

The Genitive Construction with Two *Nomina Recta*

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A special type of the noun phrase in (Biblical) Hebrew is the genitive construction:

[reg. + rec.]¹

In the position of a reg., only one noun/ptc/adj can occur². The rec., however, can be replaced by (or 'rewritten' as) several units, ranging in level from word to clause:

- rec. →³ (1) adverb
- (2) prepositional phrase
- (3) genitive construction: [reg. + rec.]
- (4) noun (rec. 1) – conjunction⁴ – noun (rec. 2)
- (5) clause

A complex construction results when several rewrites take place or one rewrite more than once.

The fourth rewrite is what concerns us here. It produces a genitive construction of the type

[reg. + (rec. 1 – cj – (. . . cj –) rec. n)]

(e. g. Gen 14:19, *qnh šmj m w'rs*), in which two or more *recta* jointly occupy the position of one. The question then is, what criterion they must meet in order to make this rewrite possible.

Grammars give only tentative answers, if any. GKa § 128a and Brockelmann-Synt. § 70f list a few examples of the construction, without specification; Richter ATS 10, § 2.3.2.2.1.1, mentions it. According to Joüon § 129b, its occurrence depends on its meaning as well as style and usage of each period. He refers to Kropat⁵ who claims it as a characteristic trait of the Chronicler.

¹ In this simplified representation, the '+' sign marks the 'construct' relationship between the two constituent parts. Later on, the '-' sign will be used to separate constituents if no such relationship exists. For the sake of clarity we use the function designations: *regens* (reg.) and *rectum* (rec.). Exactly what makes a noun (or an adjective, or a participle) a *regens* or *rectum* is of no concern here. Cf. GKa § 128; F. E. König, *Historisch-Comparative Syntax der hebräischen Sprache. Schlussteil des historisch-kritischen Lehrgebäudes des Hebräischen* (Leipzig 1897, repr. Hildesheim 1979), § 276; Joüon § 129; Brockelmann-Synt. §§ 70–80; W. Richter, *Grundlagen einer althebräischen Grammatik, II*, ATS 10 (St Ottilien 1979), § 2.1.3.

² Cf., however, GKa § 128a, note 1.

³ On this 'rewrite' symbol, cf. J. Lyons, *Introduction* to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge 1968), 161f., 216f.

⁴ Nearly always: *w-*. König, *Syntax* § 276b gives one text with 'w (Lev. 17:13). The conjunction is lacking in Isa 1:1; Hos 1:1; Mi 1:1; Ps 114:1 (!).

⁵ A. Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik verglichen mit der seiner Quellen*, BZAW 16 (Giessen 1909), 55.

Kropat, however, also provides a criterion by adding that the construction is used with “zusammengehörige parallele nomina recta”. Likewise König, *Syntax* § 276b, connects its occurrence with “(. . .) nomina recta (. . .), die ideell, resp. nach der Sprachgewohnheit zusammengehörten, oder die in verschiedenem Grade synonym waren”⁶.

In addition to this semantic rule or criterion, I would propose the following more formal one: *the recta agree in definiteness*.

Contrary to its gender and number, the definiteness of a genitive construction depends largely on that of the rec⁷. Therefore, certainty as to the definiteness of the rec. is required.

In a group [noun – cj – noun] the nouns do not influence each other. A group [noun (def) – cj – noun (indef)] can exist. However, were such a group to fulfill the role of rec. in a genitive construction, this rec., and consequently the whole construction, would be partially definite, which is an absurdity. Therefore, if a rec. of the type [noun – cj . . . – noun] is to be (in)definite, all nouns must be (in)definite.

The examples adduced⁸ in the grammars (cf. note 1) meet this criterion⁹. The following list contains these examples (most of them taken from Koenig), arranged according to definiteness.

Definite:					
Gen	14:1,10	1Sam	15:9	Dan	8:20
	18:20	Isa	1:1		11:43
	19:28		10:18	Ezr	9:2
	49:32		17:9	Neh	12:22, 26, 46
Exod	13:5		64:10	1Chr	4:23
	21:15	Jer	33:26, 26		9:3
Num	31:54	Ezek	48:1 (?)		13:1
Deut	32:19	Ps	114:1	2Chr	12:15
Judg	1:6, 7, 9	Job	31:13		24:6 (?)

⁶ Words spaced by König.

⁷ Cf GKa § 127; Brockelmann-Synt. § 73a.

⁸ König, *Syntax* § 276b, wrongly adduces 1Kgs 5:32 and Ps 49:14. 1Chr 12:8 is a misprint of 1Chr 12:9

⁹ A text that fails to meet it, and which induced me to write this contribution, is Eccl 2:8: *sglt mlkjm whmdjnw t*. Many commentators feel that there is something ‘wrong’ with the article in *whmdjnw t*, supposed to be a second *rectum*. In my opinion, the words must be understood as a circumlocution for *wmdjnw tm* (Cf. Joüon § 129a), that is, as a second *regens*. Cf. also Isa 11:2 *rwḥ d’t wjr’t jhw*.

Indefinite:

Gen	4:20, 21, 22	1Sam	23:7	Ps	5:7
	14:19	Isa	1:11,28		8:3
	30:37		11:2		10:15
Exod	3:8		17:11		10:15 (emend.)
Lev	7:23		22:5	Esth	9:22
	17:13		30:6	1Chr	5:18
	27:32	Jer	37:3		12:9
Num	20:5	Ezek	31:3 (?)		18:10
Deut	8:7,8			2Chr	24:14, 14
	33:28				

Abstract

Between two (or more) *nomina recta* within one genitive construction there is agreement in definiteness.

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