Multiple meaning and semantic domains in some Biblical Hebrew lexicographical projects: the description of *zera*ᶜ

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In this article I will compare the classical approach to lexicography of Biblical Hebrew as reflected in standard bilingual dictionaries with recent developments in the description of the meaning of Hebrew words. These show a separation of paradigmatical and syntagmatical semantics as well as a renewed interest in the treatment of near synonyms and in a lexicon set up like a thesaurus. To illustrate the principles behind the different approaches, I will discuss how they deal with the lexicography of the Hebrew word *zera*ᶜ.[1]

1. *zera*ᶜ in traditional dictionaries

1.1. *zera*ᶜ in Brown, Driver and Briggs

Of the traditional standard dictionaries,[2] Brown, Driver and Briggs (1906, reprint 1951) still serves as the most used dictionary of Biblical Hebrew for English speaking scholars (Goshen-Gottstein 1991:80). It gives an extensive article on *zera*ᶜ, differentiating its respective meanings more carefully than other traditional standard dictionaries (Gesenius 1915 and Koehler & Baumgartner 1967), sometimes giving parallel words in the near context. A summary is given in figure 1.

*zera*ᶜ sowing, seed, offspring
1. literally a) sowing Gen 47:24 Lev 27:16b (cf. 2c); Num 20:5;
       hence b) sowing as recurring at its season Lev 26:5 (cf. Amos 9:13 below).
2. seed:
       a) literally: sown to raise crops.
       b) figuratively: of idolatry Isa 17:11;
       product of seed Deut 14:22 (cf. d);
       figuratively: of rapid growth Amos 9:13.
       c) seed as product: seed of herbs Gen 1:11,12,29.
       Esp. d) seed as corn-product, corn-crop Gen 47:24 (cf. 1a); Isa 23:3.
       e) growth Zch 8:12.
list of verbs used with *zera*ᶜ in these meanings
3. seed = semen virile.

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[2]   See Marlowe (1985) for a historical overview.

4. seed = offspring:
    a) (rarely) of animals.
    b) of mankind [i.e. of people], coll. = descendants, posterity; seed of (cf. c).
    c) seed (= posterity) of individuals (cf. b).
    d) of a particular child Gen 4:25; 1 Sam 1:11; of children.
    e) = family; = pedigree Ezra 2:59; = one's nation.
list of verbs used with *zera*ᶜ in these meanings
    f) as name for people of Israel.
    g) seed of future generations.
5. seed as marked by moral quality = persons of such a quality Prov 11:21.
Figure 1. Summary of entry of *zera*ᶜ in Brown, Driver and Briggs

Brown, Driver and Briggs (henceforth BDB) state that in Genesis 47:24 *zera*ᶜ means 'sowing': 'And at the harvests ... four fifths shall be your own, for sowing the field and as food for yourselves...'. 'Sowing' might be an adequate translational equivalent to be used in this context, but the Hebrew text literally reads: 'as seed of/for the field'. The references under 1a are thus better placed under meaning 2a. In fact, BDB mention Genesis 47:24 again under 2d. The meaning 'seedtime / sowing as recurring at its season' can then no longer be derived from 'sowing' as is done in BDB. As 'season for sowing seed' it may well be derived from the verb *zāra*ᶜ 'to sow'.

The differences under meaning 2 in BDB do not always indicate different meanings. a, b, and e are only different usages of the same meaning in different contexts. For instance, Isaiah 17:11 (2b) describes the sowing of seed in the context of some idolatrous ritual, but that does not mean that *zera*ᶜ as such is used figuratively here. This also applies to Amos 9:13 where the sower of *zera*ᶜ in its season is one of the figures who illustrate rapid growth in the coming time. In Zechariah 8:12 (2e), *zera*ᶜ itself does not mean 'growth'; it is the context that describes the growth of this seed in peace: 'For the seed will be prosperous: [for instance] the vine will yield its fruit...'. In these contexts, *zera*ᶜ as such still means 'seed'.

One might object that BDB perhaps intended not only to mention and number the different meanings but to give information about their contextual usages as well. However, 2c and d cannot be seen as contextual usages of meaning 2. The relationship between the meanings 2a on the one hand and 2c and d on the other is not one between meaning and contextual usage, but a relationship between a basic meaning and a derived meaning (what comes from seed). BDB do not clearly indicate this.

