

# Ancient Texts and Modern Readers

*Studies in Ancient Hebrew Linguistics  
and Bible Translation*

*Edited by*

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# Contents

- Preface IX  
Abbreviations x  
Notes on Contributors XIV
- 1 Ancient Texts and Modern Readers: An Introduction 1  
*Gideon R. Kotzé, Christian S. Locatell and John A. Messarra*
- 2 Copulas, Cleft Sentences and Focus Markers in Biblical Hebrew 14  
*Geoffrey Khan*
- 3 Anaphoric Accessibility in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: Global and Local Participant Tracking across Clause Boundaries 63  
*Lénart J. de Regt*
- 4 An Alternative to the Coordination–Subordination Dichotomy: The Case of Causal כִּי 79  
*Christian S. Locatell*
- 5 Categorical Gradience and Fuzziness—The QWM Gram (Serial Verb Construction) in Biblical Hebrew 100  
*Alexander Andrason*
- 6 A Behavioral Profile Analysis of Biblical Hebrew דַּבָּר: Quantitative Explorations of Polysemy 127  
*Jeremy Thompson and Kristopher Lyle*
- 7 Gesenius’s Rules: The Relationship between Philology and Cognitive Semantics in Biblical Hebrew 149  
*Daniel Rodriguez*
- 8 Biblical Lexicography and the Semantic Structure of the Target Language: The Case of אֵל 165  
*Reinier de Blois*
- 9 “Now” and “Then”: Telling Time in Text and Translation 180  
*Barry L. Bandstra*

- 10 Rhetorical Questions and Negative Clauses in Biblical Hebrew 196  
*Tamar Zewi*
- 11 Translating the Hebrew Scriptures: Some Challenges and Helps 211  
*Cornelius M. van den Heever*
- 12 “Do the Dead Praise God?” A Literary-Structural Analysis and Translation of Psalm 6 228  
*Ernst R. Wendland*
- 13 Fathers and Sons, Jacob and Israel in Psalm 78: Participant Tracking and Direct Translation 246  
*Eep Talstra*
- 14 A Direct Translation and Paratext: *Hapax Legomena* and Text-Critical Notes 263  
*Herrie F. van Rooy*
- 15 Theology and Ideology in the Metatexts of Bible Translations in Muslim Contexts: A Case Study 280  
*Jacobus A. Naudé and Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé*
- 16 Sacrifice in Leviticus 1–7 and Pökot Culture: Implications for Bible Translation 300  
*Gerrit J. van Steenbergen*
- 17 Interpreting and Translating “Hanging” in Lamentations 5:12 as an Image of Impalement 319  
*Gideon R. Kotzé*
- Bibliography 343
- Index of Modern Authors 369
- Index of Topics 374

# Copulas, Cleft Sentences and Focus Markers in Biblical Hebrew\*

*Geoffrey Khan*

## 1 Preliminary Remarks

Cleft sentences are complex sentences that are formed by splitting an undivided simple sentence into two clauses, consisting of a main clause with a copula and a subordinate clause introduced by a relativizer. The relativized argument is coindexed with the complement of the copula. A cleft sentence has an identical truth value, illocutionary force and argument structure to those of the corresponding simple sentence,<sup>1</sup> e.g.,

- (1) a. *John loves Mary* (simple sentence)  
 b. *It is John that loves Mary* (cleft sentence)
- (2) a. Speaker A: *Peter loves Mary*  
 b. Speaker B: *No, it is John that loves Mary*

The difference between (1a) and (1b) is pragmatic. A simple sentence such as (1a) typically expresses broad focus. A cleft sentence such as (1b) puts narrow contrastive focus on the clefted constituent after the copula, specifying that this particular constituent (“John”) should be selected and replace another item that the speaker presupposes that the hearer is entertaining for the role in question. In (2b), for example, the use of the cleft sentence is associated with the presupposition that the hearer believes that “Peter loves Mary”. It replaces the

\* It is a great pleasure to dedicate this article to my friend Christo van der Merwe, whose ground-breaking scholarship on BH has been a great inspiration to me.

1 Otto Jespersen, *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles. Part VII: Syntax* (Copenhagen / London: Ejnar Munksgaard / George Allen and Unwin, 1949); idem, *Analytic Syntax* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937); Knud Lambrecht, “A Framework for the Analysis of Cleft Constructions,” *Linguistics* 39 (2001): 463–516; Ángela Di Tullio, “Clefting in Spoken Discourse,” in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (2nd ed.; ed. Keith Brown; New York: Elsevier, 2006), 483–491.

subject constituent in this presupposition, leaving a presupposition of “common ground” shared by the speaker and hearer, namely that “somebody loves Mary”. This is exhaustive contrastive focus, in that only by selecting this particular item renders the sentence true.<sup>2</sup> The subordinate clause is presuppositional, expressing the presupposed common ground shared by the speaker and hearer (“somebody loves Mary”). The nuclear stress of the intonation group is put on the clefted constituent.

Various reduced forms of the structure of cleft sentence described above are attested in languages. In some languages, for example, the relativizer introducing the subordinate clause is omitted. This type of variant cleft construction is common in Semitic languages. Goldenberg calls these “imperfectly transformed cleft sentences”,<sup>3</sup> e.g.,

(2) *ze 'ani halaxti*  
 it I go.PST.1S  
 “It is me that has gone” (Israeli Hebrew)<sup>4</sup>

(3) *'att=ū 'emart*  
 you=it say.PST.2MS  
 “It is you that have said” (Syriac)<sup>5</sup>

The diachronic grammaticalization of biclausal cleft constructions into monoclausal constructions with a constituent focus marker is widely documented cross-linguistically.<sup>6</sup> Typically a focus marker of a constituent develops from either the copula of the matrix copula clause (4) or the relativizer particle of the subordinate clause (5). The boundary between the matrix copula clause and the subordinate clause is lost and the construction becomes a single matrix clause. The focus is represented in the translations below by upper case, e.g.,

2 Simon C. Dik et al., “On the Typology of Focus Phenomena,” in *Perspectives on Functional Grammar* (ed. Teun Hoekstra, Harry van der Hulst and Michael Moortgat; Dordrecht: Foris, 1981), 47.

3 Gideon Goldenberg, “Imperfectly-Transformed Cleft Sentences,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 1 (1973): 127–133.

4 *Ibid.*, 117.

5 *Ibid.*, 118.

6 Alice C. Harris and Lyle Campbell, *Historical Syntax in Cross-Linguistic Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 152–165; Bernd Heine and Tania Kuteva, *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 95–96.

- (4) Haitian Créole French<sup>7</sup>  
*Se sou chen mèg yo wè pis*  
 FOC LOC dog thin 3PL see flea  
 “ON A THIN DOG the fleas can be seen”

Here the focus marker *se* has its origin in French *c’est*. The corresponding structure in standard French would have the relativizer: *C’est sur un chien maigre qu’ils voient les puces*.

- (5) Breton<sup>8</sup>  
*ar vugale a lenn levrioù*  
 the children FOC read books  
 “THE CHILDREN read books”

The focus marker *a* in Breton is historically a relative particle, which is used in relative clauses in earlier periods of the language.<sup>9</sup>

We should, therefore, consider the reduced cleft constructions cited above (2–3) in this light. They can be regarded as reflecting the process of grammaticalization of biclausal cleft sentences into monoclausal constructions with a constituent focus marker.

The historical development of focus markers from cleft constructions is widely attested in African languages.<sup>10</sup> Several of the languages discussed by Heine and Reh have not only a constituent focus marker, or “term focus” in their terminology, but also a predicate focus marker, e.g.,

- (6) Term focus marker in Rendille<sup>11</sup>  
*ínam-é y-imi*  
 boy-TERM.FOC he-came  
 “THE BOY came”

7 Pieter Muysken and Tonjes Veenstra, “Serial Verbs,” in *Pidgins and Creoles: An Introduction* (ed. Jacques Arends, Pieter Muysken and Norval Smith; Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), 289–301, cited by Heine and Kuteva, *World Lexicon*, 95–96.

8 Robert D. Borsley and Janig Stephens, “Agreement and the Position of Subjects in Breton,” *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 7 (1989): 407–427, cited by Harris and Campbell, *Historical Syntax in Cross-Linguistic Perspective*, 155.

9 Harris and Campbell, *Historical Syntax in Cross-Linguistic Perspective*, 155.

10 Bernd Heine and Mechtild Reh, *Grammaticalization and Reanalysis in African Languages* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 1984), 147–182; Enoch Oladé Aboh, Katharina Hartmann and Malte Zimmermann, eds., *Focus Strategies in African Languages: The Interaction of Focus and Grammar in Niger-Congo and Afro-Asiatic* (Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs 191. Berlin: Mouton / De Gruyter, 2008).

11 Heine and Reh, *Grammaticalization*, 165.

- (7) predicate focus marker in Rendille
- <sup>12</sup>

*díri á-kulel*

pot PRED.FOC-hot

“The pot is HOT”

Heine and Reh argue that the term focus marker originated as the copula in a cleft construction (8) whereas the predicate focus marker developed from a structure such as (9), in which the copula takes the predicate as its complement without being coindexed with the subject argument of the clause:<sup>13</sup>

- (8) NP/PP + copula (3s) + [relative clause]

- (9) copula (3s) + [predicate] (subordinate structure)

In Rendille clauses must contain a focus marker. The predicate focus occurs in all clauses that do not have a term focus. In some African languages, however, focus markers are optional. This is the case, for example, in Boni:<sup>14</sup>

- (10) a.
- an biyóo ajík-a*

I water drink-IMPF

“I drink water” (neutral focus)

- b.
- an biyóo-é ajík-a*

I water-TERM.FOC drink-IMPF

“I drink WATER” (term focus)

- c.
- an biyóo á-ajík-a*

I water PRED.FOC-drink-IMPF

“I DRINK water” (predicate focus)

The languages discussed by Heine and Reh exhibit various degrees of grammaticalization of such focus markers. They term focus constructions “weakly grammaticalized” if they have split from a source that still exists in the language without the source as a whole undergoing shift. “Strongly grammaticalized”

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 167–168.

<sup>14</sup> Hans-Jürgen Sasse, ‘Basic Word Order’ and Functional Sentence Perspective in Boni,” *Folia Linguistica* 15 (1981): 253–290.

systems, on the other hand, exhibit an overall shift of function of the original source construction.<sup>15</sup>

As we have seen in (1), the prototypical function of English cleft sentences is to express narrow contrastive focus on the clefted constituent. This, however, is not the only function of clefting. In many languages a cleft construction may be used when the clefted item is not in contrastive focus and the subordinate clause is not presuppositional but rather is an informative component of the message of the utterance.

