

Word Order in the Verbless Clause: A Generative-Functional Approach

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1. Introduction

The basic premise of this paper is as follows: a generative-functional approach to the Biblical Hebrew (BH) nominal (or verbless) clause provides a simple, adequate, linguistic framework. It explains the discontinuities in the data and is able to unite and explain the lists and ad hoc rules of many theories.

We will find that the neutral core of both a verbless clause and a participial clause is Subject–Predicate in order and that material in front of the Subject is specially marked. Naturally, this will aid any Hebrew reader in interpreting a text. Of course, we will find that the fronted material has been placed there for more than one reason, or in other words, by more than one function.

These results are so promising and valuable for resolving the theoretical contrasts among various Hebrew grammarians that they justify a brief introduction to some general linguistic concepts and terminology.

2. Linguistic Terms and Categories

2.1. By *generative* I refer to a process of producing a clause from an abstract predication. For example, in an abstract predication (example [1] below) one could join an argument/term such as ‘horse’ to a predicate ‘being beautiful’ and produce, or generate, the following two specific clauses (2a) and (2b):

- (1) Predicate: יפה (approximately ‘beautiful’ in English)
Argument: הסוס (approximately ‘the horse’ in English)

- (2a) יפה הסוס
(Semantically¹ approximate to ‘the horse is beautiful’)
- (2b) הסוס יפה
(Semantically approximate to ‘the horse is beautiful’)

2.2. The abstraction of generative grammar is forty years old within the field of linguistics and comes in many flavors.² Within biblical studies it is often treated as irrelevant or just another conceptual framework to be used or not, according to personal taste. We will see, however, that asking how any one clause in the Hebrew Bible was “generated” forces us to recognize similar patterns within the multiple lists of some theories and sometimes even helps us recognize when one or more constituents of a clause are being moved in out-of-the-ordinary ways.

2.3. *Functional* refers to communicative goals and contextual reference. Functional rules are within the description of rules of generating clauses from predications (that is, from the structure of abstract thought or propositions). Thus, a grammar that potentially generates both (2a) and (2b) is incomplete unless it provides a framework for generating one or the other in a specific communication situation.

2.4. I also work within a Praguian-generative-functional framework that distinguishes syntax from semantics from pragmatics.³

2.4.1. *Syntax* with BH clauses refers to a grammatical relationship of Subject to Predicate. The Subject is the grammatical point of reference for what is talked about in a clause; the Predicate is the semantic communication about the Subject.⁴

2.4.2. *Semantics* can refer to logical relationships between constituents of a clause. “Existence,” “description,” “identity,” “agent,” “experiencer,” “undergoer,” “location,” “aspect,” and “tense” are all semantic categories. Predication frames and the dictionary are also part of the semantic domain of language.

2.4.3. *Pragmatics* refers to the communication situation. I am specifically interested in constituents that have been *signaled in the language system*, in

1. *Semantically* is a technical term and will be contrasted with *pragmatically* below. Examples (2a) and (2b) do not contrast semantically, but they do contrast pragmatically.

2. Serious theoretical linguistic work often uses whimsical phraseology to lighten what can become quite dry material. Biblical scholars should interpret “comes in many flavors” accordingly.

3. See my “Functional Grammar, Hebrew and Aramaic: An Integrated, Textlinguistic Approach to Syntax,” in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers* (SBLSS 27; ed. Walter R. Bodine; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 77–102.

4. In BH the Subject is regularly marked by grammatical concord in a governing verb.

ויאמר אליו זבל	And Zevul said to him,
את צל ההרים אתה ראה	“You are seeing the shadow of the
כאנשים	mountains as men!”

Notice that the Subject (אתה ‘you’) precedes the participle (ראה ‘see’) and is not the salient information of the deceiving/taunting response: ‘The shadow of the mountains is what you are seeing as though men’. ‘Shadow of the mountains’ is pragmatically marked and is a single constituent, here Focus, because it is both salient information and specially marked by the grammar.

Returning to Qoh 1:4 (6), לעולם is also marked by being placed in front of the verb. The function is probably Focus,¹⁰ since this is salient information and it contrasts with the temporary nature of the context, where generation after generation disappears. Thus, Qoh 1:4 has two marked constituents because the Subject is not just in front of the verb—it is in front of another marked constituent, which is in front of the verb.¹¹

2.5. We must also recognize that ambiguities sometimes exist, and our theory should describe and include them as well. This is particularly true where two noun phrases are juxtaposed as a predication.

For example, Exod 9:27 can be read in two different ways:

10. Thus, a sensitive reader would read this constituent with a high-tone (or in whatever manner ancient focal intonation patterned) Focal intonation pattern, which probably involved some kind of high tone, to judge from modern languages using intonation patterns.

We learn a great deal about the “biblical” language from what we know of Semitic languages and human language in general. Neither First-Temple Period nor Second-Temple Period Hebrew was a “tonal” language. That is, differences in vocabulary/lexicon were not regularly and systematically signaled by changes in acoustic pitch. Since Hebrew is a nontonal language, we can assume from language universals that certain pitch contours fit certain clause types and communication situations. Certain syntactic structures and even occasional lexical items may also be expected to be signaled by pitch contrasts. For example, a simple statement versus a question may be assumed to have had a different pitch contour. Similarly, and here we touch something germane to this paper, we can assume that special contours for focal information existed. (Syntactically, Focus functions are theorized to be universal to human language, though certainly marked in a variety of ways [for example, tone, lexicon, morphology, and/or syntax].) Since the existence of Focal contours in a nontonal language is the default situation, whose nonexistence would be quite surprising and need justification, we certainly cannot work from an artificial or false framework that ignores the existence of this category, even if we do not know precisely how such contours would have sounded. This is not very different from assigning vowels to an ancient text even if we do not know exactly what their phonetic quality was.

11. This assumes that positioning in front of the core predication is the mechanism being used for marking and not a complicated sandwich structure. The example from Judg 9:36 (8) was given to show the normal, one-constituent fronting, in which the item does not land between Subject and participle. It is by far the most common order for a constituent other than Subject or Verb to be fronted.

(9a) Exod 9:27

הַצַּדִּיק	יְהוָה	The LORD is the righteous one.
Predicate	Subject	

הַצַּדִּיק	יְהוָה	The righteous one is <i>the LORD</i> .
Subject	Predicate (Focus)	

While we cannot know what the different intonations would have sounded like in the ancient world, it is reasonable to assume that some ambiguities are only the result of the graphic system. They would not have been ambiguous in speech and were not ambiguous in the grammar of the language. In most cases the context is sufficient for reconstructing the relationships, and a sensitive reader would have been expected to supply the correct intonation. (A modern reader will simply use an artificial reconstruction.)¹²

12. Some readers may wonder about the relationship between the Masoretic accents and potential intonation patterns. Each word in the Masoretic Text has an accent mark that gives a musical tone and a prosodic context. The musical tones reflect a chanted reading tradition whose relationship to intonation patterns in “natural” language situations can only be conjectured. However, the prosodic context that is indicated by the accents shows the reader where to make minor pauses and gives a general orientation to the rest of the verse. Thus, the accents are very useful for immediate constituent analysis in showing which words go together and, conversely, where clause and phrase boundaries occur. Unfortunately for the concerns of this paper, the accents are more sensitive to the length of an utterance than its pragmatic, informational structure and thus do not directly reflect syntactic, semantic, or pragmatic relations. See Bezalel Elan Dresher, “The Prosodic Basis of the Tiberian Hebrew System of Accents,” *Language* 70 (1994) 1–52, especially p. 6: “This prosodic orientation helps to account for some of the well-known ‘failings’ of the accents as markers of logical and syntactic relations.” See also the examples in Dresher and his comment: “In this way, what appear to be eccentric phrasings from a syntactic point of view turn out to have a prosodic basis” (p. 6).