Apart from 4e, the distinctions under meaning 4 are also due to differences in usage of the same meaning 'offspring' in different contexts. In 1 Samuel 1:11 (4d) *zera*ᶜ indeed refers to an individual child as is also the case in Genesis 4:25: 'God has appointed for me another *zera*ᶜ instead of Abel'. In the other instances *zera*ᶜ is used collectively with the same meaning 'offspring'. Again, it might have been the intention of BDB to mention contextual usages of meaning 4. But if that were the case, BDB should still have differentiated the meaning 'descent/pedigree' (4e) from 'offspring'. This has indeed been done in Koehler and Baumgartner (1967).

In short, the entry in BDB differentiates carefully according to the usages of *zera*ᶜ. They sometimes mention verbs and parallel words which occur with *zera*ᶜ, thus paying some attention to syntagmatic relationships. As they show that some meanings are derived from others, they make their entries more transparent to the user. However, they tend to confuse different meanings with different usages of a meaning in particular contexts.

1.2. *zera*ᶜ in Koehler and Baumgartner

Figure 2 gives a short summary of the entry of *zera*ᶜ in Koehler and Baumgartner (1967) and in the new Koehler and Baumgartner in English (1994).

*zera*ᶜ seed:
1. seed Gen 47:24, seedtime
    a) seed [corresponds to meaning 2c of BDB: seed of herbs]
    b) seeds, seed-field, yield of seed
2. of man and beast: seed, human seed, son 1 Sam 1:11; descendants, semen Lev 15:16
3. offspring
    a) collectively: descendants, children
    b) (individual) descendant Gen 4:25; ? 1 Sam 1:11
4. descent Ezra 2:59.

Figure 2. Summary of entry of *zera*ᶜ in Koehler and Baumgartner (1967 and 1994)

The conception of Koehler and Baumgartner (henceforth KBL[3]) is not a revolutionary idea of lexicography itself but rather a concern with the working over of the increased material in Hebrew and related languages (Barr 1973:110,116). In fact, even though KBL[3] is the most recent traditional dictionary, the differentiation of meanings in this entry is less developed than in BDB. It is not made clear why 'seedtime' was put before 1a and b. Different meanings have been put together under 1b. It also remains unclear why 'descendants' has been put with 'seed' and 'semen' under 2 and not with 'offspring' under 3. *zera*ᶜ in 1 Samuel 1:11 has been mentioned twice: under 2 and – only with a question-mark – under 3b with Genesis 4:25 which is where BDB would have mentioned it.

2. Semantic shifts

Synchronic shifts from one meaning to another have been the subject of further discussion. Sawyer (1972:53) says: "When an expression is taken from one sphere and applied in a totally different one because of similarities of various kinds, this process is described as *metaphorical transference*." "from concrete to abstract" (Sawyer 1972:53-54) and "materia pro producto" (Kedar 1981:170) are two types of such a transfer. This may clarify in which way different meanings are related and thus shed light on the polysemy of the word in question (Lipka 1992:138). The semantic shifts in figure 3 seem to be involved between the meanings of *zera*ᶜ,

leading to "word metaphors", based on the notion of similarity, or rather to word metonymies, based on contiguity (Lipka 1992:122,163). Some of these transfers are already mentioned in Gesenius (1915).

substance → time: 'seed' → 'seedtime' (cf. Gesenius)
/ action → time: 'to sow' → 'seedtime';
substance → (what comes from) substance
/ material → product: 'seed' → 'grain' (cf. Gesenius);
substance → place: 'seed' → 'seed-field' (cf. Gesenius);
substance → human (result of substance): 'semen' → 'offspring' (cf. Gesenius);
concrete → abstract: 'offspring' → 'person of a certain quality/character'.

Figure 3. Meanings of *zera^c*: semantic shifts

I would suggest that there is sufficient reason to differentiate between meanings when a semantic shift is involved. This is not true of the description of different usages of one particular meaning. Explicit indication of semantic shifts from one meaning to another would contribute to a clearer organisation of the dictionary article. This would enable the user to see how the different meanings are conceptually linked.