Sasse has shown that such cleft constructions are used to express a description of a situation.<sup>16</sup> He cites examples of these from various languages, e.g., (11) from colloquial French, which denotes an event, i.e., an eventive situation. To these I have added (12), from my own collected data, which is equative, and denotes a non-eventive situation:

(11) *Qu'est-ce qu'il y a?—C'est maman qui me bat.*  
 "What's the matter?—Mum's hitting me (eventive)."

(12) *J'ai faim—C'est cet homme là-bas qui est le chef. Il te donnera de bonne nourriture.*  
 "I am hungry—That man there is the chef (equative). He will give you good food."

According to Sasse, in such constructions the clefting has the effect of giving prominence to the whole situation expressed by the sentence. The sentence is, therefore, *thetic*. This differs from a *categorical* sentence, which consists of the bipartite act of naming an entity and the making a statement about. Thetic sentences, by contrast, present a situation as an undivided whole. Since in thetic sentences the whole content of the proposition is made prominent, they are also termed sentence-focus constructions, as opposed to predicate-focus constructions in which specifically the predicate is made prominent.<sup>17</sup> The thetic–categorical distinction is, however, independent of the information

15 Heine and Reh, *Grammaticalization*, 148.

16 Hans-Jürgen Sasse, "The Thetic/Categorical Distinction Revisited," *Linguistics* 25 (1987): 511–580.

17 Knud Lambrecht and Maria Polinsky, "Typological Variation in Sentence-Focus Constructions," in *Papers from the Panels on Linguistic Ideology in Contact, Universal Grammar, Parameters and Typology, the Perception of Speech and Other Acoustic Signals* (ed. Kora Singer, Randall Eggert and Gregory Anderson; CLS 33; Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 1997), 189–206.

structure of the components of the sentence. Sasse points out that the thetic–categorical distinction relates to “the general shape a speaker gives the state of affairs” and so relates to the sentence, whereas information structure relates to the text.<sup>18</sup> Some components in a thetic sentence can, therefore, be contextually bound. The splitting of sentences such as (11) and (12) by clefting into two components does not mean that they should be identified as categorical sentences nor should they be compared to normal topic–comment constructions. This is because the assertion of the predicate is subordinated syntactically and pragmatically to the initial entity and is not a main predication. Rather it is a predication of the type found in a dependent clause, viz. a non-assertive predication without illocutionary force.

The most satisfactory analysis of the clefting in thetic statements such as (11) and (12) is that the clefting is a strategy to integrate the subject and predicate to express a unitary situation. This is achieved by reducing the division of subject and predicate by the subordination of the predicate, which both demotes it and creates a syntactic linkage with the subject. The clefted constituent is the most prominent item in the construction, but it is prominent within a unitary situation. It is the pivot around which the situation holds. Crucially the clefting puts a focus on the clefted constituent that is non-contrastive. This can be termed “presentational focus”, since it presents an entity into the discourse, or highlights an entity, without contrasting it with another entity, i.e., without there being a presupposition containing other possible values of the focused item. This has been regarded as a weakening or “demarking” of a contrastive focus construction.<sup>19</sup>

Dik defines focus generically as “what is relatively the most important or salient information”.<sup>20</sup> Information focus is propositional, i.e., it relates to the roles of constituents within propositions.<sup>21</sup> It supplies an assumed gap in shared knowledge regarding constituents and their roles. For this reason new information could concern context-bound constituents, so long as the role of

18 Sasse, “The Thetic/Categorical Distinction Revisited,” 518.

19 Simon C. Dik, *The Theory of Functional Grammar*, Vol. 1: *The Structure of the Clause* (2nd ed.; Berlin: Mouton / De Gruyter, 1997), 325 ff.; Hans Bernhard Drubig and Wolfram Schaffar, “Focus Constructions,” in *Language Typology and Language Universals: An International Handbook* (ed. Martin Haspelmath, Ekkehard König, Wulf Oesterreicher and Wolfgang Raible; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 1093.

20 Simon C. Dik, *Functional Grammar* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1978), 19; Dik et al., “Typology,” 42.

21 Knud Lambrecht, *Information Structure and Sentence Form* (Cambridge Studies in Linguistics 71; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 228–233.

the constituents in a proposition is new. This applies, for example, to so-called “contrastive topics”, e.g., in (13b), in which the constituents *John* and *Bill* are context-bound:

- (13) a. *What did John and Bill buy?*  
 b. *JOHN bought a SHIRT and BILL bought a HAT*

The contrastive topics select items from a set of contextually-bound referents. In (13b) “John” and “Bill” are contextually-bound whereas “shirt” and “hat” are newly introduced. An item in contrastive focus, therefore, may be contextually-bound or new. An item that is in non-contrastive, presentational focus may, likewise, be contextually bound in some cases. As we shall see in the material that I present below, the item that is the complement of the copula in athetic cleft may be a non-contrastive contextually-bound item, i.e., it would not be selected from a set of alternatives in a presupposition. The demarking of a focus construction such as a cleft can, therefore, be summarized thus:

- (14) contrastive focus (on new or given item) > presentational focus (on new or given item)

Some of the typical functions of thetic constructions include explanations (e.g., in the cleft construction in [11]), background descriptions such as locative and temporal settings (e.g., the cleft construction in [12]), general statements (aphorisms etc.) and existential statements.<sup>22</sup> Sasse concedes, however, that a clear semantic definition of thetic constructions is not possible and they should rather be considered discourse strategies. Frequently athetic statement conveys new information in all its components, but again, this is not a rule, and in many cases it can contain a contextually-bound topical element as subject. If the latter is the case and the thetic statement is expressed by a cleft, the clefted item would be a contextually-bound item in presentational focus.

Cleft sentences that have an informative rather than presuppositional subordinate clause are used in English. These have been studied by various scholars.<sup>23</sup> They can occur in discourse-initial position, as in (15), and also within the discourse, as in (16):<sup>24</sup>

22 Sasse, “Thetic/Categorical Distinction,” 566–567.

23 Ellen Prince, “A Comparison of Wh-Clefts and It-Clefts in Discourse,” *Language* 54 (1978): 883–906; Nancy Ann Hedberg, “Discourse Pragmatics and Cleft Sentences in English” (Unpublished PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1990), 139–172.

24 Cited by Hedberg, “Discourse Pragmatics,” 139–172.

(15) *It was the Greeks who first made wine around 1500 BC.*

(16) *She saved your neck and my reputation. It was she who found your overcoat.*

In these examples the constructions do not put narrow contrastive focus on the cleft constituents to contrast them with a set of other candidates for the role that is salient in a presupposition. Prince terms such constructions “informative-presupposition” clefts.<sup>25</sup> Hedberg observes that the cleft constituents have the status of topics and the subordinate clause the status of comments, and terms such constructions, therefore, “comment-clause clefts”. According to Prince the function of these constructions is “to mark a piece of information as fact, known to some people although not yet known to the intended hearer”.<sup>26</sup> This is a strategy to exploit the non-assertiveness of the subordinate clause to reduce the personal responsibility of the truth or originality of the statement being made, by presenting it as an already known fact or a general truth.

Prince also draws attention to the fact that such “informative presupposition” clefts are often used on the inter-sentential level to perform particular discourse functions.<sup>27</sup> In particular they are often used to present explanatory background material in a discourse. They may be used at the beginning of a discourse to present preliminary scene-setting or frame-setting material or within a discourse to present a comment on what precedes rather than advance the discourse. Hedberg also identifies specific discourse functions of such constructions.<sup>28</sup> She argues that they play a role as markers of discourse boundaries by drawing attention to a particular proposition. It has also been noted by Hedberg and other scholars that these cleft constructions draw particular attention to the clefted constituent, reinforcing attention to the topical referent at boundaries of discourse segments.

Despite the treatment of such clefts as topic–comment constructions by Hedberg and others, it is more appropriate to analyse them asthetic statements according to the definition given above. Their structure presents the propositions as unitary, self-contained situations, in which the constituent that is the complement of the copula is given particular prominence as the pivot around which the situation holds. On account of their thetic status, they stand apart from the surrounding discourse of categorical statements. Eventive type thetic

25 Prince, “Comparison,” 883–906.

26 *Ibid.*, 899.

27 *Ibid.*, 902.

28 Hedberg, “Discourse Pragmatics,” 139–172.

clefts described by Sasse, such as colloquial French *C'est maman qui me bat*, "Mother is hitting me" ([11] above), can be accommodated in Prince's notion of informative presuppositions expressing facts that are assumed to be known. This is because eventivethetic clefts prototypically express a situation that is perceptible in the speech situation (i.e., assumed to be known).

Prince and many subsequent analyses of informative presupposition clefts have given particular attention to the pragmatic strategies involved when material in a clause is signalled by grammatical structure to be a presupposition although it is not in the shared knowledge of the interlocutors. These involve, for example, processes of accommodation by hearers of pragmatically inappropriate presuppositions<sup>29</sup> and the use of constructions that impose presuppositions to signal the speaker's requirements or reminders as to what information should be present in the hearer's knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

The main motivation for the use ofthetic clefts, however, is to present a state of affairs as a unitary situation holding around a central pivot rather than asserting something about the pivot. For this reason the linguistic structure gives the pivot prominence, making it cognitively the figure against the ground of the situation.<sup>31</sup> This is achieved through syntactic structure both by making the figure the complement of the copula and also by reducing the prominence of the assertion that denotes the ground by deranking it by structural subordination. The reduction of the prominence of the assertion is primarily to achieve this figure-ground configuration and is not related to information structure, since in informative presupposition clefts the subordinate component is new information. Indeed in the utterance of informative presupposition clefts speakers typically place the prominent nuclear stress of the intonation group (marked here by upper case) on the subordinate component: *C'est maman qui me BAT*. This is a prosodic signal that the material in the subordinate component is informative although its prominence has been reduced by the syntax. In fact rather than grappling with the pragmatic issue of inappropriate use of presuppositions, it is more satisfactory, as remarked, to view the

29 Lauri Karttunen, "Presuppositions and Linguistic Context," *Theoretical Linguistics* 1 (1974): 181–194; Robert Stalnaker, "Pragmatic Presuppositions," in *Semantics and Philosophy* (ed. Milton K. Munitz and Peter K. Unger; New York: New York University Press, 1974), 197–214; Kai von Stechow, "What Is Presupposition Accommodation, Again?" *Philosophical Perspectives* 22 (2008): 137–170.

30 Judy Delin, "Properties of It-Cleft Presupposition," *Journal of Semantics* 9 (1992): 1–17; Angelika Kratzer, "Interpreting Focus: Presupposed or Expressive Meanings? A Comment on Geurts and van Der Sandt," *Theoretical Linguistics* 30 (2006): 123–136.

31 William Croft and D. Alan Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 56–58.

construction in cognitive terms and identify the syntactic subordination as a strategy to create a ground for the figure rather to trigger a presupposition.

