

Contrasts in the distribution of personal proper names in construct constructions in Modern and Biblical Hebrew

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Contrasts in the distribution of personal proper names in constructs in Biblical and Modern Hebrew (BH vs MH) suggest a diachronic change in the predicate vs. argument status of proper names. Constructs are genitive constructions which occur in Semitic languages. The head occurs in construct state and is immediately followed by the genitive nominal, which often denotes the possessor. In MH proper names of individuals with a referential possessor interpretation are usually infelicitous in the annex of referential constructs: (1a) vs. (1b). When a proper name denotes a possessor, a periphrastic genitive or a so-called double construct must be used.

- (1) a. *bet ha-mora* b. *#bet ariela*
 'the teacher's house' Intended: 'Ariella's house'

Rothstein (2017) argues that (2b) is infelicitous because the annex of a construct must be a bare predicate NP. Proper names are referential DPs and thus cannot occur in this position. The data in BH are strikingly different. Proper names occur freely in the annex of constructs, throughout the corpus (2). No other genitive constructions are available.

- (2) a. *bet yosep* (Gen 43: 18) b. *bigdey aharon* (Ex. 28.3)
 'Yosef's house' 'Aharon's clothing'

These data suggest that proper names in BH are predicate NPs and not DPs. We offer four pieces of evidence to support this. (i) the lexical semantics of proper names in BH which may express uniquely identifying properties of individuals, (ii) rare examples of proper names with definite articles (iii) gentilic names, which have the syntax and morphology of nouns or adjectives (iv) uses of proper names as sentential predicates. In the absence of evidence for a determiner position in BH, we suggest that all nominals including proper names are NPs. We propose that in MH a determiner position has developed, and suggest, following Longobardi (1994), that in MH proper names start off as predicate NPs, but become referential after raising to DP.

References: • Longobardi, G. 1994. Reference and proper names. A theory of N-movement in syntax and logical form. *Linguistic Inquiry* 25(4). 609–665 • Rothstein, S. 2012. Reconsidering the Hebrew construct state. *Italian Journal of Linguistics* 24(2). 227–266. • Rothstein, S. 2017. Proper names in construct state phrases. *Folia Linguistica* 51(2).