Semantic relations in construct phrases of Biblical Hebrew: a functional approach[1]

Jan H. Kroeze (Potchefstroom, South Africa)

Introduction

The analysis of construct phrases (or "genitive constructions") in Biblical Hebrew (BH) forms an important part of understanding a text. Therefore, in almost all grammars a section on "the kinds of genitives" can be found. However, the traditional explanation of genitives is quite problematic (cf. Kroeze 1991, 129-143):

- The expression *genitive* (just like *nominative* and *accusative*) cannot be used for BH. These are the names used for certain groups of case endings and these do not occur in BH.
- These expressions and others like *construct state*, *nomen regens* and *nomen rectum* are not used consistently. In this article *construct phrase* will be used for the *s^{e}mîkût*, *construct state* for the *nismāk* and *postconstruct* for the *sōmēk*.
- The same name is used for different categories of "genitives".
- Different names are used for the same category.
- Different categories are distinguished by different writers.
- The main classifications are very divergent.
- The levels of morphology, syntax and semantics are confused.

The distinction between these linguistic levels probably offers the best approach to a solution to the problem of the construct phrase. One possibility would be to use a *morphological approach* in which all the formal characteristics can be dealt with. With a *syntactic approach* the underlying relations in construct phrases can be analysed by means of syntactic back-transformations. This is an expansion of the idea of "subjective" and "objective genitives" to include "copula-predicate genitives" and "adjunctive genitives" (cf. Kroeze 1993, 68-88).

A semantic point of view

This article offers a solution from another point of view, namely that of *semantics*. Analysing the semantic relations in construct phrases is probably a better method to understand these phrases than looking into the supposed underlying syntactic relations. The explanation for the variety of relations in construct phrases must rather be sought in the field of semantics or in what is known as the deep structure.[2]

---

[1] This article is based on the author's Ph.D.-thesis for which the financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development is acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this publication and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

[2] Cf. Beekman & Callow (1974, 251-265) and Levi (1976, 16-21, 37) for examples of semantic analyses of genitive constructions in Greek and construct phrases in Modern Hebrew.

The surface structure of all construct phrases is essentially identical, namely that of head plus adjectival modifier.

Choosing a theoretical framework

The theory of Functional Grammar (FG) developed by S.C. Dik (1989) is used as theoretical paradigm for the analysis of the semantic relations in construct phrases of Biblical Hebrew. Functional Grammar is an independent and complete theory concerned with meaning which provides an adequate basis for the analysis of construct phrases. In Dik's theory semantic functions are distinguished and defined in terms of linguistic parameters. These semantic functions are similar to categories distinguished in traditional BH syntax (which include phrase and sentence semantics). This makes the theory quite adaptable and ideal for the analysis of the semantic relations in construct phrases. For these semantic functions unique terms are used so that they won't be confused with morphological cases or syntactic functions.

Another theory of Functional Grammar that could have been used, is that of M.A.K. Halliday (1985), but Dik's theory was chosen for the following reasons:

- When dealing with semantic functions the terminology in Dik's theory is closer to the distinctions made in classical languages. Many of Halliday's terms like *Senser, Phenomenon, Carrier, Identified, Behaver, Sayer, Receiver* (of a Verbiage), *Verbiage, Target, Client, Attributor, Range* and *Extent* are not used in traditional grammar and therefore requires explanation (1985, 101-144). In Dik's theory it is mainly the distinction between the five different semantic functions, which can be occupied by the first argument, which is new to the traditional grammarian.
- Dik uses simple, homogeneous and more verifiable parameters (controlled and dynamic) to differentiate between the types of predications (i.e. actions, positions, processes and states). Halliday's distinction between material processes, behavioural processes and verbal processes is vague, as is the distinction between relational and existential processes.
- Halliday's system of participants and circumstances is more complex than Dik's system of semantic functions. There are subroles, and all the participants of the different processes differ, while only the first argument of predications is differentiated by Dik.
- Halliday uses many criteria based on English to differentiate between the processes and participants, but Dik works in a more generally linguistic way by using semantic criteria.
- Halliday discusses two complete, optional systems, that of transitivity and ergativity, which is confusing.