In the theoretical literature it is normally stated that a thetic sentence has a specific spatio-temporal deixis in that it refers to a specific event or is a predicate denoting a “stage-level” property, i.e., a transitory property relating to a specific time.<sup>32</sup> Kratzer claims that stage-level predicates have in addition to their participant argument structure also a spatio-temporal argument.<sup>33</sup> Erteschik-Shir terms this the “stage-topic”,<sup>34</sup> which she claims, following Gundel,<sup>35</sup> functions as the topic in a thetic sentence, i.e., the sentence is about the contextually specified space/time at which the reported event takes place. Likewise É. Kiss regards thetic sentences as “predication structures predicating about a phonologically empty, but deictically or anaphorically bound event argument”.<sup>36</sup> It will become clear in the data presented in this chapter that the notion of a thetic construction can be extended to include sentences with “individual-level” predicates, i.e., sentences that refer to a permanent situation.<sup>37</sup> According to Kratzer individual-level predicates do not have a spatio-temporal argument like stage-level predicates.<sup>38</sup> É. Kiss claims that the lack of such a spatio-temporal argument, or in her terminology “event argument”, in individual-level predicates prevents them from being able to be thetic sentences.<sup>39</sup> As stressed by Sasse, however, the fundamental feature of the thetic–categorical distinction is “the general shape a speaker gives the state of affairs”, which operates independently of information structure and type of predicate. A thetic sentence, therefore, is not necessarily eventive. It may be equative, as in *C'est cet homme là-bas qui est le chef* (= [12] above). Again, it is best to characterize a thetic sentence in cognitive terms as presenting a situation with a figure and ground. The figure is expressed by making the subject prominent

32 Gregory Carlson, “A Unified Analysis of the English Bare Plural,” *Linguistics and Philosophy* 1 (1977): 413–458; idem, *Reference to Kinds in English* (New York: Garland, 1977); Drubig and Schaffar, “Focus Constructions,” 1084.

33 Angelika Kratzer, “Stage and Individual Level Predicates,” in *The Generic Book* (ed. Gregory Carlson and Francis Jeffrey Pelletier; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 125–175.

34 Nomi Erteschik-Shir, *The Dynamics of Focus Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

35 Jeanette K. Gundel, “The Role of Topic and Comment in Linguistic Theory” (Unpublished PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1974).

36 Katalin É. Kiss, “Discourse-Configurationality in the Languages of Europe,” in *Constituent Order in the Languages of Europe* (ed. Anna Siewierska; Berlin: Mouton / De Gruyter, 1998), 685.

37 Carlson, “Unified Analysis,” 413–458; idem, *Reference*.

38 Kratzer, “Stage and Individual Level Predicates,” 125–175.

39 É. Kiss, “Discourse-Configurationality,” 685.

and the ground by demoting the predication. This configuration of a state of affairs is independent of the existence of a specific spatio-temporal index.

The copula clause in a cleft sentence, i.e., *It is John* in the cleft sentence *It is John that loves Mary*, is a specificational clause. Higgins distinguished a particular type of English copular clause which he termed a “specificational” clause.<sup>40</sup> Examples of such clauses in English include

(17) *What I don't like about John is his tie*

(18) *The problem is the leaking roof*

They are termed “specificational” because the nominal phrase after the copula specifies the value of the description in the first nominal phrase: “the subject in some way delimits a domain and the specificational predicate determines a member of that domain”.<sup>41</sup> The predicate typically specifies an individual member of the domain of the subject by a referent that is known or accessible to the hearer. The second nominal phrase in specificational clauses is, therefore, typically referential, whereas the first is a variable. The variable typically gives an attributive description of a referent.

Higgins distinguishes specificational copular clauses from predicational copular clauses, such as (19):

- (19) a. *That thing is heavy*  
 b. *Helen is a teacher*  
 c. *Bill is my best friend*  
 d. *John is the person whom I like*

Predicational clauses contain an attributive description after the copula, which corresponds in some cases (e.g., in 19c, d) to the type of item that serves as the first nominal in a specificational clause. For this reason it has been proposed by some linguists that specificational clauses are derived by inverting the arguments of predicational clauses.<sup>42</sup> Difficulties have been pointed out in finding

<sup>40</sup> Francis Roger Higgins, *The Pseudo-Cleft Construction in English* (New York: Garland, 1979).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>42</sup> Edwin Williams, “Semantic vs. Syntactic Categories,” *Linguistics and Philosophy* 6 (1983): 423–446; *idem*, “The Asymmetry of Predication,” *Texas Linguistic Forum* 38 (1997): 323–333; Barbara H. Partee, “Ambiguous Pseudoclefts with Unambiguous Be,” in *Proceedings of the North Eastern Linguistics Society* 16, (ed. Stephen Berman, Jae-Woong Choe, and Joyce McDonough; Amherst: GLSA, 1986), 354–366.

evidence for inversion in English.<sup>43</sup> Observable structural evidence, however, has been identified in other languages. In Russian, for example, the first nominal in specificational sentences may be in the instrumental case, whereas in predicational sentences the nominal after the copula is in the instrumental case.<sup>44</sup> Several scholars<sup>45</sup> note that in some languages the copula of specificational sentences agrees with the constituent in the apparent predicate rather than the apparent subject, e.g., in Italian:

- (20) *Il colpevole sono io*  
 the culprit be.PRS.1SG 1SG.NOM  
 “The culprit is me.”

This has been taken as evidence that the noun after the copula in such languages is the subject at some underlying level of derivation. Also relevant is the fact that the pronoun in examples such as (20) is nominative.<sup>46</sup> In languages such as English, in which the copular verb does not agree with the second constituent, the agreement is controlled by the surface syntactic subject of specificational sentences rather than the underlying syntactic subject. As pointed out by Heycock, the argument of underlying subject–predicate reversal in specificational sentences is supported by the fact that in languages such as Italian the copula does not agree with a following 1st or 2nd person in equative sentences that are not specificational.<sup>47</sup> This applies, for example, to sentences expressing “assumed identity” such as (21), in which the copula agrees with the subject before it and the pronoun following it is in the oblique form:

- (21) *Facciamo finta che tu sei me*  
 “Let’s pretend that you are me”

43 Caroline Heycock and Anthony Kroch, “Inversion and Equation in Copular Sentences,” in *Papers in Linguistics 10* (ed. Artemis Alexiadou, Nanna Fuhrhop, Ursula Kleinhenz and Paul Law; Berlin: Zentrum für allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, 1998), 71–87.

44 Catherine V. Chvany, *On the Syntax of BE-Sentences in Russian* (Cambridge: Slavica Publishers, 1975).

45 For example, Andrea Moro, *The Raising of Predicates: Predicative Noun Phrases and the Theory of Clause Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Caroline Heycock, “Specification, Equation, and Agreement in Copular Sentences,” *Canadian Journal of Linguistics* 57 (2012): 209–240.

46 Heycock, “Specification,” 213.

47 *Ibid.*, 214.

The copula clause of a cleft sentence such as *It is John that loves Mary* is specificational in that it specifies the referent of a non-referential variable in the presupposition of the subordinate clause, i.e., *somebody loves Mary*. The subject of the copula clause is coindexed with this variable, i.e., the variable is the syntactic subject of the copula clause.

In languages such as Italian in which the copula agrees with the predicate of a specificational clause, as in (22), the copula agrees with the predicate of the copula clause of a cleft sentence, which demonstrates that it is specificational, e.g.,

- (22) *sono io che amo Mary*  
 “It is me who loves Mary”

The main aim of this chapter is to identify in BH cleft constructions and constructions in which the copula is used as a focus marker, which, as we have seen, can be assumed to have its origin in cleft constructions. Attention will be given to the identification of the type of focus expressed by such constructions, distinguishing between contrastive and non-contrastive types of focus. Proposed analyses of constructions will be supported by typological parallels in Eastern Aramaic dialects.

In a cleft construction one constituent is made the predicate of a predication in the main clause (*It is John ...*). In Aramaic this predication is expressed by a copula. The copula in Aramaic nominal clauses developed historically from an anaphoric pronoun. In pre-modern Aramaic this process is well advanced in Syriac, in which the pronominal copula is an enclitic that is attached to the predicate, e.g.,

- (23) Syriac<sup>48</sup>  
 ʾalāhā zaddīq=ū.  
 God righteous=COP.3MS  
 “God is righteous.”

- (24) ʾurhā da-šrārā ʾalīšā=y.  
 road of-truth painful=COP.3FS  
 “The road of truth is painful.”

48 Theodor Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904), 246; Rubens Duval, *Traité de Grammaire Syriaque* (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1881), 362.

In such copular constructions the initial subject should not be considered to be an adjunct in left dislocation from the rest of the clause, resumed by an anaphoric pronoun. This is likely to have been the historical origin of the construction, but in examples such as (23) and (24) the subject appears to be fully integrated into the clause and the pronoun is an agreement index rather than a resumptive pronoun. Such a copular agreement index is analogous to the agreement index expressed by verbal affixes in verbal sentences and the subject nominal phrase has the properties of a grammatical subject rather than a dislocated item.

In eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects an enclitic copula of pronominal origin is regularly used. As in Syriac, it is cliticized after the predicate, e.g.,

(25) Qaraqosh, North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic:<sup>49</sup>

*báb-i kpina=ilə.*<sup>l</sup>  
 father-my hungry=COP.3MS  
 “My father is hungry”

(26) *báb-i b-bèṯa=ilə.*<sup>l</sup>  
 father-my in-house=COP.3MS  
 “My father is in the house”

(27) *ʾáwa náša báb-an=ilə.*<sup>l</sup>  
 that man father-our=COP.3MS  
 “That man is our father.”

The weak prosodic status of the copula reflects the grammaticalization of the original pronoun as an agreement index. This reflects the recognized grammaticalization pathway pronoun > clitic > affix. The selection of the predicate as its host reflects, in fact, more the behaviour of an affix than a clitic. According to some scholars a clitic does not select a specific host whereas an affix does.<sup>50</sup> The notion goes back to Wackernagel, who drew attention to the principle of the placement of many Indo-European clitics in “second position” in clauses irrespective of the grammatical category of the initial word.<sup>51</sup> In Neo-Aramaic

49 Geoffrey Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Qaraqosh* (SLL 36; Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2002).

50 Andres Spencer and Ana Luís, “The Canonical Clitic,” in *Canonical Morphology and Syntax* (ed. Dunstan Brown, Marina Chumakina and Greville G. Corbett; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 123–150.

51 Jacob Wackernagel, “Über ein Gesetz der Indogermanischen Wortsellung,” *Indogermanische Forschungen* 1 (1892): 333–436.

the copula behaves prosodically like a clitic, since the word stress ignores it, but we may say that it behaves syntactically more like a verbal subject-indexing affix.

