

Simple Nominal Clause (SNC) or Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew Prose

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Definition

The simple nominal clause (SNC) is the clause that does not contain any finite verb form—not even the verb *hyh*. It is the simple nominal clause in contradistinction to the complex nominal clause (CNC) which has a finite verb form in the second position of the sentence, i.e. *x-qatal*, or *x-yiqtol*.

These definitions do not conform to common grammatical analysis.¹ Contrary to most grammarians, I think that, first, the verb *hyh* is not a copula but a normal verb since its presence is not optional in a main sentence (see below); and, second, when a verb form takes the second position, the sentence has the function of a noun phrase, i.e. it is used as a nominal or adverbial element of a larger unit of the text. The basic presupposition is that correct syntactic analysis is impossible if one remains bound to the sentence level; only on the larger level of the text are the relationships between sentences correctly understood.

In this paper, I shall define criteria and analyse texts in order to clarify the basic structure of the SNC. I shall not treat the SNC with *ʔʕr* since this would require a paper by itself.²

Criteria

In spite of monographic studies on the subject, nobody seems able to provide criteria that determine what the subject and the predicate are in the SNC. The problem is left for the grammarian to decide — not always an easy task. Another unsolved problem is the principle which lies behind the word order, i.e. why sometimes we find the order predicate (P) – subject (S) and sometimes S – P.

My assumption is that the problem of subject and predicate is solved by taking into consideration two basic principles: first, the traditional doctrine of universals and particulars, and second, the position in the sentence.

In Aristotelian terms, universals and particulars correspond to accidental properties and substances respectively.

¹ Details of this theory can be found in two recent books of the author: *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, Sheffield 1990, and *Lettura sintattica della prosa ebraica-biblica*, Jerusalem 1990.

² I hope to publish soon a monographic study on the SNC in Biblical Hebrew prose. I refrain from giving a bibliographical list here. A brief overview of the current research on the verbless clause is available in N.M. Waldman, *The Recent Study of the Hebrew*, Cincinnati – Winona Lake 1989, 68.

Substances were persons or things of which accidental properties (of quantity, quality, relation, action, place, state, etc.) could be predicated (or asserted) in logically well-formed propositions...

Proper names, as well as pronouns and phrases which identify a definite person or thing (like *John, he* and *my friend...*) are to be regarded as the most 'substantial' — the most truly 'nominal' — of the expressions in a language (hence the traditional term 'substantive' for 'noun'). They are *particular* (or 'singular') terms, denoting some definite, *individual* substance. Other words and phrases, including indefinite 'common' nouns (*man, book, etc.*) and 'abstract' nouns (*goodness, beauty, etc.*), as well as verbs, adjectives and adverbs, are *universal* (or 'general') terms: they do not of themselves denote individual substances (unless they are syntactically determined, in the descriptive specification of an individual, e.g. *the man over there*), but they denote either a class of individuals or qualities, states, actions, etc., which may be associated with individuals.³

In principle, substances (or particulars) function as subject while accidental properties (or universals) function as predicate.

The other main principle of my analysis is that the first position of the sentence belongs to the predicate in Biblical Hebrew. I already have applied this principle to the sentence with finite verb form.⁴ Accordingly, a sentence is predicative when the finite verb form is found right at the beginning of it; it is nominal when the finite verb form takes the second position (i.e. a CNC). I hope to show that, *mutatis mutandis*, this same principle applies to the sentence without a finite verb form (i.e. a SNC).

Two more specifications are needed at this point. First, a distinction is to be made between "unmarked" and "marked" sentences; second, a special sentence is to be defined which shall be termed "presentative".

A definition of unmarked and marked is normally given by resorting to "the traditional logical distinction of subject and predicate".⁵ In Biblical Hebrew, the following definition can be given: when the first position of the sentence is taken by an expression belonging to the class of the predicate the sentence is predicative, or unmarked, or neutral; on the contrary, when the first position is taken by an expression not belonging to the class of the predicate, the sentence is non-predicative, or marked, or detail-oriented. In the first case, class and function coincide since the emphasis falls on an expression which is destined to function as the predicate by its own nature, and therefore the information is general (it states 'what the subject did'). In the second case, on the contrary, class and function diverge because the emphasis falls on an expression which is not expected to function as the predicate, and therefore the information is not general but concerned with a certain detail ('who is the subject', or 'how did something happen'). I hope that things shall become clear later on.