Relevant aspects of Functional Grammar

Using the paramaters *dynamic* and *controlled* Dik (1989, 91-99) differentiates between the following states of affairs (or predications):[3]

Action	[+ controlled]	[+ dynamic]	e.g. The man runs.
Position	[+ controlled]	[- dynamic]	e.g. The man sits in the chair.
Process	[- controlled]	[+ dynamic]	e.g. The tap runs.
State	[- controlled]	[- dynamic]	e.g. The man is old/The dress sits well on her.

A predication is the combination of the predicate and the terms associated with it.[4] The difference regarding a subject, for instance, can change the kind of predication – cf. *The man runs* and *The tap runs* above. A predicate in itself cannot be called an action, a position, etc. Therefore, the following terms will be used below:

- *Action predicate* for the predicate in an action predication.
- *Position predicate* for the predicate in a position predication.
- *Process predicate* for the predicate in a process predication.
- *State predicate* for the predicate in a state predication.

A predicate need not be expressed by a verb – it can also be a nominalised verb.[5] Verbal and nominalised verbal predicates do not have semantic functions. The terms in a predication can be either arguments or satellites. Arguments are the compulsory terms and satellites are optional terms.[6] Arguments and satellites can have different semantic functions. Some semantic functions can be occupied either by arguments or satellites.[7] For the analysis of the semantic relations in construct phrases it is not important to know whether the elements are arguments or satellites, but only what the semantic function is. Any surface realisation is destroyed by the construct phrase anyway.[8] Therefore the differentiation between arguments and satellites will not be discussed in detail. Semantic functions specify the "roles" which the referents of the terms involved play in the predication (Dik 1989, 24).

The following semantic functions which can be occupied by arguments and satellites, are distinguished (cf. Dik 1989, 101- 105, 195-198, 206-208):
Agent: The entity in control of an action.
Positioner: The entity controlling a position.
Force: The non-controlling entity which instigates a process.

---

[3] The finer distinctions between accomplishments, activities, changes and dynamisms, as well as experiences, are not relevant for the distinctions of semantic functions in Dik's FG. However, Junger (1983, 120-121) distinguishes the separate semantic functions of *experiencer* and *phenomenon.*

[4] Functional grammar can be regarded as a kind of valency grammar (cf. Dik 1985b, 95-110; 1989, 98-110; Junger 1987, 148-151; Lowery 1985, 311-314).

[5] Cf. Mackenzie (1983, 32-38, 50) and Vet (1983, 136-137).

[6] Cf. the distinction between compulsory and optional syntagms in the syntax (Richter 1980, 18).

[7] Cf. also Dik (1989, 302, 309-314) and Buth (1987, 38, 43) for a discussion of the non-rigid relationship between morphological case, syntactic and semantic functions.

[8] Genitives mask the semantic functions of the arguments involved (Mackenzie 1983, 41).

Processed: The entity undergoing a process.
Zero: The entity which is primarily involved in a state.
Goal: The entity affected or effected by the conduct of an agent, positioner, force or processed.[9]
Recipient: The entity to whom something is transferred as a possession.
Location: The place where something is located or where a predication takes place.
Direction: The entity towards which something moves or is moved.
Source: The entity from which something moves or is moved.
Reference: The second or third term of a relation with reference to which the relation holds.
Interested (party): The person or institution to the advantage/disadvantage of whom the predication is effected. Dik calls this semantic function "Beneficiary".[10] (Requires [+ control] predication.)
Company: The entity together with whom the predication is effected.
Instrument: The tool with which an action is executed or with which a position is maintained. (Requires [+ control] predication.)
Manner: The way or manner in which an action is executed, a position is maintained or a process takes place. (Requires [+ control] and/or [+ dynamic] predication.)
Speed: Indicates the quantity of action/process which is run through per time unit. (Requires [+ dynamic] predication.)
Quality: The role/function/authority/capacity by virtue of which an action is executed or a position is maintained. (Requires [+ control] predication.)
Path: Indicates the orientation or route of a movement.
Time: The time at/from/until which a predication takes place.
Duration: The period of time in which a predication takes place (cf. Dik 1978, 26).
Frequency: The number of times that a predication is repeated in a certain period (cf. Dik 1978, 26).
Circumstance: A second predication taking place at the same time as the main predication.
Result: A second predication which is brought about as the result/consequence of the main predication.
Purpose: A second predication in the future, which the controller deliberately wishes to bring about by means of the main predication. The purpose serves as the motivation for the main predication.
Reason: A motivation for the occurrence of a controlled predication in terms of a causal ground ascribed to the controller.
Cause: A motivation which is not ascribed to any of the participants of the predication, but which is given by the speaker as an explanation for the occurrence of the predication.

