Adverbializers are a subclass of subordinators, or subordinating conjunctions, that mark an intra--clausal, adverbial relation. Hebrew expresses adverbialization in a variety of ways. In this article, two syntactic patterns of adverbialization with prepositions are surveyed from the perspective of historical linguistics. Both of these arrangements are found in the earliest strata of Hebrew. Later evidence demonstrates a shift in the usage of one pattern in favor of another. We propose a historic process through which these patterns emerged in Biblical Hebrew (BH), track the diachronic distribution in Hebrew, demonstrate the role of language contact on the changes, and apply this framework to a particularly difficult interpretive problem in the Hebrew Bible.

1 The Development of Adverbializers

The primary means of adverbialization in BH is a function of prepositions. Two productive structures consist of prepositions governing a following clause or an embedded relative clause: (1) PREP+S and (2) PREP+REL+S.

\[(1) \quad \text{וֹאַחֲרֵי הֵסַבּוּ אֹת ʾוֹטֹ} \]
\[\text{ʾaḥăre hesabbu ʾoṯo} \]
\[\text{AFTER-PREP lead.around-SC.3.M.PL DOM+it} \]
\[\text{‘After they led it around’ (1Sam 5:9)} \]
‘Until I arose’ (Judg 5:7)

The syntax of these patterns finds its origin in the Semitic noun phrase (NP), particularly, the genitive construction. Through examining these modifying structures, the development of adverbializers in Hebrew is detectable.

In cross-linguistic comparison, the modification of nouns may be classified into three constructions: genitives, adjectives, and relatives.2 These may be exemplified in BH with the following: (3) a genitive (i.e. the Semitic construct phrase), (4) an adjective phrase, and (5) a relative construction. The first two expressions are types of NPs, and the last consists of a relative clause.

(3) בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים
bne ha-ʔɛ̆lohim
‘the gods’ sons’

(4) הֶהָרִים הַגְבֹהִים
hɛ-hɔrim hag-gḇohim
‘the high mountains’

(5) הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָה לְדָוִד
haṭ-ṭoḇɔ ʔăšɛr ʕɔśɔ lḏɔwiḏ
‘the good that he did for David’

A fourth construction, though less frequent, is known in BH. The modification strategy in Example (6) evidences a NP (kɔl-yme ‘all of the days of’) in construct with a clause (hiṯhallaḵnu ʔittɔm ‘we walked with them’).3 It is weakly differentiated from the genitive construction. As such, the construction may demonstrate a mediating position between the syntax of genitive and relative constructions.

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2 Gil 2013.
3 This expression has been understood alternatively as having a covert relativizer, that is, as a null-headed relative (Holmstedt 2001; 2006).