3. Lexical meanings and semantic domains

Renewed attention is paid to the differentiation of meanings in the *Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament Based on Semantic Domains* which was launched by the South African Bible Society in 1981 (Lübbe 1990:4). It is currently in its first stage of preparation by an international team under supervision of J.P. Louw and J.C. Lübbe. This stage involves going through the Old Testament concordance and considering each and every occurrence of every word again in order
— to determine what the lexical meanings of that particular word may be
— to formulate definitions[3] of those meanings rather than glosses or translational equivalents, as the intended users are likely to do Bible translation into a receptor language other than English
— to determine to which semantic domain/field they may belong.
In the second stage different words with closely related meanings will be grouped under semantic domains. This stage will be described in section 3.2.

3.1. Determining lexical meanings

In the first stage it is important to determine what comes from a lexical item, and what comes from the context.[4] In this new lexicon, only lexical meanings of a word

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[3] One should guard against the lumping together of different meanings. Also, the definitions should be distinctive, making clear which of the meanings is under consideration. Cf. Lee's (1992:174-176,184) criticism of Louw and Nida (1988) in these respects.

are distinguished, not contextual meanings (different usages of a lexical meaning in their different contexts).[5] The lexical meaning of a word is not to be confused with the particular reference which this word has in a specific context. Context-independent possibilities of meaning are narrowed down and specified by their context (van Wolde 1994:28). Particular contextual features (in the sentence or elsewhere in the text) which define the word more precisely are restricted to particular instances and cannot be recognized as new meanings of a word, while a lexical meaning applies in other contexts as well. What a word contributes on its own to the understanding of the sentence, its lexical meaning, is thus kept separate from contextual features, information derived from the usage of the word with that lexical meaning in a specific context (Louw 1991:133-135,137). This will be illustrated in the next paragraph.

Distributional analysis can help to reduce a large number of contextual meanings of a word to a smaller number of lexical meanings (Louw 1991:139). Each lexical meaning has a specific semantic value which corresponds to its systematic, minimal, contribution to the interpretation of all the sentences in which the word with that lexical meaning occurs. In the standard dictionaries however, lexical and contextual meanings are indiscriminately mixed up. For instance, I have already shown that the contextual meanings 2a,b,e and 4a-d,f-g in BDB do not indicate different meanings but different usages of the same meaning in different contexts. They can be reduced to one lexical meaning 'seed' and 'offspring', respectively. Different lexical meanings of a word usually belong to different semantic domains (Barr 1992:144); a word can thus belong to more than one semantic domain at the same time (Fronzaroli 1993:86). In the case of polysemy, a word with different lexical meanings belongs to different fields of meaning.

The entry for *zera*ᶜ is part of my contribution to the first stage of this lexicon. For the differentiation of meanings, the above semantic shifts from one semantic domain to the other are taken into account. The entry is structured as in figure 4.

*zera*ᶜ
1. seed (vegetation, agriculture)
    Gen 1:11,12,29, Gen 47:24, Isa 17:11, Jer 31:27, Amos 9:13
2. seedtime, season for sowing seed (season, agriculture)
    Gen 8:22, Lev 26:5 (no other occurrences)
3. grain (products, agriculture)
    Lev 27:30, Num 20:5, 1 Sam 8:15, Job 39:12
4. semen, sperm (human body product)
    Lev 15:16, 19:20

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[4] If no decision is taken on this, it will be difficult to decide which words are (near) synonyms (Swiggers 1993:47). The meaning of a word cannot be totally explained by its context, as is clearly illustrated by terms for flora and fauna (Rüterswörden 1993:18-19).

[5] The word *ba*ᶜ*al* is a case in point. A lexical meaning 'possessor' fans out in different contextual meanings "according to the semantic classes of what is possessed (things, animals, persons ... qualities ...)" (Jenni 1993:58).