[9] A processed can affect/effect a goal, e.g. "The woman bore a child" (cf. Dik 1989, 87: "John finally kicked the bucket" – idiomatic, i.e. "John died").
[10] Cf. Lyons (1967, 395): "one needs a neutral term".

The semantic functions of satellites which indicate the attitude of the speaker or which transforms the proposition into a linguistic act will not be found in construct phrases (cf. Dik 1989, 247-262).

Non-verbal predicates can be expressed by nouns, adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases. In non-verbal predicates the copulative verb is optional and only used to express tense, aspect and mood (cf. Lyons 1967, 390). Buth (1987, 37-39) calls the semantic relations expressed by non-verbal predicates *semantic functions* as well. These semantic functions are:[11]

Possessor: A non-verbal predicate which indicates the possessor of the subject term, expressed in a BH-clause by the preposition *l^e*.[12]

Identification: A nominal predicate which identifies the referent of the subject term with its own referent. In a clause both the subject and predicate are determinate.

Property Assignment: An adjectival predicate which qualifies the referent of the subject term.[13]

Class-membership: The entity to which the subject term refers, belongs to a class of referents indicated by the predicate term. In a clause the subject is determinate, the predicate indeterminate.

Class-inclusion: Every member of the set indicated by the subject, is a member of the set indicated by the predicate term. In a clause both the subject and the predicate are indeterminate.

Existence: An empty locative predicate expresses the existence of the subject. In a clause the subject is indeterminate. The nominal predicates *yēš* and *ʾên* can also express the existence/non-existence of the subject in BH.

Non-verbal predicates can also have some of the semantic functions mentioned above, like locative, time, recipient, purpose, etc. These are called appositional predicates (cf. Dik 1985a, 32-34). The subject has the zero semantic function in clauses with non-verbal predicates.

Every predicate has a predicate frame which contains a blueprint for the predications in which it can be used (Dik 1989, 54-55). Predicate frames don't have linear order. Every predicate frame specifies the lexical form of the predicate, the type of predicate (verbal, adjectival or nominal), the number of arguments that it takes, the semantic functions of these arguments and the selection restrictions imposed on these argument positions (Dik 1980, 6).

The selection restrictions (or semantic restrictions) determines which terms can be inserted into an argument slot. For example, in the case of *give* both the agent and the recipient have to be animate. There are no restrictions on the goal. These

---

[11] Cf. Dik (1980, 90-110; 1989, 161-182); Berman & Grosu (1976, 266-281); Richter (1980, 87); Schweizer (1981, 112-123).

[12] De Groot (1983, 117) differs from Dik (1989, 175) and Bolkestein (1983, 55-62) in regarding this kind of phrases (in Hungarian) as possessive predicates.

[13] Bare nominal predicates with the semantic function of property assignment do not occurr in BH (cf. Dik 1989, 170).

semantic restrictions apply only to the simple, unmarked use of verbs, not to the metaphorical or poetical uses (Junger, 1987:36).
An example of a predicate frame is:
$give_V(x_1{:}\langle human\rangle(x_1))_{Ag}(x_2)_{Go}(x_3{:}\langle animate\rangle(x_3))_{Rec}$
In this predicate frame *V* indicates that *give* is a verbal predicate, the variables x_1, x_2 and x_3 mark the argument positions, the labels *Ag(ent)*, *Go(al)* and *Rec(ipient)* mark the semantic functions of the arguments, and the expressions *human* (x_1) and *animate* (x_3) specify the selection restrictions on the agent- and the recipient-arguments. (Cf. Dik 1978, 16.)
Predicate frames can be used to reduce the number of possibilities of semantic relations in construct phrases, especially if one of the elements is a nominalised verb.[14]