As in Syriac, the subject nominal of copula clauses in North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (henceforth NENA) dialects is grammatically integrated into the clause.<sup>52</sup> This is reflected on a prosodic level by the fact that it is generally within the same intonation group as the rest of the clause (in the examples above a grave accent marks nuclear stress, an acute accent marks non-nuclear stress and the symbol | marks an intonation group boundary). Moreover the subject slot may be filled by the full range of items that may be used as subject in other types of clauses. It may, for example, be a non-topical and a non-accessible item, such as a non-referential item or a downward-entailing item.<sup>53</sup> Such a nominal would not be expected as a dislocated item in a left dislocation construction,<sup>54</sup> e.g.,

(28) C. Urmi<sup>55</sup>

*nášə*    <sup>+</sup>*basúərə* *cpinə=na*.|  
 people few    hungry=COP.3PL  
 “Few people are hungry.”

When there is a full subject nominal in the clause, therefore, the copula has the status of subject agreement. This development is likely to have taken place at a considerable time depth in the history of NENA, since it can be seen to have occurred already in the classical eastern Aramaic dialects such as Syriac. In Syriac copulas are very frequent in verbless clauses and in NENA they are the norm.

Turning now to BH, it must be noted that there is a controversy among scholars as to whether pronouns coreferential with a subject nominal in verbless clauses should be identified as copulas or not. Many who have investigated

52 Geoffrey Khan, “Left Dislocation in North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic Dialects,” *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus* 50 (2016): 91–110.

53 A downward entailing item reverses the entailment relations among expressions, e.g., “John ran fast” entails “John ran”, which is semantically “weaker” due to the lack of the adverbial, but “Few people ran” entails “Few people ran fast”. It is associated with negative polarity, as shown by the fact that “Nobody ran” entails “Nobody ran fast” and “John did not run” entails “John did not run fast”.

54 Khan, “Left Dislocation,” 91–110.

55 Geoffrey Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of the Assyrian Christians of Urmi* (4 vols.; Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2016).

the question prefer to regard all such sentences as dislocation constructions in which the subject pronoun resumes or anticipates a dislocated nominal.<sup>56</sup> Some scholars, therefore, refer to them as “tripartite” sentences rather than copula sentences.<sup>57</sup> According to such a view, the construction would not have developed along the grammaticalization pathway to the same extent as eastern Aramaic. Furthermore in some cases there is no consensus about the information structure of the sentences with such pronouns. This applies in particular when both of the lexical constituents are definite and there are differing views as to which is the base of predication, i.e., which of the two is the subject constituent. Unlike Syriac and the NENA dialects, co-referential pronouns do not occur in verbless clauses in BH with great frequency. This, indeed, appears to be a reflection of a lesser degree of development of the construction than in eastern Aramaic. It does not necessarily follow, however, that the cases in which the pronouns do occur are not copular constructions. In what follows I shall investigate possible typological parallels between the BH “tripartite” constructions and the copular constructions of eastern Aramaic. Given the indisputable fact that the pronoun in eastern Aramaic has developed fully into a copula, i.e., a subject agreement index, parallels in patterns of usage are likely to cast light on the BH constructions.

BH “tripartite” clauses may be classified into various types, which are examined in the following sections. Important heuristic value will be assigned to the prosodic status of the pronouns in such constructions. The prosodic status will be established on the basis of the Masoretic accent signs. It is now widely recognized that accent signs reflect a reading that has its roots in antiquity. Evidence for the reading of the biblical text can be traced to as early as the Second Temple period.<sup>58</sup>

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56 See the literature surveyed in Geoffrey Khan, “Some Aspects of the Copula in North West Semitic,” in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives* (ed. Steven Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 155–176; Robert D. Holmstedt and Andrew R. Jones, “The Pronoun in Tripartite Verbless Clauses in Biblical Hebrew: Resumption for Left-Dislocation or Pronominal Copula?” *JSS* 59 (2014): 53–89.

57 Cf., e.g., Takamitsu Muraoka, “The Tripartite Nominal Clause Revisited,” in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches* (ed. Cynthia L. Miller; LSAWS 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 187–214.

58 Geoffrey Khan, *A Short Introduction to the Tiberian Masoretic Bible and Its Reading Tradition* (2nd ed.; Piscataway: Gorgias, 2013), 39–41.

## 2 Copula in Attributive Predicates (*NP Predicate-hū*)

In this type of construction in BH the pronoun is placed after the second of the two core components of the clause. Most frequently the second component is an adjective, indefinite nominal phrase, prepositional phrase or adverbial phrase and so has the status of an attributive predicate, e.g.,

- (29) הַבֶּשֶׂר הַחַי טָמֵא הוּא  
 “Raw flesh is unclean.” (Lev 13:15)
- (30) שֻׁלְחָן יְהוָה נְבוֹזָה הוּא  
 “The table of the Lord is contemptible.” (Mal 1:7)
- (31) הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדַמְתָּ-קֹדֶשׁ הוּא  
 “The place on which you are standing is holy ground.” (Exod 3:5)
- (32) בֵּי-טוֹב כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לָכֶם הוּא  
 “The best of all the land of Egypt is yours.” (Gen 45:20)
- (33) הַבָּנוֹת בְּנֹתַי וְהַבָּנִים בְּנֵי יְהִצְאֹן צִאֲנִי וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה רֹאֶה לִי-הוּא  
 “The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine.” (Gen 31:43)
- (34) מִהַיְשָׁהֶיָּה כְּבָר הוּא וְאֲשֶׁר לְהִיּוֹת כְּבָר הִיָּה  
 “That which has been is still now; that which is to be already has been.”  
 (Eccl 3:15)

The biblical corpus also contains a few examples of this construction in which the predicate is a definite referential nominal and the clause is equative, e.g.,

- (35) וְאֶפְרַיִם בְּכֹרִי הוּא  
 “and Ephraim is my first-born.” (Jer 31:9)

When the predicate is a single word, as is the case in the examples cited above, the predicate constituent is connected to the pronoun with a conjunctive accent or a *maqeph*. This reflects the prosodic bonding of the pronoun to the preceding predicate in the cantillation tradition, which may be represented as *Predicate-hū*. Both the placement of the pronoun after the predicate and its prosodic bonding to it are features that are parallel to the eastern Aramaic copula, which is an enclitic attached to the predicate. The parallel between

syntax and prosody of the BH constructions and Aramaic copula constructions can be taken as evidence that the pronoun in such BH constructions has likewise developed the status of a copula subject index, or has at least advanced towards this status along the grammaticalization pathway. One should be cautious of attempting to distinguish left dislocation constructions from Subject–Predicate constructions on functional grounds, as do Holmstedt and Jones.<sup>59</sup> Left dislocation constructions with coreferential clitics and subject-initial constructions in principle exhibit functional equivalence in BH.<sup>60</sup> In spoken Neo-Aramaic an initial item of a left dislocation construction that stands in the same intonation group as the rest of the clause exhibits all the syntactic properties of grammatical subjects.<sup>61</sup> This point is also made by Doron and Heycock for Modern Hebrew.<sup>62</sup>

When the predicate phrase is longer, the copula may split the predicate phrase with the copula bound prosodically to the first element, e.g.,

- (36) הָאֲנָשִׁים הַזֵּאתִים שְׂלָמִים הֵם אִתָּנוּ  
 “These men are friendly with us.” (Gen 34:21)

More frequently the copula is placed after the long phrase and disconnected from it by a disjunctive accent, e.g.,

- (37) כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵשׁ אֹכֵלָה הוּא  
 “For the Lord your God is a devouring fire.” (Deut 4:24)

- (38) שְׁלֹשָׁת הַשָּׁרְגִים שְׁלֹשַׁת יָמִים הֵם  
 “The three branches are three days.” (Gen 40:12)

This prosodic disjunction is motivated by the fact that only a limited number of words can be linked by conjunctive accents rather than by the syntactic status of the copula. It may be said that when prosodic bonding is permitted according to the principles of the accent system, then the copula in the *Predicate-hū* construction is conjoined with the predicate by a conjunctive accent.

59 Holmstedt and Jones, “Pronoun,” 53–89.

60 Geoffrey Khan, *Studies in Semitic Syntax* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 95–96.

61 Khan, “Left Dislocation,” 91–110.

62 Edit Doron and Caroline Heycock, “Filling and Licensing Multiple Specifiers,” in *Specifiers: Minimalist Approaches* (ed. David Adger, Susan Pintzuk, Bernadette Plunkett and George Tsoulas; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 69–89; eadem, “Categorical Subjects,” *Gengo Kenkyu* 123 (2003): 95–135.

Further evidence that the status of the pronoun in *Predicate-hū* constructions was a copula is the fact that in some cases a form of the verb הָיָה “to be” occurs in a parallel position in an adjacent clause,<sup>63</sup> e.g.,

- (39) וְעַתָּה שְׁנֵי-בָנֶיךָ הַנּוֹלָדִים לְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַד-בֹּאִי אֵלֶיךָ מִצְרַיִמָּה לִי-הֵם אֶפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה  
כְּרֵאוּבֵן וְשִׁמְעוֹן יִהְיוּ-לִי:  
“And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, like Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine.” (Gen 48:5)

- (40) מֵה-שֶׁהָיָה כְּבָר הוּא וְאֲשֶׁר לְהִיּוֹת כְּבָר הִיא  
“That which has been is still now; that which is to be already has been.”  
(Eccl 3:15)

A *Predicate-hū* construction is sometimes inverted before the subject, e.g.,

- (41) אַחַת הִיא יוֹנָתַי תְּמִתִּי  
“My dove, my perfect one, is (only) one.” (Cant 6:9)
- (42) צְדִיק הוּא יְהוָה  
“The Lord is righteous.” (Lam 1:18)

The copula pronoun is not obligatory in the predicate of nominal sentences. The occurrence of the copula in clauses with the structure *NP Predicate-hū* or *Predicate-hū NP* is generally motivated by the status of the clause within the discourse.<sup>64</sup> In many cases there are objective indicators of the clause's prominence in the context in which it occurs. The prominence may arise from the fact that the clause is set up in contrastive or parallel relationship with an adjacent clause (e.g., Gen 48:5; Eccl 3:15; Cant 6:9). In Gen 31:43 it occurs in a clause that marks the climactic closure of a chain of parallel clauses. The clause may make an assertion that is in contrast to expectations triggered by the preceding context (e.g., Lam 1:18) or in contrast to assumed shared knowledge (e.g., Mal 1:7). The clause may, in general, be of a high level of importance, with durable relevance in the surrounding discourse (e.g., Gen 34:21; Deut 4:24; Exod 3:5; Gen 45:20; Num 21:26) or durable relevance in the extra-linguistic situation (e.g., legal statements such as Lev 13:15). In this latter category may be included cases

63 Khan, *Studies*, 72; Holmstedt and Jones, “Pronoun,” 58–66.

64 Khan, *Studies*, 73.

where the copula clause expresses an interpretation or gloss that is a key foregrounded proposition in the discourse (e.g., Gen 40:12).