5. offspring, descendant(s) (procreation)
      Gen 4:25, 1 Sam 1:11, 2 Kin 17:20, Ezek 43:19, Mal 2:3
6. descent (ancestry)
      Dan 9:1, Ezra 2:59, Neh 7:61 (no other occurrences)
7. race, stock, family (ancestry, kinship terminology)
      Gen 17:12, 1 Kin 11:14, 2 Kin 11:1, 2 Kin 25:25/Jer 41:1, Ezek 44:22, Est
      6:13, Est 10:3, Dan 1:3, Ezra 9:2, Neh 9:2, 2 Chr 22:10
8. kind of people sharing a certain quality/character
      Prov 11:21 (no other occurrences)

Figure 4. *zera*ᶜ in the Lexicon of the Old Testament Based on Semantic Domains (first stage)

For most lexical meanings, a semantic domain is tentatively suggested between brackets. Usages of the same meaning in different contexts are mentioned together under one meaning. For example, individual and collective usages of *zera* ᶜ 'offspring' are mentioned together under meaning 5.

3.2. Arrangement according to semantic domains

Eventually semantic domains and subdomains will be presented with semantically related lexical meanings of different words. Meanings of words are thus expressed paradigmatically, that is, it should become apparent what difference it might have made to the author to choose a particular word rather than some other word from the same domain.[6] An index of Hebrew words will help one to find under which domain(s) the lexical meaning(s) of a particular word is/are discussed. The order of meanings as given above will eventually be irrelevant in the Lexicon when each lexical meaning of *zera*ᶜ will be mentioned under its appropriate semantic domain. As the Lexicon concentrates on lexical meanings and not on contextual usages, syntagmatic relationships are not dealt with.[7]

In these respects, much can be learnt from the *Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English* (McArthur 1981), which is based on semantic domains as well. These domains are determined on the basis of pragmatic considerations and not on 'universal concepts' (Jackson 1988:219). It includes definitions, examples, grammatical information, and indications of stylistic and register constraints. This will indeed enable the user to distinguish between the related meanings of different words.

In our Old Testament lexicon, the list of references under a lexical meaning is not necessarily exhaustive, as could be the case in a database. However, if different

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[6]   Meanings are thus approached as "functions of choices within the lexical stock of a given language at a given time" (Barr 1968:15). Cf. Nida and Louw (1992), chapters 4 'Analyzing the Related Meanings of Different Lexemes' and 5 'Domain Classification'.

[7]   If one were to include syntagmatic relationships, it would indeed be problematic to have to repeat the same types of collocation in the different places where the respective lexical meanings of a word are discussed. A partial solution could then be to mention only those types of collocation that are certain to occur with only one particular lexical meaning of the word. Otherwise the Lexicon might be criticized the way in which Lee (1992:172,185-186) criticizes Louw and Nida (1988) for its lack of syntactic data.

lexical meanings of a particular word have a very different distribution among the books of the Old Testament, this should be indicated by the references that are given.

Under the (provisional) semantic domain of procreation, *zera͏ᶜ* 'offspring, descendants' will be presented and discussed along with *ᵓaḥărît* 'posterity' (Jer 31:17), *môledet* 'offspring' (Gen 48:6, Lev 18:9,11), *nîn* 'offspring', *nekhed* 'posterity', *se͏ᵓĕsāᵓîm* 'offspring, descendants', *wālād* 'child' (Gen 11:30), *yeled* 'child' and *tôlēdôt* 'descendants, generations'. Under the (provisional) domains of ancestry and kinship terminology, *zera͏ᶜ* 'race, stock, family' will be presented along with *bayit* 'family', *mišpāḥâ* 'clan', *môledet* 'kindred', *nahaš* 'genealogy' (Neh 7:5) and *tarbût* 'breed' (Num 32:14), whereas *zera͏ᶜ* 'descent' will be presented along with *meᵏhûrâ* 'origin, descent' (Ezek 16:3, 21:35, 29:14). The lexical meanings of the words in a semantic domain are to be defined carefully and distinctively. Only then will it become clear, e.g. to the translator, to what extent and how the lexical meaning of one word is different from the other (cf. note 3). The user should not be under the impression that words are synomymous when this is not the case.

For the translator, it is important to see that different words with similar lexical meanings are semantically closer than different lexical meanings of the same word. This lexicon is expected to be very useful for Bible translators. It would include the kind of dictionary of near synonyms Snell-Hornby hopes for: "the traditional alphabetical arrangement ... supplemented by a presentation in contrastive semantic fields, to which the main body of the dictionary would act as index." (Snell-Hornby 1988:107-108). It should be remembered that we still do not always know which substitutions are possible and whether a particular substitution changes the meaning of the collocation (Swiggers 1993:53). This lexicon, however, should bring a full-grown paradigmatical semantics of Biblical Hebrew closer, even though a complete description of semantic domains in Biblical Hebrew is not available.

