִשָּׁה
      'And I took her for myself as <u>a wife</u>.' (Gen 12:19)

As stated above, argument sharing secondary predicates may be broken down into two clauses. This is the case of (31) from Genesis 24 which uses two clauses to express the same essential meaning as above:

(31)   וַיִּקַּח אֶת־רִבְקָה וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה
      'And he took Rebekah. And she became <u>a wife</u> to him.' (Gen 24:67)

This last example supports the claim that the לְ introducing the noun אִשָּׁה in (30) contributes little semantically. It is usual for Hebraists to interpret הָיָה plus לְ as 'to become.'[12]

3   Syntactic Structure

The data reviewed in this presentation has shown that argument sharing secondary predicates may be optionally marked by בְּ or לְ, depending on the type, with little or no semantic contribution from the particle.[13] I take this evidence to support the generalized theory of predication advanced by Bowers (1993, 2001) schematized in (32). According to Bowers, every predication has a Predication Phrase (PrP) structure with a Predication (Pr) head. The head serves to link a subject with its predicate, and this head may be overt or phonologically null. This same structure applies to primary copular and verbal predicates, as well as to secondary predicates. In my view, the Hebrew particles בְּ and לְ are realizations of this Predication head.[14]

(32)   Predication Phrase: Basic Structure

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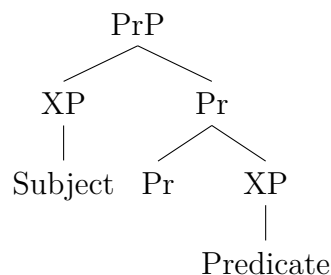
12. See Wilson (2015) who argues that this construction indicates 'change-of-state.'

13. In other work I show that בְּ and לְ may also mark primary copular predicates and complementative secondary predicates (Boulet 2018b, n.d.).

14. See Boulet (n.d.) for more cross-linguistic evidence for this structure from Egyptian, Arabic, and Scottish Gaelic.

In the case of argument sharing secondary predicates, the secondary predicate may be a predicate of the subject or of the object of the primary predication. These are called subject-oriented and object-oriented secondary predicates respectively. Both kinds involve the adjunction of the secondary Predication Phrase to the primary predication. Subject-oriented predicates are adjoined higher in the structure to the primary PrP, where it has access to the subject argument of the primary predication. Object-oriented predicates are adjoined lower down in the verb phrase where it has access to the object argument.[15]

Grammarians like Joüon (1947, §126a) have previously taken examples like גְּדוּדִ֑ים in (33) to be accusatives:[16]

(33)   וַאֲרָם֙ יָצְא֣וּ גְדוּדִ֔ים

'And Aram went out (as) <u>raiders</u>.' (2 Kgs 5:2)

However, since גְּדוּדִ֑ים is subject-oriented, I would expect it to be nominative, just like the 'predicate nominative' of traditional grammar (see Waltke and O'Connor 1990, §8.3).

4   Summary

In summary, I have presented a three part breakdown of what traditional grammars call the accusative in Biblical Hebrew. Whereas previous work generally presents two categories, roughly 'objects' and 'adverbials,' I have shown numerous examples that are neither of those, but rather 'secondary predicates' in the linguistic sense. Figure 1 shows that there are adjunct and complement secondary predicates. Today I have focused on the subsection of adjoined secondary predicates which involve the sharing of an argument with the primary predication.

I have identified five types of argument sharing secondary predicate in Biblical Hebrew, namely depictives, circumstantials, transitive resultatives, explicit creation productives, and capacitives. The significance of each of these types can be articulated by a distinct semantic representation, whether formal or informal. Depending on the type, the predication may be marked by a particle with little or no difference in meaning. Depictives and explicit creation productives may be optionally marked with בְּ, while resultatives and capacitives may be optionally marked with לְ.

Finally, although previously recognized secondary predicates have been treated as accusatives regardless of orientation, I have argued that subject- and object- oriented secondary predicates have distinct syntax, being adjoined to different positions in the

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15. Specifically, they adjoin to little-v if one assumes a tripartite verb phrase: Pr > v > Root.

16. Joüon called these *accusatif prédicatif d'état*, or 'predicative accusative of state;' see Joüon and Muraoka (2006, §126a).

tree structure. Object-oriented secondary predicates are indeed accusatives, but the subject-oriented ones are expected to be nominatives.[17]

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17. See Hasselbach (2013) who argues that Semitic is a marked-nominative language, where accusative is the default case. Thus, object-oriented secondary predicates should be accusative by default, but subject-oriented ones should be nominative in order to agree with the subject.

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