Method of analysing construct phrases

Using the 36 semantic categories (4 kinds of predicates + 32 semantic functions) listed above, construct phrases are analysed by indicating the combination of these categories. The semantic functions of both elements in a phrase are indicated consistently. It is assumed that, as a point of departure, all 36 categories can be combined with each other (36 x 36 possibilities). However, not all combinations are possible because some semantic functions have specific requirements, for example the instrument which requires a controlled predication.
The book of Proverbs is used as field of application. Since Proverbs is a poetic book, linguistic possibilities are fully exploited – also in relation to construct phrases. The book contains 1287 different construct phrases.
Unmarked paraphrases are used to clearly show the semantic relation between the elements. An unmarked paraphrase is the simplest way of formulating the predication, although more elements may have to be supposed than in more marked phrases. Supposed elements are put in brackets. Because the use of the definite article ה is very free in poetic texts it will be supposed where necessary. Hyphens between words indicate that the combination is one concept in BH. The paraphrases must be as idiomatic as possible. Abstract concepts are paraphrased as verbal or adjectival predicates, and concrete concepts as arguments, satellites or nominal predicates. But, because some words are difficult to categorise, one must often allow for other possibilities. Keeping the context in mind, as well as the use of predicate frames, can resolve some of the ambiguities. However, especially in poetry, some combinations are used ambiguously on purpose.
These paraphrases can also be used to test the semantic analysis of a certain construct phrase. If a certain construct phrase can be paraphrased in a certain stereotypical way, it can be classified in the related group.
This method results in a simple but very productive system. Although a very large number of combinations are possible (94 in Proverbs), all of them can be

[14] Lowery (1985, 214-257) gives the "case frames" (or predicate schemes) of 282 verbal roots in Judges.

categorised into twelve main groups, some examples of which are given below. The examples are analysed in the following format:

Hebrew phrase	Literal translation Paraphrase	Verse in Prov.

1. Positions with nominalised verbal predicates

Position predicate – positioner

tʾwt ṣdyqym	(the) desire of (the) righteous the righteous (pl.) desire	10:24

Position predicate (+ positioner) – goal

ʾhby ʿšyr	(the) lovers of a rich man (they) love a rich man	14:20

Goal – position predicate

ʿz mbṭḥ(h)	the stronghold of the (her) trust (she - i.e. the inhabitants of the city) trust the stronghold	21:22

Position predicate (+ positioner) – reference

yrʾ yhwh	the fearer (adj.) of Yahweh (he) fears concerning Yahweh	14:2

Position predicate – purpose

ʾrb-dm	(the) lying-in-ambush of bloodshed (or direct obj.?) (they) lie-in-ambush for the purpose of bloodshed	12:6

Position predicate – cause

twḥlt ʾwnym	(the) expectation of power/riches (someone) expects because of power/riches	11:7

2. Positions with supposed verbal predicates

Location – positioner

pnh	the corner of her (read *pnth*) she (lies-in-ambush) at the corner (cf. Pr. 7:12)	7:8

3. Actions with nominalised verbal predicates

Action predicate – agent

brkt yhwh	the blessing of Yahweh Yahweh blesses	10:22

Action predicate (+ goal) – agent (passive construction)