In general, a predicate with a postposed copula is a time-stable property of the subject and the sentence is categorical. The cross-linguistic typological study of copulas by Pustet has shown that in languages in which copulas are optional they tend to occur in predicates expressing time-stable properties more frequently than in those expressing contingent properties.<sup>65</sup>

As remarked, the majority of attested constructions with copulas placed after the predicate have attributive predicates containing items such as adjectives, indefinite nouns or prepositional phrases. There are, however, a number of cases where the predicate is a definite referential nominal, as in (35). Further examples are:

- (43) כִּי הַשְּׁבוֹן עִיר סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֲמֹרִי הוּא וְהוּא נִלְחַם בְּמֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב הָרֵאשִׁון וַיִּקַּח אֶת-כָּל-אֶרְצוֹ  
מִיַּד עַד-אֲרֹנוֹן

“For Heshbon is the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites. He fought against the former king of Moab and took all his land out of his hand, as far as the Arnon.” (Num 21:26)

- (44) הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה כֹּל-בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה

“These bones are the whole house of Israel.” (Ezek 37:11)

Anaphoric pronominal subjects are often placed after the predicate in nominal clauses that have no explicit subject constituent. If the predicate is short it is prosodically bonded with the pronoun by a conjunctive accent, as is the case with copulas. These could be analysed as copulas with zero subject arguments. In this more copious body of evidence, there are many examples where the predicate of the postposed anaphoric subject is a referential expression, e.g.,

- (45) וְעַתָּה אַחֲוֹתַי הַחַיִּישִׁי אֶתְּיָד הוּא

“Now hold your peace, my sister; he is your brother.” (2Sam 13:20)

- (46) אָמְרוּ אָדָּם מֶלֶךְ-יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא

“They said ‘It is surely the king of Israel.’” (1Kgs 22:32)

65 Regina Pustet, *Copulas: Universals in the Categorization of the Lexicon* (Oxford Studies in Typology and Linguistic Theory; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Moreover the subject pronoun may be 1st or 2nd person, e.g.,

- (47) כִּי־חַנּוּן אָנִי  
“for I am compassionate” (Exod 22:26)
- (48) כִּי־עֹפָר אַתָּה  
“for you are dust” (Gen 3:19)

In virtually all attested copular clauses with explicit subject arguments the copula is 3rd person and the subject argument is not an independent personal pronoun. Possible exceptions to both these tendencies are (49), where the subject is a 2nd person pronoun and (50) where the subject is a quantified pronominal phrase:

- (49) אַתָּה | נֹרָא אַתָּה  
“You are terrible.” (Ps 76:8)
- (50) כֻּלָּנוּ בְנֵי אִישׁ־אֶחָד נַחֲנוּ  
“All of us are the sons of one man.” (Gen 42:11)

It appears, therefore, that the postposed copula is not restricted to attributive predicates, although it is more frequent with such predicates. Moreover, although there is a pronounced tendency to avoid copulas in clauses with independent personal pronouns as subjects, this is not an absolute rule. It is worth comparing Syriac and NENA dialects, where the enclitic copula can be placed on referential predicates in sentences with an explicit subject constituent (51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 58) and can be 1st or 2nd person agreeing with 1st or 2nd person independent pronominal subjects (53, 54, 55, 57, 58):

Syriac

- (51) *ʿabūn dīlan ʿabrāhām=ū*  
“Our father is Abraham.” (Peshitta John 8:39)
- (52) *meṭṭūl d-Arnōn ṭhūmā=ū d-Mōʿābāyē*  
“for the Arnon is the boundary of the Moabites” (Peshitta Num 21:13 = כִּי  
אַרְנוֹן גְּבוּל מוֹאָב)
- (53) *w-enā ʿaprā=nā w-qeṭmā*  
“and I am dust and ashes” (Peshitta Gen 18:27 = וְאֲנִי עֹפָר וְאָפֶרֶת)

(54) *āp ʿenā nbīyā=nā ʾakwātāk*  
 “I also am a prophet like you.” (Peshitta 1Kgs 13:18 = אֲנִי נְבִיאַ כְּמֹדֶיךָ)

(55) *w-att Šāʾul=att*  
 “and you are Saul” (Peshitta 1Sam 28:12 = וְאַתָּה שָׂאוּל)

NENA, Qaraqosh

(56) *ʾawa nāša bāb-əḥ=il*<sup>l</sup>  
 that man father-his=COP.3MS  
 “That man is his father.”

(57) *ʾana bāb-əḥ=iyən*<sup>l</sup>  
 I father-his=COP.1S  
 “I am his father.”

(58) *ʾayət bāb-əḥ=iyət*<sup>l</sup>  
 you father-his=COP.2S  
 “You are his father.”

The explanation as to why a BH copular clause *Subject–Predicate–copula* tends to avoid having a pronominal subject whereas this is more frequent in Syriac and NENA is likely to be that in Syriac and NENA the copula has undergone a greater degree of grammaticalization. The more advanced state of grammaticalization is reflected in the fully clitic status of the copula in Syriac and NENA and the greater frequency of use (very frequent in Syriac and regular in NENA). The postposed pronoun in BH in clauses such as אֲנִי הוּא and אַתָּה הוּא or the postposed copula in copular clauses with subject arguments is prosodically bound to the preceding predicate but is not a full clitic, since it still carries its own accent. It is not, therefore, sufficiently distinct from an independent pronoun to function as a copula agreement index of an independent subject pronoun. We may say that the copula in Syriac and NENA is “strongly grammaticalized” where it is only “weakly grammaticalized” in BH.<sup>66</sup>

66 The occurrence of an interrogative particle after the initial nominal in מְקַנְהֵם וְקַנְיָנָם וְכָל־בְּהֵמָתָם הֲלוֹא לָנוּ הֵם (Gen 34:23) may also be a reflection of the weak grammaticalization of the copula. Some have taken this example as evidence that the *NP Predicate-hū* construction here must be left dislocation (e.g., Jacobus A. Naudé, “Syntactic Analysis of Dislocations in Biblical Hebrew,” *JNSL* 16 [1990]: 115–130; Stephen A. Geller, “Cleft Sentences with Pleonastic Pro-

### 3 Copula as a Constituent Focus Marker (*Pronoun-hū NP*)

#### 3.1 *Personal Pronoun with Constituent Focus Marker*

Some cleft constructions are attested in BH with a 1st or 2nd person predicate of a 3rd person pronominal subject followed by a verbal clause that is explicitly marked as subordinate by the relative particle אֲשֶׁר, e.g.,

(59) וְאֲנִי־הוּא אֲשֶׁר־חָטְאֵתִי וְהִרַעַתְּ הַרְעוֹתַי

“And it is I who has sinned and has done very wickedly.” (1 Chr 21:17)

(60) הֲאֵתָהּ־הוּא אֲשֶׁר־דִּבַּרְתִּי בְיָמִים קְדָמוֹנִים בְּיַד עֲבָדַי נְבִיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנִּבְּאִים בְּיָמִים הָהֵם  
שָׁנִים לְהָבִיא אֶתְךָ עֲלֵיהֶם:

“Is it you that I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them?” (Ezek 38:17)

In (59) and (60) the 3rd person copula pronoun is a clitic that is bound prosodically with the preceding personal pronoun. The complements of the copulas in (59) and (60) are referential expressions referring to individuals. The anaphor of the 3rd person copula in the cleft matrix clauses would be the variable in the presupposition of the subordinate clause: *somebody* sinned—*he* is me.

Note that in (59) the verb in the relative clause has 1s subject inflection agreeing with the clefted 1s subject. Languages differ as to the agreement patterns between a 1st/2nd person clefted subject and a verb in the subordinate cleft clause. In some languages, such as English and Spanish, the verb of the subordinate clause is 3rd person (61a, 61b), while in others, such as Italian, it agrees in person with the clefted subject (61c):

- (61) a. *It is me who has sinned*  
b. *Soy yo quien ha pecado*  
c. *Sono io che ho peccato*

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noun: A Syntactic Construction of Biblical Hebrew and Some of Its Literary Uses,” *JANES* 20 [1991]: 15–33; Holmstedt and Jones, “Pronoun,” 56). This does not imply that all *NP Predicate-hū* constructions must be left dislocation. The length of the initial nominal may have been a factor in its placement in this particular example. Furthermore, as remarked, the development of an anaphoric pronoun to a copula should be regarded as a continuous pathway of grammaticalization rather than a discrete categorical distinction.

The agreement of the verb in the subordinate clause in a BH construction such as (59) can be regarded as a reflection of an incipient merger of the biclausal cleft construction into a monoclausal construction. Once the construction has become monoclausal, the 3rd person pronoun would have to be analysed as a focus marker.

This development of the pattern of an originally biclausal cleft construction to a monoclausal construction with a focus marker can be identified in a type of “tripartite” nominal sentence in which a 3rd person pronoun is placed after, and prosodically bonded to, an initial pronoun.<sup>67</sup> The initial pronoun is a personal or demonstrative pronoun. Most attested examples of such constructions with personal pronouns have 1st and 2nd pronouns, e.g.,

- (62) וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל חֶזְקִיָּהוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרֻבִּים אַתָּה־הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים  
 לְבַדְּךָ לְכָל מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ:  
 “And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said: ‘O Lord, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.’” (2Kgs 19:15)
- (63) וְעַתָּה | אֲדַגֵּן יְהוָה אַתָּה־הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים וְדַבְרֶיךָ יְהִי אֱמֶת  
 “And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true.” (2Sam 7:28)
- (64) אַתָּה־הוּא מַלְכִי אֱלֹהִים צֹוֵה יִשׁוּעוֹת יַעֲקֹב  
 “You are my king, O God. Command the salvations of Jacob.” (Ps 44:5)
- (65) אַתָּה־הוּא יְהוָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתָּ בְּאַבְרָם וְהוֹצֵאתוֹ מֵאוּר כַּשְׁדִּים וְשָׂמְתָּ שְׁמוֹ  
 אַבְרָהָם  
 “You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him forth out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham.” (Neh 9:7)
- (66) עוּרִי עוּרִי לְבַשִׁי־עֹז וְרֹעַ יְהוָה עוּרִי כִימִי קָדָם דְּרוֹת עוֹלָמִים הֲלוֹא אַתָּה־הִיא הַמַּחַצְבֶּת  
 רָהַב מַחֹלְלַת תַּנְיִן:  
 “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Are you not the hewer of Rahab and the piercer of the dragon?” (Isa 51:9)

67 Geller, “Cleft Sentences,” 15–33 calls all types of BH tripartite clauses “cleft sentences” simply because they “seem so similar” to clefts in other languages, without any justification on structural grounds.