It is possible that further study may find some restrictions that could partially interact with pragmatic analyses and interpretations. For example, the first pragmatic constituent of clauses with two pragmatic constituents before a Verb or before a Subject of a Subject-participle core consistently ends in a disjunctive accent, while the second pragmatic constituent may have a disjunctive or conjunctive accent. All of the examples in nn. 8 and 33 fit this observation.

On the other hand, longer single constituents before a Verb or a Subject-participle core sometimes have two disjunctive accents. See example (14), Deut 9:4, where one-half of the fronted constituent ‘and because of the wickedness of’ has a disjunctive *pashta* accent, and ‘these nations’ follows with a disjunctive *zaqep*. See also Num 34:14 and Judg 7:6 treated by Dresher (“The Prosodic Basis,” 26). These doubly disjunctive constituents might be thought of as having a hint of confirmation of Focus. But such an analysis cannot be maintained absolutely since fronted constituents that are only one word in length would be negatively devalued because of their size rather than their informational value. See example (16b), Jer 1:12, where a fronted participle functioning as an obvious wordplay only has a conjunctive accent. Also, a lengthy constituent that is fronted as a Contextualization would necessarily receive two disjunctive accents, regardless of potential Focus value. See, for

2.6. Another question that needs to be cleared up before proceeding: do we need the distinction between grammatical Subject and pragmatic Topic (CC)? Some have said, “no.”

2.6.1. Recently Tamar Zewi¹³ at Hebrew University has argued that for verbless clauses Subject and Topic are the same thing; the Topic is the “true” Subject, and neither one is grammatically or morphologically marked. However, this homogenizes and collapses a necessary distinction, as points 2.6.2–2.6.5 will show.

2.6.2. Participial clauses have grammatical concord with a subject for gender and number. For example:

- (10) אָנִי רֹאֶה I am seeing
 אַתָּן רֹאוֹת you (f. pl.) are seeing

Both אָנִי ‘I’ and אַתָּן ‘you (f. pl.)’ require changes to the verb and are grammatical Subjects. However, a Praguian analysis does not tie a grammatical Subject to a logical Subject (theme) or a logical Predicate to the grammatical Predicate. The logical Predicate can be any part of a sentence. Since pragmatic marking does not obliterate the syntactic Subject marking, it is in the interests of clarity to preserve both aspects in a grammatical description. For this paper, both syntactic Subjects and Predicates and pragmatic *Contextualizing Constituents* and *Focus* are the preferred terminology.

2.6.2.2. Thinking of an alternative to Qoh 1:4 can help to illustrate the difference between an unmarked Subject and a pragmatically marked Subject-Contextualizing Constituent. For example, consider the sentence הָאָרֶץ עֹמֶדֶת לְעוֹלָם (same semantic translation as [6]). It has the same Subject as the biblical verse, but it does not show pragmatic movement or Topic/CC marking as does Qoh 1:4.¹⁴

example, ‘the land that you are lying on’ in Gen 28:13 (n. 8). These observations accord with accent patterns that are primarily sensitive to prosodic length and constituent position and only secondarily sensitive to informational structure or grammar. Further study will need to be made on the extent to which the Masoretic “chant” tradition may interact with pragmatic structure in general, first with verbal clauses where basic syntactic patterns are not disputed and second with verbless clauses. Finally, even if some patterns become useful for a part of the pragmatic analysis, the Masoretic reading will only be a single reading and not a grammatical statement about possible pragmatic, multireadings of the same sentence. Questions of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics need to be worked out within their own parameters.

13. Zewi has written a Ph.D. dissertation from such a functional perspective in which she brings out many points that are lacking in the identification/classification scheme of Andersen. Tamar Zewi, *ההסבות התחביריות הכרוכות במבנה הפונקציונלי של המשפט בעברית* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1992). Her framework would have been improved by adding a generative perspective.

14. It is possible that Prague-style analysis and a generative-functional analysis will occasionally lead to conflicting interpretations. For example, in Qoh 1:4, a Praguian desire to

2.6.3. With strictly verbless clauses, keeping a distinction of Topic from Subject provides a rationale for the distinction between Topics (CC) and “resumptive” pronoun tags that remain after Topic/CC and Focus movement (see n. 42 below).

2.6.4. It allows structures of noun plus prepositional phrases to be labeled syntactically as Subject plus Predicate, regardless of which constituent, if any, is a Focus or CC.

2.6.5. It provides a framework for distinguishing complex clauses both syntactically and pragmatically:

	A		+ resumptive pronoun		+ B
	(CC)		Subject (\pm Focus)		Predicate
versus	A	+ B		+ resumptive pronoun	
	(CC)	Predicate (Focus)		Subject	

For example, a traditional Praguian analysis would label either יהוה ‘Lord’ or the הוא ‘he’ in the first clause of Ps 100:3 (11) as a logical predicate:

(11)	יהוה הוא אלהים	The LORD, <i>he</i> is God
	הוא-עשנו ולא אנחנו	<i>he</i> (is the one who) made us and not we ourselves. ¹⁵

As we see in the second clause (הוא-עשנו), the הוא can function as a Subject in Hebrew with Focus marking at the same time. That is the preferred reading of the first line as well. Setting off יהוה ‘Lord’ as a CC¹⁶ and following with a resumptive Subject pronoun draws the pragmatic Focus marking. Semantically, exactly the same information could have been communicated without the pronoun:

(12)	יהוה אלהים	The LORD is God.
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Now, if only two-place clauses were used in Hebrew, then a single category for Subject and Topic/CC would be enough, and a single category for Predicate/Comment/Rheme would be enough. However, with split Subjects and split Predicates and with participial clauses such as (10), we need to distinguish between a grammatical core and pragmatically marked constituents. The Praguian analysis is helpful, but it must be used in conjunction with the

keep themes and rhemes continuous, where possible, might lead to labeling עמדת as the most salient part of the sentence, although by that analysis a pragmatic Focal distinction on לעולם is lost. See example (19), Gen 15:14 below, where the explanatory power of fronting and special marking beyond predication is important.

15. Q: וְלוֹ אֲנַחְנוּ ‘and we are *his*’.

16. Actually, within Functional Grammar, this Topic/CC should be viewed as outside the sentence proper and can be labeled *Theme*, an extrasentential Topic. In traditional grammars, such a construction may be called a *casus pendens* or *nominative absolute*.

full grammar of syntactic and semantic relationships and within a generative framework.

With this survey of linguistic terminology we can return to Hebrew data and the nominal clauses.

3. Participial Clauses in Biblical Hebrew

3.1. Because participial clauses have clearly marked Subjects, I begin the discussion of *nominal clauses* with them.¹⁷ They are only a subset of the nominal clause,¹⁸ but we will be able to see the mechanics of clause-generation most clearly, and we will also be able to demonstrate how a functional analysis will allow us to interpret what is going on. We need to recognize any pragmatic movement or placement.

First of all, there are many clauses with Predicate–Subject order and many more (approximately four times more) with Subject–Predicate order.¹⁹ But raw statistics do not explain what is going on.

The tell-tale clue comes when something is put in front of a participle other than the Subject. Something quite different happens with participial clauses than when a clause with a finite verb has something fronted.²⁰ We need to

17. Some nominal clauses are susceptible to more than one interpretation of what is the Subject, and differing theories define differently what the Subject of a nominal clause might be. The participle as a verb is normally unambiguous in being at least part of the syntactic Predicate. The Subject as a grammatical category is also more sharply defined. With the participle we have the control of grammatical concord in number and gender between the participle and the Subject.