mʾrt yhwh	the cursed (pass. part.) of Yahweh Yahweh curses (him)	3:33

Agent – action predicate

npš-brkh	a person of blessing a person blesses	11:25

Action predicate – goal

zkr ṣdyq	(the) mention of (the) righteous (someone) mentions the rigtheous	10:7

Action predicate (+ agent) – goal

sbʾy-yyn	drinkers of wine (they) drink wine	23:20

Goal – action predicate
ʾyš twkḥwt a man of punishments 29:1
(someone) punishes a man
Action predicate (+ agent) – recipient
mlwh yhwh the lender (hif. part.) of Yahweh 19:17
(he) lends to Yahweh (*lwh* II hif. + complement)
Location – action predicate
ksʾ-dyn a chair of judgement (judgement-seat) 20:8
(the king) judges on a chair
Action predicate – direction
qrʾtw (lqrʾtw) the coming (inf. cs.) of him 7:10
(she) comes to him
Action predicate (+ agent) – direction
bʾyh the coming ones (part.) of her 2:19
(they) come to her
Action predicate (+ agent) – source
srt ṭʿm a turner aside from sense 11:22
(she) turns away from sense
Action predicate – reference
dbtk the rumour of you 25:10
(someone) spreads-a-rumour about you
Reference – action predicate
br-ndr(y) the son of the (my) vows 31:2
(I) made-vows concerning the son
Action predicate (+ agent) – interested party
ḥwṭʾ npš(w) the sinner of the (his) self/soul (or direct obj.) 20:2
(he) sins against (him)self (disadvantaged)
Action predicate (+ agent) – company
nʾp ʾšh an adulterer of a woman (or complement) 6:32
(he) commits-adultery with (preposition *ʾēt*) a woman
Action predicate – instrument
mdqrwt ḥrb thrusts of a sword 12:18
(someone) thrusts/pierces with a sword
Instrument – action predicate
šḇṭ mwsr a rod of chastisement 22:15
(someone) chastises with a rod
Action predicate – manner
twrt-ḥsd an instruction of faithfulness 31:26
(she) instructs faithfully
Action predicate (+ agent) – manner
hlky tm walkers of completeness/integrity 2:7
(they) walk/live in-integrity
Action predicate – quality (= capacity)
hwlk rkyl a goer of a slanderer (or simply in apposition) 11:13
(he) goes/acts as a slanderer

Action predicate (+ agent) – path
ʿbry-drk (the) bypassers of (the) road 9:15
(they) pass by on the road
Time – action predicate
ywm nqm a day of revenge 6:34
(he) takes-revenge on a day
Duration – action predicate
mʿṭ ḥbq (ydym) a little of folding (hands) 6:10
(you) fold (hands) for a little (while)
Action predicate – circumstance
zbḥy-ryb sacrifices of quarrel 17:1
(they) sacrifice while they quarrel
Action predicate (+ agent) – circumstance
mrdp ʾmrym a pursuer of words (or complement) 19:7
(he) pursues (them) while he speaks
Action predicate – purpose
twkḥt ḥyym (the) reprimand of (the) life 15:31
(someone) reprimands so that (someone) can live
Action predicate (+ agent) – purpose
yʿṣy šlwm advisers of peace 12:20
(they) advise with the purpose of peace
Action predicate – cause
ʿqb ʿnwh (the) reward of humility 22:4
(someone) rewards (someone) because of (his) humility

4. Actions with supposed verbal predicates
Agent – goal
ʾyš mtn a man of gift(s) 19:6
a man (gives) gift(s)
Goal – agent
mtn ʾdm a gift of a man 18:16
a man (gives) a gift
Agent – manner
ʿd-ḥnm a witness of causelessness (substantivised adverb) 24:28
a witness (testifies) without cause
Path – agent
drky-ʾyš (the) ways of a man 5:21
a man (goes) on the ways
Goal – beneficiary (action)
kpr-npš (the) ransom of a life 13:8
(someone pays) a ransom for (*lʿ*) a life
(cf. Ex. 30:12, Num. 35:31, Prov. 21:18)
Goal – instrument (action)
dbr-śptym (the) word of (the) lips 14:23
(someone says) the word with the lips

Instrument – goal (action)
mḥyr śdh (the) money of a field (cf. 13:8 and 31:10) 27:26
(you buy) a field with the money
Goal – material (subclass of instrument) (action)
nzm zhb a ring of gold 11:22
a ring made of gold
Goal – manner (action)
ʾwṣrwt ršʿ treasures of injustice 10:2
(someone acquired) treasures by injustice
Time – goal (action)
ʿtw the time of him (the word) 15:23
(someone says) it at the time
Path – instrument (action)
mʿgl rgl(k) the track of the (your) foot 4:26
(you walk) with the foot on the track