Presentative sentences are clearly discernible by their specific word order and semantic setting. "Presentative" is not the usual terminology in English, however. Presentative sentence has been clearly described in Italian and French. In Italian it

³ J. Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*, Cambridge etc. 1968, § 8.1.3.

⁴ See note 1.

⁵ See J. Lyons, *Semantics 2*, Cambridge etc. 1977, § 12.7, p. 502.

is sometimes marked by *c'è, ci sono*; in French by *il y a; c'est; voici, voilà*.⁶ In English there might correspond the "there construction" although it is not analysed in this way by grammarians.⁷ The prominent feature of the presentative sentence is that the subject takes the second position instead of the first (as in the normal word order). Its specific setting is description not evaluation (as in a predicative sentence). The speaker describes what he sees (in reality or in a dream), or he portrays as present an event which happened in the past or far away from himself and/ or from the listener. In English this type of sentence is indicated as "descriptive" (J. Lyons), "descriptive statement" (J. R. Searle), or "proposition" (J. L. Austin).⁸

Type 1 of SNC

By combining the two main principles we have just described, i.e. classes of subject and predicate, and position in the sentence, all types of SNCs can be described and accounted for. The two basic types of SNC are as follows: type 1, with word order P – S, and type 2, with word order S – P.

Type 1 is a predicative sentence. It is unmarked or neutral when P belongs to the class of the predicate; it is marked when it does not belong to this class. This means that when an element not belonging to the class of the predicate takes the first position, it bears the emphasis and it functions as the predicate of the sentence. The element belonging to the class of the predicate is then demoted to function as the subject.

- (1) Lev 11:35 | (P) $\dot{t}m^{\dot{y}}m$ | (S) hm
 (Everything upon which a part of their carcass shall fall...) they are unclean...
- (2) 1Kgs 20:32 | (P) $^{\dot{h}}y$ | (S) $hw^{\dot{y}}$
 (Ben-hadad...) he is my brother.

These two examples illustrate different terms belonging to the class of the predicate (universals): an adjective and a 'common' noun respectively. These are unmarked, plain sentences because the predicate is a term belonging to the class of the predicate.

Note, however, that particular terms denoting individual substances can also function as P as shown in the following examples:

- (3) Dt 3:21b | (P) $^{\dot{c}}ynyk$ | (S) $hr^{\dot{r}}t^{\dot{r}}t\ kl^{\dot{r}}\text{-}\dot{s}r^{\dot{c}}sh\ yhw^{\dot{h}}\ ^{\dot{r}}lhykm$
 (To Joshua I said...) It is your eyes which have seen all that Yahweh your God (did to those two kings...)
- (4) Gen 37:16 | (P) $^{\dot{r}}t^{\dot{r}}\dot{h}y$ | (S) $^{\dot{r}}nky\ mbq\dot{s}$
 (Gen 37,15 What are you looking for?) It is my brothers that I am looking for.

⁶ See L. Renzi (ed.), *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione*, Bologna 1988, 36-37, and J.-C. Chevalier et al. (ed.), *Grammaire Larousse du français contemporain*, Paris 1964, §§ 121.125.

⁷ According to R. Huddleston, *Introduction to the Grammar of English*, Cambridge etc. 1984, § 14.7, this "dummy there" is the subject of the sentence.

⁸ See index at the end of the respective books: Lyons, *Semantics*, 1-2; J.R. Searle, *Speech Acts*, Cambridge etc. 1969; J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford – New York 1975.

- (5) Gen 29:4 | (P) *m²yn* | (S) *ʔtm*
 | (P) *mḥrn* | (S) *ʔnhnw*

(Jacob said to the shepherds ...) Where are you from? (They said:) From Harran are we.