18. Semitists have long recognized the nominal nature of the participial clause. For one thing, the morphology of participles follows that of adjectives and nouns, not verbs. This study confirms that its syntax is part and parcel of the nominal clause, using the same rules and base patterns.

One colleague has suggested that participles and Subjects form a unit that is identical to the verb in a verbal clause (oral communication). This is an illusion based on the frequent use of pronouns as Subjects of participles. First of all, both the orders Subject–participle and participle–Subject occur. These orders must be differentiated, hopefully in a way as congruent as possible with the rest of the syntactical system. Second, when nouns are Subjects (whether indefinite, definite, possessed, or proper) they cannot be treated as enclitic parts of the verb constituent.

19. These numbers and ratio come from Jan Joosten, “The Predicative Participle in Biblical Hebrew,” *ZAH* 2 (1989) 131, 140, 158. On p. 158 he lists all 110 examples of the order participle(verbal)–Subject in the Bible.

20. Finite verbal clauses and nominal clauses could be joined into one category if one were to layer the rules and stipulate that a Subject of a participial clause must first be put into a lower ordered pragmatic slot before other rules were allowed to operate. One pragmatic advantage of such a theory would be its ability to show and explain why participial clauses in narrative function similarly to Noun + verb clauses in breaking up the temporal

review briefly what happens with finite verbs in order to appreciate what happens with participles.

3.2. In a verbal clause,²¹ a verb usually follows the pragmatically fronted, marked constituent and an explicit Subject follows the verb. In Gen 30:40, presented as a commonplace example, notice that the Subject **יעקב** remains after the verb **הפריד**.

(13) Gen 30:40

והכשבים הפריד יעקב (Jacob separated the sheep.)

and-the-sheep (obj.) separated Jacob (subject)

With participles, the normal pattern is that when a constituent comes before the participle other than the Subject, then the Subject follows that element and the participle follows the Subject. This happens regularly and is not a result of double pragmatic marking. For one thing, the natural order of pragmatic marking (as a linguistic universal) when two elements are fronted is Topic/CC followed by Focus. However, with participles, we regularly find Focus information (that is, marked salient information) in front of an otherwise insipid Subject.

3.3. The direct conclusion from this is that we are seeing the default, base or neutral order²² in clauses with a Pragmatic (Focus or Contextualizing) Constituent + Subject + Participle + X. Several examples follow:

succession. However, the placing of a Subject in a participial clause is normally immediately next to the verb, even when there are other fronted constituents. On the other hand, in finite-verbal clauses with a Subject and another marked constituent, a fronted Subject will usually precede another pragmatically marked constituent, usually a Focus, which then comes between the Subject and the main verb. Thus, an extra rule is still necessary to distinguish verbal clauses from nominal clauses if one wants to preserve functional explanatory power and correctly predict certain restrictions.

21. A verbal clause is one whose main verb is either a suffix-verb, prefix-verb, or imperative. Participles are excluded since they use adjectival morphology and a different word order syntax.

22. The neutral order should not be thought of as “context-free”; indeed, there is no such thing as context-free constructions. For example, initiating, intermediary, and ending propositions are all part of a larger context. Rather, a base or default order is an order that results without any pragmatic conditioning of word order. A neutral order is relative within the language system.

Unfortunately, one game that linguists can play is to divide and conquer by labeling particular constructions as context-bound and then to try to deal with a more obedient remainder, hopefully more “basic.” Such approaches can be manipulated. For example, one can ignore all *waw ha-hippuk* clauses (sequential finite verb clauses) so that the Biblical Hebrew verbal clause can be labeled Subject–Predicate, an un insightful analysis (see my “Functional Grammar, Hebrew and Aramaic”). Something similar may be going on with nominal clauses when “circumstantial” clauses are pulled out of the picture. The “circumstantial” clauses may in fact be those clauses without a need for Focus saliency marking.

(14) Deut 9:4

אל-תאמר . . .	Don't say . . .
בצדקתי הביאני יהוה לרשת	because of my righteousness the LORD
את-הארץ הזאת	brought me to possess this land
וברשעת הגוים האלה יהוה	and because of the wickedness of
מורישים מפניך	these nations the LORD is
	dispossessing them before you.

This is a good example of the difference between verbal clauses and participial clauses. Both clauses have a fronted pragmatic constituent, 'because of my righteousness' and 'because of the wickedness of these nations', respectively. The verbal clause has a suffix-verb (הִבִּיאֲנִי) and then an explicit Subject (יְהוָה) (=x-V-S). The participial clause has an explicit Subject (יְהוָה) and then the participle (מֹרִישִׁם) (=x-S-Ptc).²³

(15) Gen 37:15–16

מה תבקש	What are you looking for?
את-אחי אנכי מבקש	My brothers I am seeking.
איפה הם רעים	Where (are) they shepherding?

In the example from Genesis 37, Joseph could have answered with simply אחי 'my brothers' in a less formal conversation. The salient information is fronted and thus is a result of a Focus function operation. The phrase אנכי מבקש 'I am looking for' adds nothing except syntactic completeness.²⁴ The following question also fronts the question word as a pragmatic function: איפה הם רעים.²⁵

(16a) Jer 1:11

מה-אתה רֹאֶה ירמיהו	What (do) you see, Jeremiah?
מקל שֶׁקֶד אני רֹאֶה	An almond stick I am seeing.

(16b) Jer 1:12

היטבת לראות	You have seen well
כי שֶׁקֶד אני על-דברי לעשותו	for diligent (am) I over my word to
	do it.

23. Cf. Deut 18:12 for a similar clause and one without any resumptive pronoun of the pragmatic constituent: ובגלל התועבת האלה יהוה אלהיך מורישים אותם מפניך 'and because of these abominations the LORD your God is dispossessing them from before you' (=x-S-Ptc).

24. From an approach within Relevance Theory, this syntactic completeness may have an implication of "formality" in order to fit a context of speaking with a stranger.

25. The interrogative may be either CC or Focus, depending on the intonation. A question word may be simply contextualizing in eliciting a later salient response. But there may also be a Focal intonation which would then imply some special saliency—for example, some kind of surprise or contraexpectation. A question word, in any case, normally triggers a pragmatic fronting rule.

The LORD now makes a wordplay on the root of שָׁקַד. Notice that by recognizing Subject–Predicate as the unmarked order with participles, we are obliged to explain this order here. The participle שָׁקַד is pragmatically placed in front of the Subject. This completes the wordplay and should be read as a Focus function, drawing special attention to the slight difference in the word.

(16c) Jer 1:13

מה אתה רֹאֶה	What (do) you see?
סִיר נִפְוַח אֲנִי רֹאֶה	A pot boiling I am seeing
וּפְנֵיו מִפְּנֵי צְפוֹנָה	and its face is toward the north.

The examples from Jeremiah reinforce the general conclusion that the unmarked order is Subject–Predicate. In the repeated question, מה אתה רֹאֶה, מה is placed in front of the Subject–Predicate core by an obligatory pragmatic function (either CC or Focus).²⁶ Similarly, the answer מִקֵּל שָׁקַד is fronted by a Focus function; the rest of the clause is neutral. It could even have been dropped.

Jer 1:13 repeats these structures. Of added interest is the final clause that describes the condition of the pot, וּפְנֵיו מִפְּנֵי צְפוֹנָה. I would call this a neutral, descriptive, unmarked clause, though Andersen and Waltke and O'Connor and others would make it a special category called “circumstantial.”²⁷

3.4. Joosten’s Aspectual Approach to Participles

3.4.1. Before summarizing how clauses with participles work, we need to discuss a proposal by Jan Joosten.²⁸ He claims that Predicate–Subject order signals a “factitive,” aoristic present tense, while Subject–Predicate order signals a durative, real-present aspect. I will respond at length.