4. Semantic domains and alphabetical order

In the *Lexicon Based on Semantic Domains* alphabetical order is given up in order to put related lexical meanings of different words together in a semantic domain. The index only mentions under which semantic domains the respective lexical meanings of a word are discussed. This makes it impossible to get an overview of the word and its meanings in one composite description. Such a lexicon will complement alphabetical dictionaries, not replace them (Jackson 1988:221). This dilemma could be solved in a database. (Lexical) meanings could be coded not only for the word to which they apply, but for semantic domain and syntactic class as well. Information could then be retrieved according to a variety of characteristics (Jackson 1988:236).

In the *Diccionario bíblico hebreo-español* (henceforth DBHE; Alonso Schökel 1994) entries are sometimes organized on the basis of semantic domains.[8] Although

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[8]   This does not always mean that in such entries semantic domains are explicitly mentioned as such. *ᵓeben* is a case in point. In the introduction it says: "In the field of building. *ᵓeben* is stone

this does not give information on a semantic domain as a whole, it demonstrates that some information on semantic domains can be given in an alphabetical dictionary. *zera*ᶜ is one of the entries in which this is done, giving an overview of the meanings and the relevant semantic domains. Figure 5 summarises the entry of *zera* ᶜ in DBHE.

*zera*ᶜ:
1. Field of vegetation.
a) Seed, grain of seed Gen 47:23f correl. ʾokel food. Grain 1 Sam 8:15.
b) by extension: Shoot, offshoot, grafting Isa 17:11 = *netaᶜ* planting.
c) Sowing Lev 27:16,30 [?, cf. Figure 4]; Zch 8:12 dubious; Gen 8:22; Lev 26:5.
d) [specific contexts] *mᵉqôm*- field of sowing Num 20:5; *mošēk h*- sower Amos 9:13.
2. Of people.
a) Semen. In *šikbat*- coition or emission of semen Lev 15:16ff 19:20.
b) Descent, origin, lineage.
when divided: race, blood;
to former times: ancestors, tribe, descent;
downwards: offspring, posterity, progeny;
once removed: children, offspring.
In general Gen 17:12 ≠ *ben-nēkār* stranger; Jer 49:10 + *ʾaḥîm* brothers; Ps 112:2 = *dôr* generation.
Race, family Gen 7:3 2 Kin 17:20 Est 6:13 Neh 9:2.
– *hammᵉlûkâ* of royal blood 2 Kin 25:25 Jer 41:1.
Ancestors, descent Ezra 2:59 Neh 7:61.
Offspring, posterity. – *ʾaḥărê* posterity of Gen 9:9. Children and grandchildren[9] Gen 46:6.
– *ʾĕlohîm* godly offspring? Mal 2:15. Children, offspring Lev 18:21; – *ʾănāšîm* male child 1 Sam 1:11.
Figure 5. Summary of entry of *zera*ᶜ in Alonso Schökel (1994)

The meanings are given in connection with one of two broad semantic domains: one of vegetation, and one of people. This dictionary intends to be based on semantic logic, going for the factors that justify and explain the differentiation of meanings (Alonso Schökel 1991:79; 1994:9), paying special attention to figurative language (Alonso Schökel 1991:81). The semantic fields to which a word belongs are important for the differentiation of meaning, and a criterion of organization (Alonso Schökel 1994:10). Given these sound principles, it is rather surprising that the entry does not include Proverbs 11:21 (cf. meaning 5 in figure 1 (BDB) and meaning 8 in figure 4).

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and can mean 'plummet'; in the field of goldsmith's art, 'precious stone' or 'gem'; in the commercial one, 'weight'; in meteorology, 'hail'." (Alonso Schökel 1994:10). The actual entry is indeed organized on the basis of these fields but they are not referred to as such.