Examples (3) - (5) illustrate cases where a particular term (a substantive with a personal pronoun in (3) and (4), a prepositional phrase in (5)) functions as a predicate. In all three the information is not general, or unmarked, or neutral, but rather detail-oriented, or marked. It states who the subject is in (3), who the object is in (4), and the place from where in (5). Emphasis falls in the first element of the sentence, i.e. it is the predicate. In examples (3) and (4) we find a participle (*hr²t*, *mbqš*, respectively) which belongs to the class of the predicate. Because of its position in the second place, this participle is demoted to the role of subject;⁹ in (5) a prepositional phrase, which is normally not classified as predicate, is promoted to the role of the predicate.

Type 2 of SNC

Type 2 shows a word order S - P. In this case the P is demoted from its leading function in the sentence. This happens in circumstantial and in presentative SNCs. The fact that the circumstantial SNC shows the word order S - P is well known. One example is enough:

- (6) 1Sm 17:41 | *wylk hplšty hlk wqrb ʔl-dwd*
 | (S) *wh²yš nš² hšnh* | (P) *lpnyw*

The Philistine came on, continually getting closer to David, while the shield-bearer was in front of him.

The clearest case of the presentative sentence is that of someone introducing himself to the listener (as in the so-called "self-presentation formulas"):

- (7) Gen 28:13 | (S) *ʔny* | (P) *yhwh ʔlhy ʔbrhm ʔbyk wʔlhy yšḥq*
 (God said to Jacob:) I am Yahweh the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac.

With the same sentence type we find the case of someone introducing a third party to the listener (8), describing something which is happening in that very moment (9), reporting on some event (10), or submitting to the listener a proposition of his own (11):

- (8) Gen 24:65 | *my-h²yš hhlk bšdh lqr ʔtnw*
 | (S) *... hw²* | (P) *ʔdny*

(Rebekah said to the servant:) Who is that man that is walking in the field to meet us? (He answered:) He is my master.

- (9) Gen 38:13 | (S) *hnh ḥmyk* | (P) *ʕlh tmnth lgz š²nw*

(It was reported to Tamar as follows:) Behold your father in law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.

- (10) Nb 11:27 | (S) *ʔldd wmydd* | (P) *mtnb ʔym bmḥnh*

(A young man reported to Moses as follows:) Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.

⁹ The 'subject' is an embedded SNC in (4) with *ʔnky* as the (grammatical) S and *mbqš* as the (grammatical) P.

- (11) Gen 19:31 | (S) ^ʔ*bynw* | (P) *zqn*
 | (S) *w^ʔyš* | (P) ^ʔ*yn b^ʔrš lbw^ʔ ʕlynw*

(The firstborn said to the younger daughter of Lot:) Our father is old and there is no man in the country to come unto us.

We conclude that the normal word order of the predicative independent SNC is P – S (exactly as in the corresponding sentence with a finite verb form). The first element of the SNC functions as the predicate and on it the emphasis falls. If the first element belongs to the class of the predicate, the SNC is unmarked, otherwise it is marked, i.e. it communicates information not in general terms but stressing only a detail of it. When, however, the SNC is presentative (independent) or circumstantial (dependent) the normal word order is S – P. No emphasis falls on the first element of the presentative sentence simply because the sentence is not predicative, i.e. there is no predicative nexus in it between (grammatical) subject and (grammatical) predicate. In fact, the presentative sentence communicates information in a global way (see next section). No emphasis falls in the first element of the circumstantial SNC, either. In fact, the effect of the circumstantial SNC is to demote the predicate (thus making the whole sentence syntactically dependent) simply by putting the subject in the first position.

Presentative and predicative SNC

It is advisable to show the difference between predicative and presentative SNC by means of examples:

- (12) Gen 24:23 | (P) *bt-my* | (S) ^ʔ*t*
 Gen 24:24 | (P) *bt-btw^ʔl* | (P) ^ʔ*nk y*
 (Abraham's servant asked:) Whose daughter are you? (Rebekah answered:) A daughter of Bethuel I am.
 (13) Gen 27:32 | (P) *my-* | (S) ^ʔ*th*
 | (S) ^ʔ*ny* | (P) *bnk bkrk ʔšw*
 (Isaac asked:) Who are you? (Jacob answered:) I am your firstborn Esau.