3.4.2. It is improbable on general linguistic grounds that a pragmatic structure would be strictly aspectual and semantic. As will be seen below, the Subject–Predicate, Predicate–Subject order is a loose generalization and not a restricted syntactic-pragmatic order as is, for example, verb-subject order in German conditional clauses.

26. Some question words obligatorily trigger pragmatic placement rules in many languages. Such is the case with מָה in Hebrew.

27. Francis I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 14; New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1970); B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990). When we accurately define which constituents are moving and why, it turns out that categories such as “circumstantial” disappear. “Circumstantial clauses” (whether verbal or nominal) are already correctly generated by the grammar within a proper textlinguistic framework. The word *circumstantial* is useful for speaking with Semitists on a popular level, but grammatically it has no ontological status.

28. Joosten, “The Predicative Participle in Biblical Hebrew,” 128–59.

3.4.3. Joosten's rules do not make room for additional pragmatic marking. So, for example, what happens if in a Predicate–Subject clause someone wants to Topicalize (= contextualize with CC) or put Focus on a Subject? Are these functions missing with the participle? Symmetry in a language that already clearly uses word order pragmatically in verbal clauses would argue against its widespread neutralization here.

3.4.4. The “facticity” of Joosten's Predicate–Subject order, for example, with yes/no questions, can just as easily be described as a reason for invoking fronting in questions. For example:

(17) Gen 18:17

המכסה אני מאברהם אשר (= Should I hide from Abraham
אני עשה what I am about to do?)

is-it-that hiding I-am from Abraham what I-am doing?

Here the potential contraexpectation suggests a Focus function. Notice the normal Subject–Predicate order inside the relative clause.

3.4.5. When a constituent separates particles such as אם ‘if’,²⁹ הֲ ‘is-it?’,³⁰ אשר ‘that/which’,³¹ or הנה ‘look, behold’ from the core elements of the clause (that is, from the Subject and Predicate) then Subject–Predicate order normally follows. Again, this order is predicted from a functional-generative perspective. Otherwise, one would have to make them all special cases. One example follows as an illustration:³²

29. Joosten writes (*ibid.*, 136): “If the participle and its subject follow the particle *’im* immediately, then the sequence is always *’im Ptcp-Su*. . . . if any other element comes between the particle and the participle with its subject the sequence *Su-Ptcp* is used.” He lists *’im Ptcp-Su* examples at Gen 27:46; Exod 7:27, 9:2, 10:4; Deut 5:22; Judg 11:9; Jer 26:15, 38:21, 42:13; Hos 4:15; Joel 4:4. He lists *’im-Su-Ptcp* [*sic*] examples at Num 11:15; Lev 3:1, 7; Judg 9:15; 1 Sam 7:3. These latter examples have obviously marked a constituent other than the participle (=x–S–Ptc).

30. “The sequence is *h^a-Ptcp-Su* unless an element separates *h^a-* from the participle with its subject. In the latter case the sequence *Su-Ptcp* is used, e.g., Jer 7:19. . . . If another element follows *h^a-* the weight of the question falls on this element and not on the action expressed by the participle” (*ibid.*, 136–37). He lists direct questions with *ha-Participle-Subject* at Gen 18:17; Num 11:29; 2 Sam 10:3, 15:27(?); Ezek 8:6, 9:8; 1 Chr 19:3. Indirect questions with *ha-Participle-Subject*: Judg 2:22; Qoh 3:21, 22. Questions with *ha-X-Subject-Participle*: Exod 2:14, 2 Kgs 1:3, Jer 7:19.

31. Joosten (*ibid.*, 135) writes, “In relative clauses introduced by *’asher* we find almost exclusively the sequence *Su-Ptcp*. However, it seems that in these clauses the sequences *Su-Ptcp* is not the expression of the actual present. . . . The only exception is Job 6:4.”

32. All of the examples in Joosten (*ibid.*, 135–37) will fit here, since we are both agreed on the data. Joosten merely lists these as a neutralized environment where his general rules do not apply. I would say that normal pragmatic functions must be assumed for all fronted constituents. Such an approach is more encompassing and symmetric within the language.

(18) Judg 9:15

אם באמת אתם משחים אתי if in-truth you (are) anointing me as
למלך עליכם a king over you . . .

This is a good “aoristic,” nondurative, conditional clause with a constituent separating the conditional conjunction ‘if’ from the Subject–Predicate core. Joosten’s aspect theory would have predicted a Predicate–Subject order. However, a Focus interpretation of the fronted constituent ‘in truth’ as a counterexpectation is fairly transparent in the contrafactual/sarcastic context. A functional-generative perspective has no problem recognizing the fronted constituent, interpreting it, and showing the remaining unmarked basic order of the default core.

3.4.6. According to Joosten’s count, out of 550 participial clauses, not counting “circumstantial” (!) clauses, there are 7 ([sic] at least eight) examples in the Bible where a constituent precedes Participle + Subject. A functional approach predicts that this order occurs where Focus marking on the participle is desirable. That is, one constituent is pragmatically marked and fronted as a CC, and then the participle is pragmatically marked and fronted before the Subject. A CC followed by participle marked for Focus fits 7 out of the 8 examples.³³ These claims are illustrated by example (19). The one outstanding example, Gen 41:2 (20), probably has a double CC marking.

(19) Gen 15:14

וגם את־הגוי אשר יעבדו (= as for the nation that they will
דן אנכי serve I will certainly judge them too)
and-too, the-nation that they-serve *judging* I-am (CC–Focus–S)

The Object is fronted to serve as a new point of discussion in comparison to Abraham’s descendents. It would be interpreted as a Contextualizing Constituent and would not receive “focal intonation.” Pragmatically marking the verb ‘judge’ also makes sense in this context since ‘judging the agent of justice’ describes something contra-expected and can be interpreted as a Focus function. Here, a generative-functional approach leads us to recognize two special positionings and a functional approach requires us to explain two pragmatic functions operating on this clause. Furthermore, the distinction between a “nonemphatic” Contextualizing Constituent and an “emphatic” Focus provides necessary refinements for meaningfully dealing with complex sentences like Gen 15:14. More traditional approaches to syntax simply cannot help here. Compare Joüon and Muraoka’s comment: “When a third element additional to a personal pronoun and a participle or some other element occupies

33. The examples are Gen 15:14 [also 41:2]; Jer 4:29; Ps 19:2, 31:24; Prov 17:17; Job 6:4; Qoh 1:6.

the first slot and attracts some prominence to itself, the pronoun commonly occupies the second slot. . . . There are, of course, exceptions to the rule: e.g., Gn 15.14.”³⁴

(20) Gen 41:2

והנה מן־היאר עלת שבע פרות	and behold, from the Nile were-
יפות מראה ובריאת בשר	going-up seven cows pretty of sight
	and healthy of flesh.

Both the prepositional phrase and the verb have been fronted and seem to be Contextualizing Constituents. This description can be viewed as a backward way of leaving the Subject to be the most salient part of the clause.³⁵ As such, the analysis would be congruent with a Praguian reading where the Subject has become the rheme.

3.4.7. Joosten’s aspectual analysis of Subject-participle order ignores the relationship of the larger Predicate. A participle with an object or a prepositional phrase can follow a Subject (common). But the extra constituent (for example, object or prepositional phrase) can also come before the Subject + participle (common), between the Subject and the participle (rare; for example, Qoh 1:4; Gen 12:6, 26:29), or before the participle + Subject (rare, Gen 15:14), after a Participle + a Subject (common), or even between a participle + Subject (rare; cf. Isa 3:13).³⁶ A generative grammar demands a flexibility that can produce all of these orders, and a functional-generative grammar demands an interpretation. Something powerful is happening that is elusive from a strictly referential semantic point of view.