- (67) **לָכֵן יָדַע עַמִּי שְׁמִי לְכֹן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כִּי־אֲנִי־הוּא הַמְדַבֵּר הַנִּינֵי**  
 “Therefore My people will know My name, therefore on that day, for (behold) I am speaking, (behold) I am here.” (Isa 52:6)
- (68) **אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא מַחֵה פְשָׁעֶיךָ לְמַעַן לֹא אֲזָכֹר**  
 “I—I am blotting out your transgression for my own sake, I shall not remember your sins.” (Isa 43:25)
- (69) **אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא מְנַחֵמְכֶם מִי־אֵת וּתְרֵאֵי מֵאֲנָשׁ יָמוּת וּמִבְּן־אָדָם חָצִיר יִנָּתֵן**  
 “I—I am comforting you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass.” (Isa 51:12)

A rare example of the construction with an initial 3rd person pronoun is:

- (70) **בְּחֶלְקֵי־גִיחַל חֶלְקֶיךָ הֵם הֵם גּוֹרְלֶיךָ גַּם־לָהֶם שְׁפָכְתָּ נֶטֶד הַעֲלִית מִנְהִיָּה**  
 “Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion; they are your lot; to them you have poured out a drink offering, you have brought a cereal offering.” (Isa 57:6)

The pattern of occurrence of the 3rd person pronoun in such constructions has its origin in biclausal cleft constructions such as (59) and (60), in which the 3rd person pronoun is a copula in a matrix clause. There is, however, no morphological signal of syntactic subordination in the remainder of these constructions, so they should be interpreted as monoclausal and the 3rd person pronoun should be interpreted as a focus marker. Despite their monoclausal structure, they retain the same function as clefts, which is the origin of their pattern.

In some examples of this construction the context could suggest that the initial pronoun is in narrow contrastive focus. This may apply, for example, to a case such as (62), where the phrase **לְבַדְּךָ**, “you alone”, suggests that there is an exclusive contrastive focus on the “you” constituent. For this reason some scholars have analysed the definite noun **הָאֱלֹהִים** in such constructions as the subject and the second person pronoun the predicate with a 3rd person copula agreeing with the 3rd person subject **הָאֱלֹהִים**, i.e., “God is you”.<sup>68</sup> I should like to

68 Cf., e.g., Tamar Zewi, “Subordinate Nominal Sentences Involving Prolepsis in Biblical Hebrew,” *JSS* 41 (1996): 1–20; eadem, “The Definition of the Copula and the Role of Third Person Independent Pronouns in Nominal Sentences of Semitic Languages,” *Folia Linguistica Historica* 17 (1996): 41–55; eadem, “The Nominal Sentence in Biblical Hebrew,” in *Semitic and Cushitic Studies* (ed. Gideon Goldenberg and Shlomo Raz; Wiesbaden: Harras-

argue that it is preferable to analyse the אָהוּא as a focus marker developing from the pattern of a biclausal cleft construction. This would accommodate the full range of functions performed by the construction. In my earlier study of the BH copula, I drew attention to the fact that several instances of this construction do not clearly express contrastive focus on the initial personal pronoun.<sup>69</sup> In (64), for example, the context makes no reference to any other candidate contending for the role of “my king” that could necessitate a contrastive focus on the 2nd person pronoun with “my king” being presuppositional. Rather the constituent “my king” is an informative part of the message. It is unsatisfactory, therefore, to explain the 3rd person pronoun in אָהוּא מֶלֶכִי by the claim that “my king” is the subject and the predicate has been inverted before this subject, since “my king” is clearly more informative than the 2nd person pronoun “you”. The situation of God being king lays the ground for the following command. Driver regards the 3rd person pronoun as anticipatory of the predicate: “You are he—the king”.<sup>70</sup> In their analysis of similar constructions in Modern Hebrew, Berman and Grosu proposed that the 1st/2nd person pronoun is the subject and the 3rd person pronoun is a copula that lacks person agreement because it is no longer a pronoun.<sup>71</sup> I adopted a similar view in my 2005 paper and this was followed also by Holmstedt and Jones.<sup>72</sup> I now propose that the third person pronoun postposed after the initial pronoun in such a construction should rather be analysed as a focus marker, originating in the pattern of biclausal cleft constructions, and the construction has the function of a cleft: “It is you who is my king”. Crucially it would have the function of a cleft con-

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sowitz, 1994), 145–167; Alviero Niccacci, “Types and Functions of the Nominal Sentence,” in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew* (ed. Cynthia L. Miller; LSAWS 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 229. Zewi analyses the nominal as standing in extraposition, i.e., right dislocation, where Niccacci considers it to be in apposition to the 3rd person pronoun.

69 Khan, “Some Aspects,” 155–176.

70 Samuel R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), 297.

71 Ruth A. Berman and Alex Grosu, “Aspects of the Copula in Modern Hebrew,” in *Studies in Modern Hebrew Syntax and Semantics: The Transformational-Generative Approach* (ed. Peter Cole; Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1976), 271. Susan Rothstein, *Predicates and Their Subjects* (Dordrecht / Boston / London: Kluwer, 2001), 218, who also assumes that the 1st or 2nd person pronoun in such constructions in Modern Hebrew is the subject, offers an explanation for the lack of person agreement of the copula in the framework of the agreement mechanisms in generative grammatical theory. Edit Doron, “Verbless Predicates in Hebrew,” (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1983), 117, who also works within generative theory, argues that a 1st or 2nd person pronoun in such sentences in Modern Hebrew is not the subject, but the predicate.

72 Holmstedt and Jones, “Pronoun,” 59.

struction with an “informative presupposition”. Such constructions typically express a fact that is assumed to be known<sup>73</sup> or is verifiable in the speech situation, and so demote the assertion by subordination, or in the case of focus markers by reducing the relative degree of focus on the assertion. This can be identified in many of the examples above (62–70). The constructions with 2nd person pronouns are devotional addresses to God. Those that have informative presuppositions (i.e., the component after the focus marker), which are likely to be the majority, would naturally express known truths. As discussed above in Section 1, such cleft constructions have been found to be used in other languages to expressthetic situations. The subject, which is the pivot of the situation, is given prominence by presentational (not contrastive) focus by the clefting, or by a focus marker, as is the case in our construction. This creates a disjunction from what precedes and marks a boundary in the discourse, which is a typical feature ofthetic descriptions. As shown by some scholars,<sup>74</sup> suchthetic clefts have been found cross-linguistically to be used to provide the grounds for what follows in the discourse. Thetic sentences, or more generally the category of utterance that Kaltenböck, Heine and Kuteva call theticals,<sup>75</sup> are typically used by a speaker/writer to manage the discourse in his/her interaction with the reader/listener. Many of the examples above have this discourse managing function, in that they typically lay the ground for a following request, which is expressed by the worshipper in the following discourse.<sup>76</sup>

Another cross-linguistically attested function ofthetic clefts is to express an eventive situation.<sup>77</sup> Example (67) above with an initial 1st person pronoun could be interpreted as having the function of an eventivethetic cleft. Most Bible translations interpret this as expressing narrow contrastive focus on the 1st person pronoun (e.g., NRSV “It is I who speak”). If this were the case, the sentence would have the function of correcting a presupposition that somebody else was speaking. The sense of the passage, however, is that God is revealing his presence to His people, as shown by the presentative phrase הַיְיָ at the end of the verse, by which He draws attention to Himself. It would be more appropriate in the context, therefore, to interpret אֲנִי־הוּא הַמְדַבֵּר as having the function

73 Prince, “Comparison,” 883–906.

74 Cf., e.g., Prince, “Comparison,” 883–906; Sasse, “Thetic/Categorical Distinction,” 511–580.

75 Gunther Kaltenböck, Bernd Heine, and Tania Kuteva, “On Thetical Grammar,” *Studies in Language* 35 (2011): 852–897.

76 A corresponding construction in biblical Aramaic is אֲנַחְנָא הִמּוּ עַבְדֵי דִּי־אֱלֹהֵי שְׁמַיָא וְאֶרְצָא, “We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth” (Ezra 5:11), in which the 1pl. pronoun is followed by a prosodically bound 3rd person pronoun. This sentence opens a speech and presents athetic situation that sets the scene for what follows.

77 See Sasse, “Thetic/Categorical Distinction,” 511–580 and the discussion in Section 1.

of athetic cleft with presentational, not contrastive, focus on the initial item, which draws attention to the situation of God speaking: “I am speaking”. The verse would, therefore, be more accurately rendered with a translation such as the following: “Therefore My people will know My name ... for (behold) I am speaking, (behold) I am here.” It is possible that also (68) and (69) should be interpreted as eventive: “I am blotting out your transgressions”, “I am comforting you”.

Constructions with an initial personal pronoun and a 3rd person pronominal clitic similar to examples (62–70) are found in Syriac. As in the BH examples, in many cases the following definite nominal is an informative part of the utterance and is not presuppositional, e.g., (71), which is the answer to the question “Who do you say that I am?”

- (71) *ʾatt=ū mšihā*  
 “You are the Messiah.” (Peshitta Matt 16:16)

On account of the information structure of such constructions that is suggested by the context, some scholars have identified the 2nd person pronoun in Syriac constructions such as (71) as the subject and noted simply that the enclitic copula does not agree with the subject.<sup>78</sup> According to Muraoka and Goldenberg in all such sentences with a third person clitic the initial pronoun is the predicate and the following nominal should be regarded as the subject.<sup>79</sup> Proponents of this view assume, it seems, that in all cases the nominal is presuppositional and not informative, which is not an appropriate interpretation in cases such as (71). As with the BH examples, I propose that the 3rd person pronoun after the initial pronoun in Syriac constructions such as (71) should be analysed as marking presentational focus, based on the pattern of cleft constructions, and that the construction has the function of an informative presupposition cleft (“It is you that is the Messiah”), i.e., the information in the predicate is presumed to be known and uncontroversial. The construction is thetic and points to a situation rather than making a categorical statement.

In Syriac the copula clitic that is attached to a 1st or 2nd person pronoun in such constructions can agree in person with the pronoun, e.g.,

78 Cf., e.g., Jan Joosten, *The Syriac Language of the Peshitta and Old Syriac Versions of Matthew: Syntactic Structure, Inner-Syriac Developments and Translation Technique* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 87–88; Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar*, 248–249; Duval, *Traité*, 362.

79 Takamitsu Muraoka, “On the Nominal Clause in the Syriac Gospels,” *JSS* 20 (1975): 28–37; Gideon Goldenberg, “On Syriac Sentence Structure,” in *Arameans, Aramaic and the Aramaic Literary Tradition* (ed. Michael Sokoloff; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1983), 104–106.