In (12) a complete reply would also be simply *bt-btw^ʔl*, while in (13) it would be *bnk bkrk ʕšw*. It is clear that these two noun phrases are the predicate. In (12) we find a predicative sentence, with the word order P – S, since it states a quality of the subject. On the contrary, (13) is a presentative sentence since it simply reveals the identity of the man who is coming along. In (12) Rebekah states something of herself while in (13) Jacob simply presents himself (falsely!).

We can now understand the variant word order of identical SNCs such as the following:

- (14) Gen 26:20 | *wyr ybw r^ʕy grr^ʕm r^ʕy yšq l^ʔmr*
 | (P) *lnw* | (S) *hmym*
 The shepherds of Gerar strove with the shepherds of Isaak saying: Ours is the water!
 (15) 1Kgs 2:14 | *wy^ʔmr*
 | (S) *dbr* | (P) *ly^ʔlyk*
 (Adonijah) said (to Bath-sheba): I have something to say ('a word') to you.
 (16) Lev 11:35 | (P) *ʔm^ʔym* | (S) *hm*
 | *wʔm^ʔym yhyw lkm*

(Everything upon which a part of their carcass shall fall...) they are unclean and unclean they should be unto you.

(17) Nb 9:7 | (S) ²*nhnw* | (P) *tm²ym*

(The men who had become unclean because of touching a corpse said to Moses:) We are unclean...

Since in (14) the two groups of shepherds are arguing one against the other, the prepositional phrase *lnw* clearly states a claim on the water. The prepositional phrase is the predicate and takes the first position. This word order is distinctive of the predicative sentence (P – S). On the contrary, no such claim occurs in (15) where the speaker simply announces that he has something to say to the addressee. The word order is therefore that of the presentative sentence (S – P), and not that of the predicative one. Accordingly, (16) is a predicative SNC with the word order P – S while (17) is a presentative sentence with the word order S - P. The context, in fact, justifies this analysis. In Lev 11 God is giving instructions concerning pure and impure animals. Starting from v. 4b, the structure of several sentences is as follows: a description ("As for this and this...", a *casus pendens*) followed by a statement ("it is clean", or "it is unclean"). The statement consists of a SNC of the predicative type having the adjective *tm²* "unclean", or *thwr* "clean" in the first position, and an independent personal pronoun in the second position. The adjective belongs to the class of the predicate and functions as the predicate; the pronoun, on its part, belongs to the class of the subjects and functions as such. Every such sentence conveys God's verdict on food matters.

The second sentence of (16) is not a SNC with the copula but a CNC of the type *waw-x-yiqtol*. This is one of the clearest examples that contradicts the analysis of the verb *hyh* as a copula (see below). Otherwise, it would be rather difficult to explain the repetition of the same sentence in (16). It is, in fact, no repetition since the second sentence is totally different. The (*waw-x-*) *yiqtol* has a jussive force in contrast to the declarative force of the preceding SNC: "They are unclean and they must be unclean for you". This same type of sentence is found in Lev 11:10-11 and Ex 30:32.

In contrast with (16), the SNC of (17) is not predicative. The people who speak have already undergone impurity. They are not issuing a statement on themselves; rather they are presenting their state to Moses so that a solution can be found allowing them to celebrate the passover.

A SNC very similar to (3) is found in Gen 45:12:

(18) Gen 45:12 | (S) *hnh^c nykm* | (P) *r²wt*
 | (S) *w^cny² hy bnymyn* | (P) –
 | (P) *ky-py* | (S) *hmdbr²lykm*

(Joseph said to his brethren:) And, behold, your eyes see, as do the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it's my mouth that speaks unto you.