[9]   Hoftijzer's observation is relevant at this point. "In some instances *zrᶜ* indicates someone's descendants living during his lifetime: his children (and grandchildren)." (Hoftijzer 1989:32). He mentions the following examples: Gen 46:7, 48:11, Lev 20:2, 22:13, 1 Sam 2:20 and Isa 53:10.

DBHE provides "equivalents in the receptor language rather than describing the semantic content in a metalanguage." (Alonso Schökel 1991:76). This will be adequate as long as the receptor language is Spanish. DBHE was indeed prepared in connection with a literary translation of the Old Testament into modern Spanish (Alonso Schökel 1991:77; 1994:7).

This dictionary mentions near synonyms (=), antonyms (≠), 'correlatives' (correl.) and 'associatives' (+) in so far as they occur in the near context. Syntagmatic information is also given, e.g., under nouns that occur frequently, verbs are listed of which they are subject or complement (Alonso Schökel 1991:80; 1994:12).

5. Syntagmatic relationships

In the dictionary entries discussed above, basic meanings normally precede derived ones. In the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* however, a project led by D.J.A. Clines, "the senses of a word are generally arranged in order of frequency of attestation" (Clines 1990:79; 1993:19). Such frequencies may be interesting pieces of information, as is illustrated in figure 6. I would, however, consider the lack of information on semantic shifts a loss. As many of the texts are undatable, it is as yet impossible to prepare a separate dictionary for each diachronic phase (Clines 1992:169).[10]

Each entry in this dictionary is intended to answer two questions: "1. How is this word used and in what kind of sentences and connections? 2. How is it related in meaning and use to other similar or opposite words?" (Clines 1993:25). Thus, like BDB it sometimes presents different usages of the same meaning as different meanings but it does aim to make usages of a word much more explicit than BDB. It is primarily the Hebrew scholar who will benefit from this dictionary and gain insight into the collocation types of a word. These aims are different from those of the *Lexicon Based on Semantic Domains* which does not deal with syntagmatic relationships but with lexical meanings and their paradigmatic relationships, having the translator in mind.

More extensively than BDB, Clines' dictionary gives near synonyms and antonyms of the word under consideration, "even if they occur only once" (Clines 1995:13). However, this only happens in so far as they occur near that word at a particular point in the text and in so far as they belong to the same part of speech (Clines 1990:75,80; 1992:171,174; 1993:21). Such synonyms and antonyms give some indirect information about paradigmatic relationships of the word and its place within a semantic field of words but they are presented as part of the syntagmatic analysis.

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[10]   Of course this also applies to the *Lexicon Based on Semantic Domains*. On the other hand, the "process of collecting, editing, transmitting and interpreting" the texts of the Old Testament "has moulded what one may justifiably consider a linguistic corpus" (Kedar-Kopfstein 1994:18), although for the present purpose a division between Early and Late Biblical Hebrew would also seem valid.

The project has not yet proceeded to *zera*ᶜ – date of this article: august 1995 – but on the basis of its principles a possible entry of *zera*ᶜ would be structured as follows. With each meaning, the verbs would be mentioned of which *zera*ᶜ is the subject and those of which it is the object, as well as nouns connected to it in nominal phrase constructions, adjectives used to modify this noun, and the prepositions used with it (Clines 1990:74-75,79-80; 1992:170,172-173; 1993:20). Bible references are included. Frequencies would not be mentioned for each meaning. A summary (except for the morphology) with regard to the Biblical material is given in figure 6, using the meanings of the Lexicon in figure 4 and restricted to Bible references given earlier.