- (72) *ʿenā=nā mār̄yā*  
 I=COP.1S Lord  
 “I am the Lord.” (Peshitta Gen 28:13)

The copula in a construction such as (72) can also be interpreted as expressing focus on the pronoun following the pattern of a cleft without formal subordination of the rest of the clause. It has the function of an informative presupposition cleft (“It is me who is the Lord”).

As has been remarked in Section 1, the copula clause in a cleft construction is a specificational clause. The complement of the copula specifies the value of a variable in the presupposition of the subordinate clause, e.g., in *It is John that loves Mary* the noun *John* specifies the variable in the presupposition of the subordinate clause *somebody loves Mary*. The agreement of the copula in person and number with its complement in a Syriac construction such as (72) could be explained by the fact that a copula agrees with the predicate of a specificational clause in some languages. As we have seen above (Section 1) this applies to Italian and in Italian the same person and number agreement occurs in cleft constructions, e.g.,

- (73) *sono io che sono stanco*  
 COP.1S I that COP.1S tired  
 “It is me who is tired.”

In Syriac this agreement in person is not regular, as shown by a construction such as (71), in which the copula does not agree in person with its 2ms complement. In BH constructions such as (62–70) the pronoun focus marker is predominantly 3rd person. This focus marker, it will be recalled, is based on the pattern of copula pronouns with personal pronoun predicates in cleft constructions. The focus marker does, however, agree in gender (66) and number (70). A possible example of person agreement is Isa 43:11:

- (74) אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה וְאִין מִבְּלַעְדֵי מוֹשִׁיעַ:  
 “I am the Lord and besides me there is no saviour.”

This person agreement is, however, exceptional and it is likely that the construction is left dislocation: “I—I am the Lord”.

Thethetic constructions discussed above have parallels in NENA. The construction in (75a), with the copula cliticized to the initial pronoun, is athetic description of a situation whereas the one in (75b) with the copula on the predicate nominal makes a categorical statement. In both cases the predicate nominal is informative and carries the nuclear stress of the intonation group:

(75) NENA, Qaraqosh

a. 'áxni=iγəx surəγə<sup>l</sup>  
 we=COP.1PL Christians  
 “We are Christians.” (thetic)

b. 'áxni surəγə=iγəx<sup>l</sup>  
 we Christians=COP.1PL  
 “We are Christians.” (categorical)

### 3.2 *Demonstrative Pronoun with Constituent Focus Marker*

A constituent focus marker is used also after demonstrative pronouns, e.g.,

(76) וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד זֶה הוּא בַּיִת יְהוָה הָאֵלֹהִים  
 “And David said ‘This is the house of the Lord God.’” (1 Chr 22:1)

As in constructions discussed above with personal pronouns, here the 3rd person pronoun that functions as the focus marker is prosodically bonded to the initial demonstrative by a conjunctive accent. Again the pattern of the construction has its origin in cleft constructions, but it is monoclausal without any subordination, so the 3rd person pronoun now has the function of a focus marker. The overall function of the construction in this example is that of an informative presupposition cleft, in that the component that comes after the focus-marking הוא is informative. The focus marker gives presentational, not contrastive, focus to the initial demonstrative, which refers to a referent in the surrounding speech situation. In conformity with the discussion above about informative presupposition clefts, the effect of this is that the clause is thetic and presents a situation with a central pivotal figure. It is not a categorical statement that directly predicates something about the referent of the initial demonstrative. As remarked, such thetic constructions may be used to manage the discourse by presenting a situation that lays the grounds for the following discourse. This is indeed the case in this context, since after this preliminary thetic construction, which presents the site of the “house of the Lord God”, the speaker goes on to command the various building operations relating to its construction.

A construction with a deictic demonstrative without a focus marker, as in (77), would be more appropriately interpreted as a categorical statement, which makes a direct predication about the subject referent:

(77) זֶה הַבְּבֹרָא  
 “This is the first-born.” (Gen 48:18)

Another example of a construction containing a focus marker combined with the demonstrative pronoun *זה* is Eccl 1:17:

- (78) וְאֶתְנָהּ לְבִי לְדַעַת חֲכָמָה וְדַעַת הוֹלָלוֹת וְשִׁכְלוֹת יִדְעֵתִי שְׁגָם-זֶה הוּא רַעֲיוֹן רוּחַ:  
 “And I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly.  
 I perceived that this also is a striving after wind.”

Here the demonstrative is anaphoric to the preceding discourse rather than deictic to the external speech situation. It is preceded by the inclusive focus particle *גַּם* and the phrase *רַעֲיוֹן רוּחַ* has been activated in the preceding context (v. 14). The nature of the focus expressed by the focus marker *הוּא* is, therefore, different from that in (76). It is a category of contrastive focus, which Dik terms “expanding focus”.<sup>80</sup> There is a presupposition of shared knowledge with the interlocutors that another thing has the property of being “striving after wind” and this clause asserts that the set of things that have this property should be expanded by an additional referent. The construction reflects the presuppositional status of the component of the clause coming after the initial demonstrative, this time through its discourse activation rather than its being an informative presupposition as in (76).

When the focus is contrastive, the presuppositional component of the construction may be elided, as in the following, where the demonstrative is deictic:

- (79) וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיְבִיאֵהוּ וְהוּא אֲדָמוּנִי עִינָיו עֵינִים וְטוֹב רֵאיוֹ פּ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה קוּם מִשְׁחָהוּ בִי-זֶה הוּא:  
 “And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and besides with beautiful eyes, and handsome appearance. And the Lord said, ‘Arise, anoint him; for it is him.’” (1Sam 16:12)

Samuel has stated that God has not chosen the other sons of Jesse (v. 10). The clause *זה הוּא* in v. 12 has the meaning “It is him (that God has chosen)”. This is a “replacing” type of contrastive focus according to the terminology of Dik, i.e., the other possible candidates that the speaker presupposes the hearer is contemplating for the role should be replaced by this one.

A constituent focus marker occurs also in a number of constructions with the plural demonstrative *אֵלֶּה* “these”, e.g.,

- (80) אֵלֶּה הֵם בְּנֵי יִשְׁמָעֵאל  
 “These are the sons of Ishmael.” (Gen 25:16)

<sup>80</sup> Dik et al., “Typology,” 41–74.

- (81) אֵלֶּה הֵם מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הַקֹּהַתִּי  
 “These are the families of the Kohathites.” (Num 3:27)

Again, in these constructions the 3rd person pronoun is prosodically bonded with the preceding demonstrative and it should be identified as a focus marker originating in the pattern of a cleft construction and retaining the pragmatic function of a cleft, in which the preceding demonstrative is a predicate and what follows is a presuppositional subordinate clause. Examples (80) and (81) occur at the end of genealogical lists and the referents of the phrases “the sons of Ishmael” and “the families of the Kohathites” have been activated in the preceding discourse. The focus on the demonstrative is presentational, not contrastive. The demonstrative pronoun is anaphoric. The focus has the function of reinforcing the anaphoric reference to bind the clause more tightly with the preceding discourse where the anaphors are to be found. This is achieved by explicitly signalling by the construction that the remainder of the clause (i.e., “the sons of Ishmael” and “the families of the Kohathites”) is presuppositional and is assumed to be recoverable from the discourse. When the nominal after the initial demonstrative is not presuppositional, a simple nominal clause is used, as in (82):

- (82) וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׁמָעֵאל  
 “and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael.” (Gen 25:13)

In (83) the demonstrative pronoun is cataphoric to the following discourse, but the following nominal “my appointed feasts” is recoverable from the preceding discourse:

- (83) דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדָי  
 “Say to the people of Israel: The appointed feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—these are my appointed feasts.” (Lev 23:2)

Example (84), from a different context from that of lists, can also be identified as a construction with a focus marker:

- (84) אֹי לָנוּ מִי יַצִּילֵנוּ מִיַּד הָאֱלֹהִים הָאֲדִירִים הָאֵלֶּה הֵם הָאֱלֹהִים הַמְכִּים אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּכָל־מַכָּה בַּמִּדְבָּר:  
 “Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.” (1Sam 4:8)

Here the plural demonstrative is bound prosodically with the following 3rd person pronoun by a conjunctive accent. It has the pragmatic function of an informative presupposition cleft: “It is these that are the gods who smote the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness”. The speaker presents the statement as if he were assuming that the identity of the gods was a generally known fact, as a rhetorical device to increase his persuasiveness. As is the case with other informative presupposition clefts, it is *thetic*, pointing to a situation for the purpose of managing the discourse, in this case to give the grounds of the preceding statement.

### 3.3 *Numeral with Constituent Focus Marker*

The 3rd person pronoun that is used in some constructions with initial numerals can be identified as a constituent focus marker, e.g.,

(85) שְׁלֹשָׁה הֵמָּה מֵיטִיבֵי עֲטָד

“Three things are stately in their march.” (Prov 30:29)

(86) שְׁלֹשָׁה הֵמָּה נִפְלְאוֹ מִמֶּנִּי

“Three things are too wonderful for me.” (Prov 30:18)

(87) שֵׁשׁ־הֵנָּה שָׂנֵא יְהוָה

“Six things the Lord hates.” (Prov 6:16)

(88) שְׁתֵּים־הֵנָּה קִרְאֵתֶיךָ מִי יָנֹד לְךָ הַשָּׂדֶה וְהַשֶּׁבֶר וְהָרָעָב וְהַחֶרֶב

“Two things are befalling you. Who will condole with you?—devastation and destruction, famine and sword.” (Isa 51:19)

The numeral is bound prosodically to the following 3rd person pronoun. Examples (85–87) are presentational constructions. Example (85) has a nominal predicate, whereas (86) and (87) have verbal predicates. As in other constructions with the focus marker, these constructions have the pragmatic function of a cleft. The content after the pronoun is packaged as an informative presupposition. They are *thetic* and have a similar function to informative presupposition constructions with demonstrative pronouns such as (76), in that they present a situation that lays the grounds for the following discourse.