Gen 45:12 consists of three SNCs, the first two showing the word order S – P (in the second we find an ellipsis of the P, which is the same as the preceding). They are presentative sentences as the context shows. In order to reassure his brethren, Joseph invites them to consider what they see with their own eyes (note the presence of *hnh* which is characteristic of visual experience). On the contrary, in (3) the emphasis rests on the first term *^cnykm*, which consequently has the function

sentence is governed by definite rules. It is mandatory when there is a need to indicate a time setting for the information which is different from the present. The SNC indicates present setting by itself; for past and future settings a finite verb form (qatal and yiqtol, respectively) is needed. In the SNC no form of *hyh* is found simply because the participle of this verb is not used in Biblical Hebrew (it is only found in Ex 9:3). When a finite verb form of *hyh* occurs, we have either a verbal sentence (if the verb form is in the first position) or a CNC (if the verb form is in the second position), not a (verbless) SNC. The nominal complement found with the verb *hyh* functions as a predicative complement since it completes the predication of the verb. In fact, in such cases, *hyh* is a verb of incomplete predication (it can also be a "full" verb of complete predication, as in Gen 1:3).

The analysis of a SNC where three members occur is a matter of debate. The third member is a pronoun, personal or demonstrative. According to some authorities, it is a "pleonastic or dummy pronoun"; according to others, one of the members is "focus". For instance: $\text{ʔšw hw}^{\text{ʔ}} \text{ʔdwm}$ (Gen 36:8) can be analysed as follows: "Esau (, he) is Edom" (i.e. subject – pleonastic pronoun – predicate), or: "As for Esau, he is Edom" (i.e. focus – subject – predicate).¹³ Still other authorities take the pronoun to function as the copula.

R.S. Driver is one of the few authors who find hard to accept the existence of the copula in Biblical Hebrew. Driver's analysis of the evidence is not without flaws but it is sound in this respect. He also refers to some texts which beautifully demonstrate, in my opinion, the non-existence of the copula.¹⁴ Some of the relevant texts are as follows (note that the casus pendens is indicated as "pd"):

(24) Dt 9:3	(pd) $\text{wyd}^{\text{t}} \text{hywm ky yhw}^{\text{h}} \text{ʔlhyk}$	
	(P) $\text{hw}^{\text{ʔ}}$	(S) $\text{ha}^{\text{c}} \text{ʔbēr lpyk}$
	(pd) $\text{ʔš}^{\text{ʔ}} \text{ʔwklh}$	
	(P) $\text{hw}^{\text{ʔ}}$	(S) yšmydm
	(P) $\text{whw}^{\text{ʔ}}$	(S) $\text{ykny}^{\text{c}} \text{m lpyk}$

And so you shall experience today that Yahweh your God, it's Him that is about to go over before you; a consuming fire, it's Him that will destroy them, it's Him that will bring them down before you.

The parallelism between a (verbless) SNC ($\text{hw}^{\text{ʔ}} \text{ha}^{\text{c}} \text{ʔbēr lpyk}$) and CNCs ($\text{hw}^{\text{ʔ}} \text{yšmydm}$, $\text{whw}^{\text{ʔ}} \text{ykny}^{\text{c}} \text{m lpyk}$, with a finite verb form in the second position) is instructive. It shows that the pronoun cannot be taken as pleonastic, or as a copula. Understandably, this analysis is impossible with a following finite verb form. Rather, the pronoun is the predicate, the subject being, in the first instance, a participle ($\text{ha}^{\text{c}} \text{ʔbēr}$, with a particular article). In the other two instances the role of the subject is played by a finite verb form. The SNC shows the word order P – S with a total reversal of roles since what is normally subject functions as predicate, and vice versa.

Other texts with the same sentence structure can be quoted:

¹³ See B.K. Waltke – M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake 1990, 131.

¹⁴ R.S. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and Some Other Syntactical Questions*, Oxford ³1892, §§ 198-201.