5. States with nominalised verbal predicates
State predicate – zero
ʿṣbt-lb (the) pain of (the) heart (heartache) 15:13
the heart pains
Zero – state predicate
ʾyš-dʿt a man of knowledge 24:5
a man knows
State predicate – reference
dʿt ʾlhym the knowledge of God 2:5
(you) know about God
State predicate (+ zero) – reference
ywdʿ dʿt a knower of knowledge (or direct obj.) 17:27
(he) knows about knowledge
State predicate – time
phd pʾm a terror of suddenly(ness) (substantivised adverb) 3:25
(you) fear suddenly
Time – state predicate
ywm ʿbrh a day of anger 11:4
(God) is-angry (*ʿbr II*) on a day
Duration – state predicate
šnwt … šlwm years … of prosperity (2nd postconstruct after the same cs.?) 3:2
(you) are prosperous (*šlm* qal) for years

6. States with supposed verbal predicates
Zero – contents (subclass of reference)
plgy-mym channels of water 5:16
channels (are full of) water

7. States with nominalised adjectival predicates

Zero – property assignment

ʾmry ʾmt	words of truth	22:21
	words (are) true	

Property assignment – zero

mtq śptym	sweetness of lips	16:21
	lips (are) sweet	

8. States with expressed adjectival predicates

Property assignment – reference

rb-brkwt	numerous/great of blessings	28:20
	(he is) numerous/great in regard to blessings	

Property assignment (+ zero) – reference

ʿqšy-lb	(the) perverted/false of heart	11:20
	(they are) perverted/false in regard to heart	

9. States with nominal predicates

Zero – identification

lwḥ lb(k)	the tablet of the (your) heart	3:3
	the tablet (is) the heart	

Zero (members = total) – identification (undivided total)

kl-pśʿym	all (the) offences (the total of the offences)	10:12
	the total (is) the offences	

Zero (part = whole) – identification (undivided whole)

kl-hywm	the whole day (the whole of the day)	21:26
	the whole (is) the day	

Zero (member/members) – class membership (divided total)

bny ʾdm	(the) sons of mankind	8:4
	the sons (are) members of mankind/(are) people	

Zero (part/parts) – class membership (divided whole)

pt-lḥm	(the) piece/morsel of (the) bread	28:21
	the piece (is) part of the bread	

Zero – class inclusion

ksyl ʾdm	a fool of a man	15:20
	a fool (is) a man	

Zero (member = total) – class inclusion (undivided total)

kl-ʾwyl	every fool (lit. every one of a fool)	20:3
	every one (is) a fool	

Existence – zero

yš drk	(the) being/existence of a road	14:12
	there is a road	

10. States with appositional predicates

Zero (concrete possession) – possessor

byt ṣdyq	(the) house of (the) righteous	15:6
	the house (is/belongs) to the righteous	

Zero (possession: body part) – possessor		
ʾzny ksyl	(the) ears of (the) fool	23:9
	the ears (are/belong) to the fool	
Zero (possession: body part, figuratively) – possessor		
yd-yhwh	the hand (metaphorically: power) of Yahweh	21:1
	the hand (is/belongs) to Yahweh	
Zero (relationship) – possessor		
ʾby ṣdyq	(the) father of (the) righteous	23:24
	the father (is/belongs) to the righteous	
Possessor – zero (concrete possession)		
ʾyš mgn	a man of a shield	6:11
	a shield (is/belongs) to a man	
Possessor – zero (possession: body part)		
zrzyr mtnym	a cock of loins (show cock)	30:31
	loins (are/belong) to a cock	
Possessor – zero (possession: body part, figuratively)		
bʿl ʾp	an owner of a nose (metaphorically: anger)	22:24
	a nose (is/belongs) to a owner	
Possessor – zero (relationship)		
ʾyš rʿym	a man of friends	18:24
	friends (are/belong) to a man	
Zero – location		
ʾbny-kyš	(the) stones/weights of (the) bag	16:11
	the stones (are) in the bag	
Zero – direction		
drky šʾwl	(the) ways of (the) underworld	7:27
	the ways (are/lead) to the underworld	
Direction – zero		
drk ntybh	(the) direction of (the) path	12:28
	the path (is/goes) in the direction (of …)	
Zero – source		
ḥlb ʿzym	milk of goats	27:27
	milk (is) coming from goats	
Zero – time		
ʿb mlqwš	(the) clouds of (the) late rain	16:15
	the clouds (are there) during the late rain	
Time – zero		
ywm hksʾ	(the) day of (the) full moon	7:20
	the full moon (is) on the day	
Zero – cause		
ḥbrwt pṣʿ	bruises of a wound	20:30
	bruises (are) caused by a wound	