Is it just possible that whatever is moving or positioning the prepositional phrase is also working on the participle and Subject as part of its proper domain? If so, we are again drawn toward a pragmatic, functional explanation and away from a semantic explanation. (A semantic explanation would need to develop six aspects for all of the above orders and would create innumerable additional neutralized environments.)

34. Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2 vols.; trans. and rev. by Takamitsu Muraoka; Subsidia Biblica 14/1–2; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991) 571–72.

35. While it is true that there is a general tendency among languages to hold longer constituents toward the end of a clause, this explanation is not appropriate here. In Gen 41:6, in the second dream, a very long Subject is in front of the participle: והנה שבע שבלים דקות ושדופת קדים צמחות אחריהן ‘and look, seven heads of grain thin and withered by the east wind are sprouting after them’.

36. Isa 3:13 נצב לריב יהוה ‘the LORD is set for arguing’. The whole Predicate has been fronted and has apparently been treated as one Focal constituent. The phrase לריב ‘for argument’ does not seem to have been fronted by a separate pragmatic function. The Masoretic accents apparently support such an argument because the disjunctive accent is not on נצב but on לריב.

3.4.8. The bottom line for points 3.4.2–3.4.7 is that a functional-generative analysis must be preferred over Joosten’s aspectual analysis. With the 110 clauses that have a participle preceding a Subject (almost always immediately preceding), we can say that a Focus function has caused considerable overlap with Joosten’s “factitive” and “aoristic” semantics. But we need to follow the whole generative picture in order to recognize the insufficiency of an aspectual analysis. The aoristic fronted participle is based on an incomplete analysis and is ultimately illusory in comparison with the fully functioning pragmatics of Contextualization and Focus in participial clauses.

3.5 A Conclusion for Participial Clauses

3.5.1. A grammatical template for participial clauses within the theoretical framework outlined here is

\pm (pragmatic slot[s])ⁿ + Subject + participle \pm (predicate slots).

This template allows multiple pragmatic slots before the default core and has a number of advantages. It handles the biblical data. It leads a reader to interpret a text in a direct manner even when confronted with changing structural components. It is more complete than rival approaches by not requiring “neutralizations.” Finally, it is integrated with general linguistic theory by incorporating insights from linguistic universals and Functional Grammar.

4. Verbless (Nonparticipial) Nominal Clauses

4.1. We may now turn to the nominal-verbless clause proper. Much discussion in North America during this past generation has been influenced by Andersen, followed by Waltke and O’Connor.³⁷ I will first explain why the problems and exceptions that develop in that system are sometimes counter-intuitive to the way the language works. Then I will demonstrate how a generative-functional approach will handle the same data.

Andersen and Waltke and O’Connor analyze Predicate–Subject order as “classifying” and Subject–Predicate order as “identifying” clauses. These first two categories, “identification” and “classification,” are semantic predications or relationships. Theoretically, such semantic relationships could be tied to word order rules in the grammar, and furthermore, “aspect” might have been connected to word order as well. Andersen and Waltke-O’Connor also group participles and circumstantial clauses as Subject–Predicate. Participles deal with morphology, and “circumstantial clauses” deal with an undefined text-linguistic relationship (“circumstantial”). However, as with the case of participles above, we will find that a complete examination of the data leads

37. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch*; Waltke and O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*.

straight to a pragmatic, generative-functional theory rather than a semantic or morphological one.

4.2. Andersen and Waltke-O'Connor do not try to explain why verbal participles reverse the proposed order of descriptive-classifying Predicate–Subject to Subject–Predicate. This is contrary to the nature of Hebrew verbal clauses that show a strong Verb-Subject syntax. Why would verbal participles produce a Subject-Verb order if both verbal clauses and classifying nominal clauses were predicate-initial? On the other hand, we did see that Subject–Predicate order is not absolute or fixed with participles and that Predicate–Subject order can be used for Focus marking.

4.3. Furthermore, Andersen and Waltke-O'Connor do not explain why frequently only a part of a predicate occurs before a Subject. To be fair, Waltke and O'Connor said that they would not deal with discontinuous or complicated predicates in their discussion. However, in this case the discontinuous predicates are highly suggestive of an alternative analysis from a generative grammatical model, an analysis not suggested within a model that lists different possible structures as proposed by Andersen and Waltke-O'Connor. Andersen also cannot explain why discontinuities predominate in Predicate–Subject orders.³⁸ The verbal clause shows that Hebrew, as an ordinary VSO language, allows a constituent to precede the verb. The constituent may be the Subject, Object, or other piece of the clause. (Less frequently, two constituents may be placed in front of a verb.) This means that the language included a mechanism for fronting a part of a verbal clause:

- (21)
- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| O | V | S | X | |
| S | V | O | X | |
| X | V | S | O | |
| | V | S | O | X |
- [Pragmatic + V S O X]

The clause types in (21) all develop out of an underlying predication with a basic VSOX order³⁹ plus a slot before the verb for pragmatic marking by means of word order. The pragmatic, communication effect may have one of two functions, either marking special saliency, a Focus, or marking a less salient constituent as orienting the clause to the context. This Contextualizing Constituent is the more common function in narrative.⁴⁰

38. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch*, 37. See discussion below, §4.3.2.

39. This is a simplification of the total word order system in which connectives, negatives, conjoined constituents, and postverbal pronouns fill some of the spaces between the major constituents or are part of a constituent.

40. The non-Focal character of a Contextualizing Constituent has confused many biblical grammarians. One does not need to read much text before discovering that *emphasis* is

This same process of fronting for pragmatic marking can explain the verbless clause with split predicates. An order “Predicate (partial) + Subject + Predicate (partial)” would be generated simply from a Subject–Predicate predication by marking a part of a Predicate constituent or word and placing it before the Subject. In this way a reader or hearer is able to work through a clause and distinguish special marking from normal order, processing the clause with little difficulty.

Discontinuous clauses, however, form an enormous task for analyses based upon lists of attested constituent orders, as would be the case if one followed Andersen and Waltke-O’Connor, because of endless complications requiring continual splitting and lumping of multiple lists.⁴¹

4.3.2. Despite my theoretical disagreement in this paper, I find Andersen’s work generally very useful, especially for cataloguing the data on discontinuities. On p. 37 he says, “Table 5 shows that there are 185 clauses with a predicate of the kind in which discontinuity might occur; and of these, 153 have a predicate divided by the subject.” This is a remarkable tendency that needs more of an explanation than saying that these are basic Predicate–Subject clauses. I submit that we are looking at pragmatic marking on only a part of the Predicate in 83% of the cases and on the whole predicate in 17%. A logical entailment follows. As soon as one recognizes a partial pragmatic marking on a fronted part of a predicate, what remains is a Subject–Predicate order at the core of the clause. This means that the language is not maintaining a Predicate–Subject core order but the reverse, Subject–Predicate. The discontinuous Predicate–Subject clauses show that pieces of the predicate may be fronted before the default Subject–Predicate core. Here is where generative grammar,

a misleading nomenclature for fronted constituents, yet a reader cannot just throw up hands in despair and treat word order functions as unrecoverable.

41. Andersen (pp. 52–108) distinguishes 555 structurally distinct nominal clause-types in the Pentateuch. He distills these into 9 rules or classes of rules (pp. 39–50). The functional-generative approach, in contrast, has one rule.