- (25) Dt 31:3
- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (pd) <i>yhwh ʾlhyk</i> | (S) <i>ʿōbēr l pnyk</i> |
| (P) <i>hwʾ</i> | (S) <i>yšmyd ʾt-hgwym hʾlh ...</i> |
| (P) <i>hwʾ-</i> | |
| (pd) <i>yhwš^c</i> | |
| (P) <i>hwʾ</i> | (S) <i>ʿōbēr l pnyk...</i> |

Yahweh your God, it's Him that is about to go over before you, it's Him that will destroy those peoples (from before you, so that you shall inherit them). Joshua, it's him that is about to go over before you (as Yahweh promised).

- (26) Dt 31:8
- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| (pd) <i>wyhwh</i> | (S) <i>hahōlēk l pnyk</i> |
| (P) <i>hwʾ</i> | (S) <i>yhyh ʿmk</i> |
| (P) <i>hwʾ</i> | |

And Yahweh your God, it's Him that is about to march before you, it's Him that will be with you.

- (27) Jos 22:22
- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| (pd) <i>ʾl ʾlhyw yhwh ʾl ʾlhyw yhwh</i> | (S) <i>yōdēā^c</i> |
| (P) <i>hwʾ</i> | |
| (pd) <i>wyšr ʾl</i> | |
| (P) <i>hwʾ</i> | (S) <i>yēda^c</i> |

The God of the gods Yahweh, the God of the gods Yahweh, it's Him that knows; and Israel, it's him that shall know.

- (28) Jos 23:3b
- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (pd) <i>ky yhwh ʾlhykm</i> | (S) <i>hannilḥām lkm...</i> |
| (P) <i>hwʾ</i> | |

Jos 23:5a

(pd) <i>wyhwh ʾlhykm</i>	(S) <i>yhdpm m pnykm</i>
(P) <i>hwʾ</i>	

Because Yahweh your God, it's Him that fought for you...

And Yahweh your God, it's Him that shall expel them from before you.

In all these examples we find a personal pronoun functioning as the predicate, the structure of the sentence being as follows: casus pendens, P – S. The pronoun can also function as the subject and the sentence pattern can change; e.g., casus pendens, S (pronoun) – P (as in 29), and casus pendens, P – S (pronoun) (as in 30).

- (29) Gen 36:8b
- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| (pd) <i>ʿšw</i> | (S) <i>hwʾ</i> | (P) <i>ʾdm</i> |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|

As for Esau, he is Edom.

- (30) Gen 41:25
- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| (pd) <i>ḥlwm pr ʿh</i> | (S) <i>hwʾ...</i> |
| (P) <i>ʾhd</i> | |

Gen 41:26

(pd) <i>šb^c prt ḥḥbt</i>	(S) <i>hnh</i>
(P) <i>šb^c šnym</i>	

(pd) <i>wšb^c šblym ḥḥbt</i>	(S) <i>hnh</i>
(P) <i>šb^c šnym</i>	

(pd) <i>ḥlwm</i>	(S) <i>hwʾ</i>
(P) <i>ʾhd</i>	

(Joseph said to the Pharaoh:) The dream of the Pharaoh, it is one. (...)

The seven good cows, they are seven years, and the seven good ears, they are seven years. The dream, it is one.

Demonstrative pronouns behave in the same way as the personal pronouns. They can function as the predicate, thus being related to what follows ("cataphoric pronouns") (31), or they can function as subjects, thus being related to what precedes ("anaphoric pronouns") (32).

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|--------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| (31) Gen 5:1 | (P) zh | (S) spr twldt ²dm... |
| Gen 20:13 | (P) zh | (S) hsd ²šr t ²šy ²mdy... |
| Gen 25:12 | (P) w ²lh | (S) tldt yšm ²l bn- ²brhm... |

The following is the book of the generations of Adam...

The following is the kindness that you shall show unto me...

And the following are the generations of Ishmael son of Abraham...

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| (32) Gen 27:21 | (P) h ²th | (S) zh bny ²šw |
| | ²m-l ² (P) - | (S) - 15 |
| Gen 27:24 | (P) ²th | (S) zh bny ²šw... |
| | (P) ²ny | (S) - |
| Gen 32:3 | (P) m²nh ²lhym | (S) zh |

(Isaac said to Jacob: Come near that I might feel you) whether you are (this, i.e.) my son Esau, or (you are) not (my son Esau).