11. Processes with nominalised verbal predicates

Process predicate – processed

mwt ʾdm	(the) dying of a man	11:7
	a man dies (cf. Dik 1989, 162)	

Processed – process predicate

bny ḥlwp	sons of vanishing/passing away (inf. cs.)	31:8
	sons (people) vanish/pass away	

Process predicate – force

ʾšwn ḥšk	(the) approach (*qᵉrēʾ*-reading) of darkness	20:20
	darkness approaches	

Process predicate – goal

mḥtt dlym	(the) destruction/ruin of (the) poor	10:15
	(poverty – force) destructs/ruins the poor	

Process predicate (+ processed) – goal

ywldtw	the bearer of him	17:25
	(she) bore him	

Process predicate (+ processed) – direction

ywrdy bwr	descenders of (the) pit	1:12
	(they) descend (uncontrolled) into the pit (= die) (cf. 5:5)	

Time – process predicate

ywm sgryr	(the) day of rain/downpour	27:15
	(it) rains/pours on a day	

Duration – process predicate

šnwt ḥyym	years of life	3:2
	(you) live for years	

12. Processes with supposed verbal predicates

Processed – goal

ʿṣ-ḥyym	a tree of life (cf. *ʿṣ-ḥzyt*)	3:18
	a tree (bears) life (product)	

Goal – processed

ʾwr-ṣdyqym	(the) light of (the) righteous	13:9
	the righteous (see (*rʾh*)) the light (= live)	

Processed – location

ʿśbwt hrym	(the) green plants of (the) mountains	27:25
	the green plants (grow) on the mountains	

Path – processed

drk-ʾnyh	(the) way of (the) ship	30:19
	the ship (sails) on the way	

Duration – processed

šnwt rśʿym	(the) years of (the) wicked	10:27
	the wicked (live) for years	

Conclusion

From the analysis and classification of the construct phrases above it became evident that the semantic categories, distinguished by S.C. Dik, offer an adequate theoretical framework for the analysis of semantic relations in construct phrases of BH. This confirms the assumption that semantic functions "are universally relevant to natural languages, although not all languages necessarily make the same distinctions within the general domain of these functions" (Dik 1989:25). However, in a few instances, semantic subclasses had to be proposed, for instance *contents* which was taken as a subclass of reference and *material* which was taken as a subclass of instrument. *Body parts* and *relationships* were viewed as possessions, and *part-whole relations* were classified under identification, class-membership and class-inclusion.
The proposed method of analysis of semantic relations in construct phrases offers a simple but very productive system, which can help interpreters to understand and explain one of the most interesting and difficult constructions in Biblical Hebrew.

Bibliography

Beekman, J. and Callow, J. 1974. Translating the Word of God: with Scripture and topical indexes. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
Berman, R.A. and Grosu, A. 1976. Aspects of the copula in Modern Hebrew. (In Cole, P., ed. Studies in modern Hebrew syntax and semantics: the transformational-generative approach. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company. p. 265-285.) (North-Holland linguistic series, vol. 32.)
Bolkestein, A.M. 1983. Genitive and dative possessors in Latin. (In Dik, S.C., ed. Advances in functional grammar. Dordrecht: Foris. p. 55-91.) (Publications in language sciences, 11.)
Buth, R.J. 1987. Word order in Aramaic from the perspectives of functional grammar and discourse analysis. Los Angeles, California. (Dissertation (Ph.D.) – University of California.) (Photocopy - University Microfilms International.)
De Groot, C. 1983. On non-verbal predicates in functional grammar: the case of possessives in Hungarian. (In Dik, S.C., ed. Advances in functional grammar. Dordrecht: Foris. p. 93-122.) (Publications in language sciences, no. 11.)
Dik, S.C. 1978. Functional grammar. Dordrecht: Foris. (Publications in language sciences, no.7.)
Dik, S.C. 1980. Studies in functional grammar. London: Academic Press.
Dik, S.C. 1985a. Infinitief-konstrukties met om in een funktionele grammatika. Glot (Leids taalkundig bulletin, Dordrecht), 8(1):25-46, jan. (In: [om-zinnen]. Speciaalnr. van Glot.)
Dik, S.C. 1985b. Valentie en valentie-operaties in funktionele grammatika. Tijdschrift voor taal- en tekstwetenschap (ttt), 5(2):95-114.
Dik, S.C. 1989. The theory of functional grammar. Part 1: The structure of the clause. Dordrecht: Foris. (Functional grammar series, no. 9.)
Halliday, M.A.K. 1985. An introduction to functional grammar. London: Edward Arnold.
Junger, J. 1983. The problem of the passive in constructions of perception and cognition in modern Hebrew. (In Bennis, H. and Van Lessen Kloeke, W.U.S., eds. Linguistics in the Netherlands. Dordrecht: Foris. p. 115-123.) (Publications in language sciences, 12.)
Junger, J. 1987. Predicate formation in the verbal system of Modern Hebrew. Dordrecht: Foris. (Functional grammar series, 7.) (Published dissertation, University of Amsterdam.)
Kroeze, J.H. 1991. Die chaos van die "genitief" in Bybelse Hebreeus. Journal for Semitics 3(2):129-143.