Andersen’s rules (pp. 39–50), without listing the exceptions, are as follows: (1) The sequence is S–P in a clause of identification, in which both S and P are definite. (2) A pleonastic pronoun in a clause of identification comes before the predicate, in keeping with rule 1. (3) The sequence is P–S in a clause of classification, in which P is indefinite relative to S. (4) A pleonastic pronoun in a clause of classification comes after the predicate. (5) Circumstantial clauses of classification have sequence S–P, in contrast with rule 3. (6) When a suffixed noun is predicate, the sequence S–P (rule 1) is used for a clause of identification in which the suffixed noun is definite; the sequence P–S (rule 3) is used for a clause of classification in which the suffixed noun is indefinite. (7) When the predicate is a participle, the sequence is S–P in declarative clauses. (8) When the predicate is a participle, the sequence P–S is preferred in precative clauses. (9) The sequence P–S is used when the subject of a declarative clause is an infinitive; the predicate is always an indefinite noun. Finally, clauses with prepositional phrases have “no clear rules” (p. 50).

with its attention to the process of encoding a “thought” into a surface structure sentence, provides theoretical integration of these facts.

(22) Gen 34:21

האנשים האלה שלמים הם These men, they are friendly with
אתנו us.

This example has a compound predicate, שלמים אתנו. The most unmarked clause would be האנשים האלה שלמים אתנו. A Focus on the whole predicate could have produced שלמים אתנו האלה. A partial Focus on the predicate could have produced two forms, either שלמים האלה אתנו or אתנו האלה שלמים. Finally, both the Subject and the Predicate could have been fully marked pragmatically: האנשים האלה שלמים אתנו הם (CC + Focus + Subject). Each order would need an appropriate communication environment. The clause in Genesis has used a CC (presumably to help introduce the topic being discussed)⁴² and a Focus on the most salient piece of the Predicate in the speaker’s eyes.

(23) Num 14:7

הארץ אשר עברנו בה לתור The land that we passed through it to
אתה טובה הארץ מאד מאד see it, the land is very, very good.

This uses both a CC (technically an extracausal Theme) and a Focus structure followed by a Subject and two adverbs reinforcing the choice of ‘good’ as Focus.

4.4. Finally, Waltke and O’Connor list further exceptions as ad hoc categories that “neutralize” word order patterns.⁴³ That is, both orders occur

42. These Contextualizing Constituents can also be treated as *casus pendens* and technically outside the grammar of the clause. Within Functional Grammar, such pragmatic functions are called Theme, to distinguish them from Topic (= my CC). Pragmatically, there is no difference in these contexts, because both Theme and Topic are marking a constituent as a point of reference to the larger context. The question is whether or not the constituent is part of the clause proper or is “sitting outside.” With verbal clauses one can use resumptive pronouns as a means for defining when one or the other (Theme or Topic) is being employed as the clause is generated. With verbless/nominal clauses this distinction seems an unnecessary complication, because a pronoun is usually necessary to mark the predication core and to show that fronting of a constituent has occurred.

43. Their analysis hides one of the biggest problems with a nongenerative approach. The patterns mentioned by Waltke and O’Connor are only statistical probabilities, not absolute rules, and they do not explain what is happening in any one instance. The “neutralized” patterns are really no different; it is just that the probabilities are less dominant. But in either case, a reader or listener must interpret an individual instance. This is the same problem that Joosten ran into with his aspectual approach to word order with participles: several environments were hypothesized to neutralize the word order distinctions so that “both” could occur on a regular basis.

frequently. “Either order may be expected if the predicate is a numeral . . . , or an adverb . . . , or a prepositional phrase.”⁴⁴ This analysis is inadequate. It certainly does not explain how any one clause would be generated at any one time. It is much better to assume that constituents in front of the Subject–Predicate are marked. It is the job of every reader/listener to interpret the marked constituents. In this way the same functions that are at work in other clause types can be applied in verbless clauses as well.

(24) Num 16:3

כי כל־העדה כלם קדשים	because all of the congregation, all of them are holy
ובתוכם יהוה	and the LORD is in their midst

This is a good example of ambiguity, where a theory helps us understand the possibilities but does not resolve the problem. The clause ‘the LORD is in their midst’ has P–S order and needs an explanation. ‘In their midst’ may be a Contextualizing Constituent relating to ‘the congregation’ and understood as spoken without any Focal intonation. Understood in this way, the clause would be subtle, a kind of soft-selling of the argument. On the other hand, the speakers may have added Focus intonation to the fronted phrase in order to drive home the point that all of the people were qualified. In any case, the clause has a fronted prepositional phrase in the opposite order from that in Gen 39:3. Recognizing a base structure (Subject–Predicate) and a marked structure (Predicate–Subject) leads to meaningful questions and possible interpretations. A statement that ‘both orders can occur’ may be accurate, but it is bankrupt as far as processing the language.

(25) Num 14:9

כי לחמנו הם	for they are “meat on the table”;
סר צלם מעליהם	their shadow has left them
ויהוה אתנו	and the LORD is with us;
אל־תיראם	do not fear them

These clauses start out with a colorful expression, ‘they are our bread’, which uses P–S order followed by two clauses that explain the saying more prosaically. One clause, ‘their shadow has turned from them’, is pragmatically unmarked. It appears that the following clause, ‘the LORD is with us’, is also pragmatically unmarked, confirming a Subject–Predicate order.

(26) Josh 9:16

וישמעו כי־	and they heard that
קרבים הם אליו	they were near to it
ובקרבו הם יושבים	and in its midst they were dwelling

44. Waltke and O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 134.

Again, we have two parallel clauses illustrating a pragmatic function. The last clause uses a fronted Focus constituent **ובקרבו** before a normal Subject-Participle core. It would appear that the “verbless” clause has likewise fronted the adjective **קרבים** ‘near’ as a Focus constituent before the Subject and the rest of the Predicate. The Predicate–Subject order is predicted by Andersen and Waltke-O’Connor for such a classifying clause. However, it is important to see that both the split Predicate and the parallel structure with the following clause strongly suggest that the real reason for the fronting is pragmatic (that is, as Focus) and that the construction is not a separate syntactic-semantic structure (as a “normal” classifying relationship).

4.5. There are examples where fronting one constituent in front of a Predicate–Subject core results in a Subject–Predicate order. This is predicted by the functional-generative approach of this paper but would contradict the expectations of Andersen and Waltke-O’Connor. Compare the following two examples from Judges 7.

(27a) Judg 7:2

רב העם אשר אתך The people who are with you are
(too) many.

(27b) Judg 7:4

עוד העם רב Still the people are (too) many.

The difference between the two sentences involves the marked (fronted) constituents but not the semantic relationship between Subject and Predicate. Both clauses have a Predicate that describes or classifies the Subject. In Judg 7:2, the main point of the clause was the size of the people, and the appropriate part of the Predicate, **רב** ‘many’,⁴⁵ was fronted. Judg 7:4, by contrast, has marked the salient adverb ‘still’ as Focus. In so doing, the speaker/author no longer had any need to mark ‘many’ as Focus, and we find the order Subject–Predicate despite identical semantics with 7:2. A generative-functional approach not only handles these alternative word orders, it makes it easy to see what is happening in the grammar and leads an interpreter directly to the most salient points.