Are you (this, i.e.) my son Esau?

(Jacob answered:) I am.

(Jacob said:) A God's camp is this.

The reply ²ny (alone) in Gen 27:24 confirms that the personal pronoun in the first position of the sentence functions as the predicate while the demonstrative pronoun functions as the subject. The personal noun is in apposition with the subject. The same sentence pattern occurs in the following examples:

- | | | |
|---------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| (33) 2Sm 7:28 | w ²th ²dny yhw | |
| | (P) ²th- | (S) hw ² h ²lhym... |
| 2Chr 20:6 | (P) w ²th | (S) mwšl bkl mmlkwt hgwym |

And now, Lord Yahweh, it's you (it, i.e.) the true God...

And it's you that rules over all the kingdoms of the nations.

In 2Sm 7:28, *hw* ² is the subject and *h* ²lhym follows in apposition with it (the same in 2Kgs 19:15). The parallel text of 2Chr 20:6 shows this same construction but soon after, there follows another SNC without the personal pronoun, the subject being the participle *mwšl*. This same pattern (with and without a personal pronoun) occurs in the following example:

- | | | |
|----------------|----------|--------------------------|
| (34) 1Chr 22:1 | (P) zh | (S) hw ² byt yhw h ²lhym |
| | (P) wzl- | (S) mzbh l ²lh lyšr ²l |

(David said:) This is (it, i.e.) the house of Yahweh the God, and this is the altar for the burnt offering of Israel.

A proof that in this kind of sentence the term that follows the personal (or demonstrative) pronoun is really apposition comes from the fact that different terms can fill that position. These are a noun (32-34), a participle (35), a relative phrase with ²šr (36-37), and a clause introduced by *ky* (38). Normally, a substantive occurs with the ²šr clause instead of the pronoun (37).¹⁶

- | | | |
|--|--------------|----------------------------|
| (35) Gen 27:33 | (P) my-²pw ² | (S) hw ² hsd-šyd |
| (Isaac said:) Who then is he that hunted game (and brought it to me) ? | | |
| (36) 2Chr 2:5b | (P) wny | (S) ²ny ²šr ²bnh-lw byt... |
| And who am I that I should build a house for Him...? | | |

¹⁵ The particle ²m-l ² introduces a disjunctive question where both P and S are elliptical.

¹⁶ 2Chr 2:5b is the only example I know with the personal pronoun before the particle ²šr.

- (37) Dt 4:7 | (P) *ky my-* | (S) *gwy gdwl ʔšr-lw ʔlthym...*
 For who is a great nation that has gods (near to them as Yahweh...)?
- (38) Ex 3:11 | (P) *my* | (S) *ʔnky ky ʔlk ʔl-pr ʕh*
 (Moses said unto God:) Who am I that I should go to the Pharaoh (and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt)?

In (35) a participle with article follows the pronoun with the force of an adjective, the same as the ʔšr clause in (36). The same position is filled by a circumstantial *ky* clause in (37). Thus we find a paradigmatic substitution of the following terms and functions: noun in apposition, attributive participle, attributive ʔšr clause, circumstantial *ky* clause. These functions express similar relationship with different terms. We conclude that the SNC consists of two members only, i.e. S and P. All different patterns consist of these two basic members with a possible addition of a third member functioning as a *casus pendens*. As such it is not really a third member because it is not a part of the sentence.

Abstract:

The author gives a description of the verbless clause (SNC) based on new criteria. The basic types of the SNC are as follows: type 1, with predicate + subject, and type 2, with subject + predicate. The first type is predicative, the second is 'presentative' or circumstantial. Both types can have an extra element at the beginning or at the end. At the beginning it functions as a *casus pendens*; at the end it functions as an apposition with the subject. The copula does not exist in Biblical Hebrew. The SNC is basically a two-member sentence.

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