*zera*ᶜ 229x noun: seed, offspring
1. offspring, descendant(s) [158x]
<Subject> *hāyâ* be Ps 112:2
<Nominal clause> *rab* shall be many Job 5:25
<Object> *šāt* appoint Gen 4:25, *nātan* give Gen 15:3 1 Sam 1:11 1 Sam 2:20, *niqrā*ᵓ be named Gen 21:12, *gāᶜar* rebuke Mal 2:3
<Construct> *yiśrāᵓēl* of Israel 2 Kin 17:20, *ᵓabrāhām* of Abraham Ps 105:6
<Adjective> *ᵓahēr* other Gen 4:25, *ᵓănāšîm* male 1 Sam 1:11
<Synonyms> *bᵉnê yaᶜăqov sons* of Jacob Ps 105:6, *dôr* generation Ps 112:2, *seᵓĕṣāᵓêkā* your *descendants* Job 5:25
2. seed [40x]
<Object> *hizrîaᶜ* yield Gen 1:11,12, *hiprîah* make to flourish Isa 17:11
<Construct> *haśśādeh* of the field Gen 47:24, *ᵓādām* of man Jer 31:27, *bᵉhēmâ* of beast Jer 31:27, *mošēk* sower of Amos 9:13
3. race, stock, family [11x]
<Preposition, Construct> *min* … *hammᵉlûkâ* of the royal family 2 Kin 25:25/Jer 41:1 Dan 1:3
<Synonym> *mibbᵉnê yiśrāᵓēl* of the *people* of Israel Dan 1:3
4. semen [8x]
<Construct> *šikbat* emission of Lev 15:16, Lev 19:20
5. grain [6x]
<Object> *hēśîv* bring in Job 39:12
<Construct> *mᵉqôm* place of Num 20:5
6. descent [3x]
<Object> *higgîd* prove Ezra 2:59 Neh 7:61
<Preposition> *min* by birth Dan 9:1
<Synonym> *bêt-ᵓăvôtām* their fathers' *house* Ezra 2:59 Neh 7:61
7. seedtime [2x]
<Subject> *šāvat* cease Gen 8:22
<Object> *hiśśîg* reach Lev 26:5
8. kind of people sharing a certain quality/character [1x]
<Subject> *nimlat* be delivered Prov 11:21
<Construct> *saddîqîm* of the righteous Prov 11:21
Figure 6. Possible entry of *zera*ᶜ

One cannot expect an alphabetical dictionary to serve at the same time as a dictionary ordered according to meanings (Goshen-Gottstein 1991:90). Not surprisingly, one of Lübbe's criticisms is that in Clines' alphabetical dictionary words of related meaning are not grouped together for comparison,[11] as in the second stage of the Lexicon discussed earlier, but apparent synonyms are only mentioned without any comparison (Lübbe 1991:137). This will not be of much help to exegetes and translators.

6. Concluding remarks

There is sufficient reason to differentiate between lexical meanings when a semantic shift is involved. Different lexical meanings of a word usually belong to different semantic domains. A lexical meaning is to be kept separate from the usage of the word with that lexical meaning in a specific context. In terms of the lexicographical lumping x splitting problem, contextual meanings that belong to the same semantic domain are to be lumped together.

In the alphabetical dictionaries of Clines and Alonso Schökel, words of related meaning are not grouped together for comparison but near synonyms and antonyms are only mentioned in so far as they occur near that word at a particular point in the text. This will be of limited value to exegetes and translators. On the other hand, Clines aims to make usages of a word much more explicit than in BDB. The Hebrew scholar will thus gain insight into the collocation types of a word.

These aims are different from those of the *Lexicon of the Old Testament Based on Semantic Domains* which deals with lexical meanings and their paradigmatic relationships, showing what difference it makes to choose a particular word rather than some other word from the same domain. This will make it very useful for Bible translators.

When entries in the *Diccionario bíblico hebreo-español* are organized on the basis of semantic domains, this does not give information on a semantic domain as a whole. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that some information on semantic domains can be given in an alphabetical dictionary, while it helps to differentiate meanings more carefully.

A database could not only contain all the references of the respective meanings of a word, but their semantic domains and the relevant syntagmatic information could be retrieved from it as well.

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[11]   The English-Hebrew index at the end of the volume and the Spanish-Hebrew glossary to DBHE (Morla 1993) can only be a very indirect help towards that.

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Abstract:

In this article the classical approach to lexicography of Biblical Hebrew as reflected in standard bilingual dictionaries is compared with recent developments in the description of the meaning of Hebrew words. These show a separation of paradigmatical and syntagmatical semantics as well as a renewed interest in the treatment of near synonyms and in a lexicon set up like a thesaurus. This affects the presentation of multiple meaning or polysemy. Users such as Bible translators are likely to benefit from some of these developments. To illustrate the principles behind the different approaches, it is discussed how they deal with the lexicography of the Hebrew word *zera^c*.

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