(28) Lev 25:55

כי־לי בני־ישראל עבדים The people of Israel are slaves for *me*

עבדי הם They are *my slaves*

P(Foc) Subj Pred

P(Foc) Subj

45. The Predicate continues with **מתתי את־מדין בידם** ‘from my giving Midian into their hand’.

The first clause is particularly interesting because it shows a “classifying” clause using a Subject–Predicate order (contra Andersen and Waltke-O’Connor) after a fronted constituent. This order is what a generative-functional approach would predict from a Subject–Predicate unmarked core with only one constituent pragmatically marked. It is the same thing that we saw with participles, and it helped us reject both an aspectual approach and an inflexible syntactic approach. As to the function of the fronted constituent, after the connector כִּי ‘because’ it is most probable that ‘for me’ is to be read as a Focus. The second clause continues with a Focus structure.

(29) Judg 16:5 (similarly Judg 16:6, 15)

וּרְאִי	and find out
בְּמָה כָּחַר גְּדוֹל	with what his strength is great
וּבְמָה נוֹכַל לוֹ	and with what we can prevail against him

As in Deut 9:4 (14) above, we can see the pragmatic function used in two parallel clauses, one clause nominal and the other clause verbal. In both clauses the question word has been fronted. In the nominal clause the Subject follows first and then the Predicate. Notice that this clause is not identifying but descriptive and classifying (to use Andersen’s terminology). This example follows the predictions of the functional-generative approach with a core, default Subject–Predicate order and contradicts the prediction of Andersen and Waltke-O’Connor.

5. A Proposal

The above discussion allows us to propose a simple strategy for interpreting nominal clauses in a Biblical Hebrew text, with several apparent advantages. Verbless clauses do not need to be separated from participial clauses, since both are using the same template. Extra categories such as “circumstantial clauses” disappear as unnecessary. “Complication” such as split Predicates are handled without a problem and are even predicted. The grammar becomes very simple to manipulate and describe while at the same time becoming very flexible and powerful. The grammar is capable of taking the same semantic relationships and generating more than one word order, as attested in the data.

5.1. In reading a text, the Subject will normally be identified as the more definite constituent. A ranking of first-second person pronoun, third person pronoun, proper name, definite noun phrase, suffixed noun phrase will provide a first indication of Subject. The Subject will also normally be the more presupposed constituent. When otherwise ambiguous (for example, two definite

useful in such an environment. (Of course, where they are useful, a Predicate (Foc)–Subject order is found.⁴⁹)

(31) Gen 41:31

	כי־כבד הוא מאד	
for	severe	it (is / will be) very
rel	Predicate-partial (Foc) Subject	Predicate-partial

With a pronoun Subject ready from the context, a Focus function on the main adjective or characteristic is common as a salient point in an argument.

(32) Deut 14:2

כי עם קדוש אתה ליהוה	for you are a holy people to the LORD
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This clause has the same pragmatics and split Predicate as (31).

(33) Ezek 9:9

עון בית־ישראל ויהודה	The guilt of Israel and Judah is
גדול במאד מאד	great in the extreme.

This verse begins a quotation with a classifying clause. It functions as a general description and builds some of the background toward a more specific judgment in v. 10. Thus, there is no need for a Focus function in this first clause. Someone with Andersen's perspective might try to call this "circumstantial," as though it were somehow different syntactically and semantically from classification and description. From a generative perspective this clause is simply unmarked and fits the general development of the argument in vv. 9–10.

(34) Exod 33:5

אתם עם־קשה־ערף	you are a people of a hard neck
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Like Ezek 9:9 (33), this clause uses an unmarked order for a descriptive clause with an indefinite Predicate. Andersen listed this among his "real exceptions."⁵⁰ Again, it is simply an unmarked clause where there was no need for Focus. This clause serves as a reason clause for a threatened destruction. The point of the larger discourse is not that the people are stiff-necked but that they are about to be destroyed.

(35) Gen 33:13

אדני ידע כי־הילדים רכים	My lord knows that the children are
	"soft."

49. For example, גלית שמו 'his name is Goliath!' (1 Sam 17:4), איוב שמו 'his name is Job!' (Job 1:1).

50. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch*, 44.

This subordinated content clause also shows a basic Subject–Predicate order. A Focal order Predicate–Subject would certainly have been possible, had the speaker or author so chosen. (See the next example, [36], for the opposite order after the same verb.)

(36) Gen 3:7

וידעו כי עירמם הם and they knew that they were naked

In Gen 3:7 the condition of the Subject is fronted by a Focus function. Of course, with a pronoun Subject such an order became so commonplace in Biblical Hebrew as to diminish its significance somewhat, yet it was not obligatory and still shows the functional movement. So the pragmatic function still needs to be interpreted, and a reader still needs to read with a Focus intonation.

(37) Gen 39:23

ואשר־הוא עשה יהוה מצליח and what he was doing (Object) the LORD (Subject) was prospering

This clause shows a typical Subject-participle core with a pragmatically front-positioned object. It may be read either as a Contextualizing Constituent or Focus, depending on whether the point falls on ‘*whatsoever* he was doing’ (Focus on marked salient information) or on ‘the LORD was *prospering*’ (most salient [but unmarked] information, leaving the Object clause as CC). Notice the Subject–Predicate order inside the relative clause as well.

(38) Gen 39:3

וירא אדניו כי יהוה אתו and his master saw that the LORD (was) with him

This nominal clause is subordinated as the content of a perception verb ‘saw’. It seems to exhibit a default order without any need for marking. The following clause in Gen 39:3 expanded the meaning of this clause and used a CC but without any Focus.

(39) Deut 2:7

זה ארבעים שנה יהוה אלהיך עמך This (= for) forty years the LORD your God (is, has been) with you.

Here is another nominal clause using a prepositional phrase as the predicate, like (38), though with a Focal adverbial phrase/clause. The order after the Focal element is Subject–Predicate. See Gen 31:38 for a parallel.

(40) Deut 11:12

ארץ אשר־יהוה אלהיך דרש אתה תמיד עיני יהוה אלהיך בה מרשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה As for a land that the LORD your God seeks, the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

This example is a parenthetical comment to the sentence before Deut 11:11. Verse 12 has a CC⁵¹ followed by a Focus תמיד 'always' and then the default Subject–Predicate 'eyes of the LORD are on it' with additional material reinforcing 'always' at the end. This is a relatively complicated example and would cause some concern to grammarians trying to work with lists and multiple patterns. Within a functional-generative approach, the sentence can be processed without difficulty as long as one recognizes the need to interpret what is fronted and to accept the author's choice of what remains unmarked.

(41) Gen 47:6

ארץ מצרים לפניך הוא The land of Egypt, it is in front of you.
Subject (CC [or Theme]) Predicate (Focus) Subject

This is a relatively simple example with double pragmatic marking. The first constituent, 'the land of Egypt', relates to the larger context. A land for Joseph's family is under discussion, and the land of Egypt becomes the point of departure for the next sentences. The main point that Pharaoh makes is that the whole country is open for them. They may settle in the best land. This is expressed by the Focus constituent 'before you'. The following pronoun, הוא 'it/she', is the grammatical Subject. Its purpose is to anchor the core of the clause and show that the other constituents are placed by pragmatic functions. The order CC + Focus is quite common.⁵² These two constituents by themselves would have produced a good clause, but without any marking. The pronoun at the end changes the construction into a marked one that would require a reader to use a Focal intonation on לפניך.

(42) Deut 31:3

יהוה אלהיך הוא עבר לפניך The LORD your God *he* is going on
before you
הוא יישמיד את הגוים האלה *he* will destroy these nations before
מלפניך you.

It is important to recognize that the Subject pronoun הוא 'he' can be used for Focus when it follows a Subject that has been fronted as a CC. The first clause in Deut 31:3 has a participial predicate, so there is no question as to its syntactic role. The pronoun הוא is a Subject, yet it is semantically and syntactically unnecessary. Pragmatically, it sets up יהוה אלהיך 'the LORD your God'

51. The indefinite CC is unexpected in this context (though explainable as an appositional parenthesis to the Predicate of the previous verse), and some manuscript traditions among the Samaritans, in Syriac, and the Targum have a definite noun phrase, 'The land. . . '.