Kroeze, J.H. 1993. Underlying syntactic relations in construct phrases of Biblical Hebrew. Journal for Semitics 5(1):68-88.
Levi, J.N. 1976. A semantic analysis of Hebrew compound nominals. (In Cole, P., ed. Studies in modern Hebrew syntax and semantics: the transformational-generative approach. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company. p. 9-55.) (North-Holland linguistic series, vol. 32.)
Lowery, K.E. 1985. Toward a discourse grammar of Biblical Hebrew. Los Angeles. Dissertation (Ph.D.) - University of California.)
Lyons, J. 1967. A note on possessive, existential and locative sentences. Foundations of language, 3:390-396.
Mackenzie, J.L. 1983. Nominal predicates in a functional grammar of English. (In Dik, S.C., ed. Advances in functional grammar. Dordrecht: Foris. p. 32-51.) (Publications in language sciences, no. 11.)
Richter, W. 1980. Grundlagen einer althebräischen Grammatik: B. Die Beschreibungsebenen, III. Der Satz (Satztheorie). St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag. (Münchener Universitätsschriften: Katholisch-theologische Fakultät; Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament, Bd. 13.)
Schweizer, H. 1981. Metaphorische Grammatik: Wege zur Integration von Grammatik und Textinterpretation in der Exegese. St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag. (Münchener Universitätsschriften: Katholisch-theologische Fakultät; Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament, Bd. 15.)
Vet, C. 1983. Possessive constructions in French. (In Dik, S.C., ed. Advances in functional grammar. Dordrecht: Foris. p. 123-140.) (Publications in language sciences, 11.)

Abstract:

The theory of Functional Grammar developed by S.C. Dik is used as theoretical paradigm for the analysis of the semantic relations in construct phrases of Biblical Hebrew. Functional Grammar is an independent and complete theory concerned with meaning which provides an adequate basis for the analysis of construct phrases. In Dik's theory semantic functions are distinguished and defined in terms of linguistic parameters. These semantic functions are similar to categories distinguished in traditional syntax (which include phrase and sentence semantics). This makes the theory quite adaptable and ideal for the analysis of the semantic relations in construct phrases. For these semantic functions unique terms are used so that they won't be confused with morphological cases or syntactic functions.
The book of Proverbs is used as field of application. Since Proverbs is a poetic book, linguistic possibilities are fully exploited – also in relation to construct phrases. The book contains 1287 different construct phrases. It is assumed that, theoretically and with some exceptions, all kinds of predicates and semantic functions can be combined in construct phrases. Using a total of 36 semantic categories, construct phrases are analysed by indicating the combination of these categories. The semantic functions of both elements in a phrase are indicated consistently. Unmarked paraphrases are used to clearly show the semantic relations between these elements. These paraphrases can also be used to test the semantic analysis of a certain construct phrase. This method results in a simple but very productive system. Although a very large number of combinations are possible (94 in Proverbs), all of them can be classified into twelve main groups.

Address of the author:
Dr. J.H. Kroeze, Department of Classics and Semitics, Potchefstrooom University for Christian Higher Education, Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom, 2520, South Africa