52. Andersen (pp. 65–69) cites Gen 30:33; 40:12, 18; 41:25, 26; 42:11; 43:7; 49:20; Lev 11:12, 20; 13:15; 15:2; 23:27; 27:26, 28; Num 1:4; 8:4; 12:7; 13:32; 14:7; 18:9; 32:3–4; Deut 32:4; Josh 22:14.

as a Contextualizing Constituent. (It is what is popularly called a “topic.”) The repetition of the Subject referent in the pronoun **הוא** becomes Focal and should receive Focus intonation. This is seen by the identical parallel use in the next clause, where it is also added as a Focus constituent. The following example (43) shows the same structure in a nominal clause.

(43) Deut 18:2

יהוה הוא נחלתו כאשר דבר-לו The LORD *he* is his inheritance as he promised him.

The pronoun **הוא** ‘he’ has been added to the Subject–Predicate core, thus marking off **יהוה** as a CC that the pronoun follows as a Focus Subject. There is nothing that marks **הוא** as being in a pragmatic position, but its very existence signals a pragmatic function. Comparison with the participial clause and finite verb clause in (42) confirms this analysis.

(44) Isa 51:12

אנכי אנכי הוא מנחמכם I, I am he, your comforter
Subject (CC), Subject (Foc) Predicate, Predicate (appositive-Tail)

This is a tricky example. The double first-person reference would seem to have at least one pragmatic marking. The first **אנכי** ‘I’ apparently orients the clause to the context, so it has been labeled CC (= “theme” in functional grammar). The core relationship **אנכי הוא** can be defined as Subject–Predicate on two grounds. First, Subject–Predicate is a default order when two definite constituents are used. Second, the doubling of **אנכי** makes the **אנכי** of the core clause more presupposed and thus a candidate for Subject. However, the use of **הוא** as the grammatical Predicate may suggest that the Subject should be given a Focus intonation as well. The pronoun is regularly used to fill a grammatical slot, so that a preceding constituent becomes pragmatically marked. The final phrase, ‘your comforter’, is an appositive to the grammatical Predicate. (In Functional Grammar this is what would be called a Tail function, which includes afterthoughts and extragrammatical intrusions.)

(45) Nah 1:2–3

אל קנוא ונקם יהוה The LORD is a jealous God (Foc) and avenging (Foc),
נקם יהוה ובעל חמה the LORD is avenging (Foc) and has wrath.
נקם יהוה לצריו The LORD is avenging (Foc) against his foes,
ונוטר הוא לאיביו he acts consistently (Foc) against his enemies.
יהוה ארך אפים וגדול-כח The LORD is patient and very strong (‘great of strength’).

This passage in Nahum shows an interesting progression in its choice of grammatical structures. It begins with a clause with two fronted, Focus constituents.⁵³ It is followed by a clause that has two Predicate constituents, only one of which is marked as a Focus constituent. The other is an unmarked Predicate constituent after the Subject. The next two clauses only mark one part of the Predicate as Focus, with the remainder of the Predicate appearing after the Subject in the default position. Finally, the last clause uses an unmarked order Subject–Predicate with two Predicate constituents.

When we look more closely at the content, we notice that the clauses with a Focus constituent describe the LORD with aggressive attributes, and they diminish in grammatical intensity until reaching the grammatically neutral closing clause, which describes the LORD with a conciliatory attribute.⁵⁴ This provides an esthetic iconicity to the poem.

6. Areas for Further Research

6.1. The nominal clause and participles create a tension within Hebrew grammar because of their difference from the standard verbal clause. Conflicting patterns may pull a language in one direction or another over a period of time. For example, the participle came to be treated more and more as a verb and as an integral part of the verbal system. This fact could exert an influence on participial clauses toward the ordering P–S so as to mirror the order VSO that we see in verbal clauses. It remains to be established exactly when, how, and whether such a process transpired. Studies on Mishnaic Hebrew suggest that the process had not yet taken place during the time when Mishnaic Hebrew was a living language.⁵⁵

53. It may be preferable to simplify these two constituents and treat them as a single Focus constituent unit, because one disjunctive accent marks the entire phrase. However, I have treated them in this paper as two constituents in order to reflect possible syntactic complexity. The next three clauses all have single, fronted words, and each receives a conjunctive accent. Presumably, this prevents an overly-heavy piling up of three disjunctive accents in each short clause. The last clause is similar to the first clause in having two descriptive phrases. It has two disjunctive accents for the two phrases following the Subject. These two phrases are made up of four words in the consonantal text, while the Masoretic tradition reads them as three metrical words.

54. While one may legitimately argue that poetry is not the place to define grammar, one must still read poetry and interpret what is there.

55. Abba Bendavid, *לשון מקרא לשון חז"ל* (rev. ed.; 2 vols.; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1967). See also Takamitsu Muraoka, "הפסוק השמני בלשון המקרא המאוחרת ובלשון חז"ל," in *מחקרים* שמא ניתן ללמוד מזה, שלמרות התוכן הפועלי המובהק של הבינוני, (ed. Moshe Bar-Asher; Jerusalem: Institute of Jewish Studies, Hebrew University, 1990) 219–52, especially 222: "One might conclude from this that in spite of the pronounced verbal character of the participle, from a syntactic

6.2. In this study we have not discussed clauses of existence with Ψ 'there is' (138 examples in the MT) and $\gamma\aleph$ 'there is not' (over 700 examples). Both of these words lexicalize existence and often function like fronted, contextualizing Predicates.

6.3. The relative frequencies of various constructions and syntactic environments can be calculated according to genre and author. These distributions may be compared across time, though the incomplete nature of the biblical corpus vis-à-vis the living language will render results problematic. It will be difficult to establish which changes are the result of stylistic or grammatical drift in the language and which changes are accidental and idiosyncratic. It is important, however, to relate to a generative-functional framework so that illusionary grammatical constructions are not proposed and then traced through a corpus.

6.4. Most importantly, further text-linguistic work needs to be done in order to describe more precisely the ways in which the pragmatic functions are used within a text. This paper only attempts to establish the rationale for a generative-functional approach and to establish how the grammar is generating the nominal clauses. This is a necessary first step. However there is a continuum from what might have been termed descriptive "circumstantial" clauses (that is, those with unmarked Subject–Predicate order) to those in which a part of the Predicate is made a Focus or in which all of the Predicate is Focus.

In addition, nominal clauses themselves play an interesting role within narrative to break up the sequencing of events. Both nominal clauses and finite verb clauses with XV(S)(O) order overlap at this point in breaking up the narrative flow.

7. Conclusion

The underlying order in nominal clauses is Subject–Predicate. This is clear from the pattern of fronted partial Predicates, from the patterns with participles, from patterns with "neutralized" order, from subordinate clauses that have one fronted constituent, from "circumstantial" clauses, and from descriptive clauses that have one fronted constituent.

Reading becomes a simple matter of interpreting pragmatically positioned material against the context, whether salient, Focus material; or orienting, Contextualizing material. The pattern can be abstracted for readers/students as:

(CC) (Focus) Subject Predicate

perspective it remained as a nominal category within the consciousness of Mishnaic Hebrew speakers'.

Such a way of reading and generating Hebrew nominal clauses corrects and reorganizes the suggestions of previous approaches based on multiple lists, patterns, and exceptions. The flexibility of the generative approach and the power of a functional approach provide a basis for better understanding and interpretation and for more productive future research.