The construction in (88) has the pragmatic function of an eventive *thetic* cleft: “It is two things that are befalling you”. It draws attention to the situation that has the figure of two things that befall you. This lays the grounds for the following question: “Who will condole with you?” The question should not be interpreted as a parenthetical insertion, as is reflected by some modern

Bible translations. The proposed interpretation would correspond to the LXX  $\delta\upsilon\omicron\ \tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\epsilon\nu\acute{\alpha}\ \sigma\omicron\iota\ \tau\iota\varsigma\ \sigma\omicron\iota\ \sigma\upsilon\lambda\lambda\upsilon\pi\eta\theta\acute{\eta}\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$  "(While) these two things (are) befalling you, who will sympathize with you?"<sup>81</sup>

### 3.4 *Interrogative Words with Constituent Focus Marker*

A third person pronoun that is prosodically bonded with the interrogative word  $\text{מִי}$  can also be identified as a constituent focus marker, e.g.,

- (89)  $\text{מִי־הוּא יִרִיב עִמָּדִי}$   
 "Who will contend with me?" (Job 13:19)

This is a rhetorical question used in a context where the speaker assumes that nobody will contend with him in a trial and that he will surely be vindicated; cf. Job 13:8:  $\text{יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־אֲנִי אֶצְדָּק}$ , "I know that I shall be vindicated". As with other constructions containing a constituent focus marker, this interrogative construction has the pragmatic function of a cleft construction. In a cleft construction "Who is it that will contend with me?" the content of the subordinate clause is not asserted. This may be uttered in a situation where the content of the subordinate clause is already part of shared knowledge of speaker and hearer, i.e., it has been previously asserted that somebody will contend with the speaker. If it is used, as is the case here, without such existing shared knowledge, the lack of assertiveness of the subordinate clause does not commit the speaker to a presupposition that "somebody will contend with him." Likewise it does not impose a presupposition that "somebody will contend with him" in the mind of the hearer. As a result, it is a rhetorical question with an expected answer that "Nobody will contend with me."

Similar interrogative questions with a focus marker are the following:

- (90)  $\text{מִי־הוּא יְרַשִּׁעֵנִי}$   
 "Who will declare me guilty? = Who is it that will declare me guilty?" (Isa 50:9)
- (91)  $\text{מִי הוּא נִקְי אֲבָד}$   
 "Who has perished (while being) innocent? = Who is it that has perished while being innocent?" (Job 4:7)

81 Other examples with initial numerals include Prov 30:24 and Prov 30:29.

- (92) שְׂיִמְהֶנָּה עִרְבֵנִי עִמָּךְ מִי הוּא לְיָדַי יִתְקַע  
 “Give a pledge! Be surety for me with you! Who (else) will strike hands with me (in pledge)? = Who (else) is it that will strike hands with me (in pledge)?” (Job 17:3)

In a few cases the focus marker in such rhetorical questions is followed by the particle *וְהֵ*, which, following Huehnergard and Pat-El<sup>82</sup> can be considered to be an archaic relative particle thus making the construction explicitly cleft in its structure, e.g.

- (93) מִי הוּא-וְהֵ עָרַב אֶת-לְבָבוֹ לְגִשַׁת אֵלַי  
 “Who is it that has pledged his heart to approach unto Me?” (Jer 30:21)

In (94) the cleft construction is used where the unasserted content of the subordinate clause (“somebody is the king of glory”) has been introduced in the preceding discourse (e.g., v. 9 *וַיָּבֵא מַלְאֲכֵי הַכְּבוֹד*, “that the king of glory may enter”):

- (94) מִי הוּא וְהֵ מַלְאֲכֵי הַכְּבוֹד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הוּא מַלְאֲכֵי הַכְּבוֹד סֵלָה:  
 “Who is it that is the king of glory? The Lord of hosts! He is the king of glory! *Selah*” (Ps 24:10)

A 3rd person pronoun functioning as a focus marker is sometimes combined with the interrogative word *מָה*, e.g.,

- (95) מָה הֵנָּה שֶׁבַע כְּבָשֹׂת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר הִצַּבְתָּ לְבַדְדָּנָה  
 “What are these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?” (Gen 21:29)

Here the referents “these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart” have been activated in the preceding discourse and so is unasserted content.

A few rhetorical questions are attested in which a phrase containing the interrogative word *מָה* combined with a 3rd person pronoun functioning as a focus marker is placed at the end of the clause, e.g.,

- (96) אֶרְצוֹ אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שְׁקֵל־כֶּסֶף בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ מִה־הוּא  
 “What is a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver between you and me?” (Gen 23:15) = “What is it that a piece of land worth four hun-

82 John Huehnergard and Na’ama Pat-El, “Some Aspects of the Cleft in Semitic Languages,” in *Studies in Semitic and General Linguistics in Honor of Gideon Goldenberg* (ed. Tali Bar and Eran Cohen; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2007), 325–342.

dred shekels of silver is between you and me?”, i.e., there is no imposing of a presupposition that “the land is (worth) something.”

- (97) וְאַהֲרֹן מִהֲיָהוּא כִּי תִלְוֶנּוּ עָלָיו:  
 “What is Aaron that you murmur against him” (Num 16:11) = What is it that Aaron is that you murmur against him?, i.e., there is no imposing of a presupposition that “Aaron is something (negative).”

### 3.5 *Nominal with Constituent Focus Marker*

The construction below may be a case of a lexical nominal phrase taking a prosodically bound constituent focus marker:

- (98) כִּי כַחַטָּאת הָאֲשָׁם הוּא לְכַהֵן  
 “For like the sin offering, (also) the guilt offering is for the priest.” (Lev 14:13)

The conjunctive accent on the noun הָאֲשָׁם indicates that the pronoun following it is a focus marker. This would be the category of contrastive focus termed “expanding focus” by Dik (see above).

## 4 NP *hū* NP

When a copula occurs in a nominal sentence with a predicate that is a definite nominal with unique reference, the copula is frequently placed before the definite predicate nominal, e.g.,

- (99) וַיְהִיוּ בְנֵי־נֹחַ הַיֵּצְאִים מִן־הַתְּבֵּה שֵׁם וְחָם וְיָפֶת וְחָם הוּא אָבִי כְנַעַן:  
 “The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham is the father of Canaan.” (Gen 9:18)
- (100) רַק חִזֵּק לְבַלְתִּי אֲכַל הַדָּם כִּי הַדָּם הוּא הַחַיָּה  
 “Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life.” (Deut 12:23)
- (101) וַיֵּשֶׁב עֵשָׂו בְּהַר שֵׂעִיר עֵשָׂו הוּא אֶדְוֹם:  
 “and Esau dwelt in the hill country of Seir. Esau is Edom.” (Gen 36:8)
- (102) וַיֹּסֶף הוּא הַשְּׂלִיט עַל־הָאָרֶץ  
 “and Joseph is the governor over the land” (Gen 42:6)

A distinctive feature of these constructions is that the copula pronoun is disjoined prosodically from the preceding subject nominal, which regularly has a disjunctive accent. This applies even to cases where the subject nominal is monosyllabic, as in (99) and (100).

Nominal sentences with definite nominal predicates may have no copula,<sup>83</sup> e.g.,

- (103) הַקֹּל קוֹל יַעֲקֹב  
“The voice is the voice of Jacob.” (Gen 27:22)
- (104) שְׁמֶךָ יַעֲקֹב  
“Your name is Jacob.” (Gen 35:10)
- (105) אֶרְנוֹן גְּבוּל מוֹאָב  
“The Arnon is the boundary of Moab.” (Num 21:13)
- (106) הַבָּנוֹת בְּנֹתַי וְהַבָּנִים בְּנֵי וְהַצֹּאן צֹאנֵי  
“The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks.” (Gen 31:43)

As has been remarked in Section 2, constructions with definite referential predicate nominals can have a copula that is placed after the predicate. There is, therefore, no grammatical constraint on the occurrence of copulas after definite predicates. The motivation for the different constructions can, rather, be found in discourse function. *NP hū NP* constructions, such as (99–102), typically supply background information that has an explanatory function (e.g., 99–101) or sets the scene for a following section of narrative (e.g., 102). They have the status ofthetic expressions. *NP Predicate-hū* constructions, on the other hand, express foreground categorical assertions.

In some NENA dialects, two types of copular constructions are used for sentences containing definite nominal predicates. In the first type of construction the copula is placed after the predicate, as in attributive predicates, e.g.,

- (107) Barwar<sup>84</sup>  
*Yósap báb-at Gwirgis=ile.*  
Joseph father-of Gwirgis=COP.3MS  
“Joseph is the father of Gwirgis.”

83 Francis I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 52–59; Zewi, “Nominal Sentence,” 158–159.

84 Geoffrey Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Barwar* (HdO 1/96; Leiden: Brill, 2008).

In the second type of construction the copula is placed before the predicate. In some dialects, such as Barwar, the copula stands independently, e.g.,

- (108) Barwar  
*Yósəp ʾile báb-ət Gwiris.*<sup>1</sup>  
 Joseph COP.3MS father-of Gwiris  
 “Joseph is the father of Gwiris.”

In other dialects, e.g., Qaraqosh, the copula is hosted by a 3rd person pronoun:

- (109) Qaraqosh<sup>85</sup>  
*Yósəp ʾahu=lə báb-ət Gwiris.*<sup>1</sup>  
 Joseph PRO.3MS=COP.3MS father-of Gwiris  
 “Joseph is the father of Gwiris.”

The second type of construction is typically used in the same contexts as BH constructions such as (99–102), i.e., as explanatory background statements or statements that present a situation that sets the scene for what follows, and can be identified asthetic sentences. A feature of such constructions is that they cannot be used to ask a question. When they are used, the speaker is committed to their factuality.<sup>86</sup>

The construction in (109) from the Qaraqosh dialect has the appearance of a cleft. It would be more appropriate to say that the positioning of the copula marks focus and what follows it is not syntactically subordinated as in a true cleft. The construction nevertheless has the pragmatic function of an informative presupposition cleft. The statement conveys the presupposition that the content of what follows the copula, i.e., what would be in the subordinate clause of a cleft, is factual and generally known. That is why a question cannot be asked with such a construction. The initial item is contextually-bound and the focus that is marked by the copula is presentational focus. As can be seen in (109), a further feature of the Qaraqosh construction is that the contextually bound lexical subject has been displaced by a left dislocation process and is coindexed by a pronoun. This applies only to lexical noun subjects. Pronouns do not undergo such left dislocation, e.g.,

85 Khan, *Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Qaraqosh*.

86 Khan, *Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Barwar*, 625–628.

- (110) *ʾáhu=lá*                      *báb-ət*    *Gwírgis.*<sup>1</sup>  
 PRO.3MS=COP.3MS father-of Gwírgis  
 “He is the father of Gwírgis.”

Such left dislocation of lexical subjects is a further strategy to give salience to the subject as the topical pivot of the situation presented in thethetic sentence and, correspondingly, to demote the assertion of the following content, the hallmark of an informative presupposition. A pronoun is inherently more salient, i.e., its referent is more accessible, than a lexical nominal phrase, so a nominal phrase requires the additional left dislocation strategy to raise its salience. This left dislocation can be analysed as internal to the clause, since the displaced item may stand in the same intonation group as the rest of the clause, as in (109).

A similar left dislocation construction is used in Syriac in sentences corresponding to BH sentences such as (99–102), and these appear in many of the Peshitta translations of such clauses, e.g.,

- (111) *ʿEsaw hū=yū*                      *ʿEdōm*  
 Esaw PRO.3MS=COP.3MS Edom  
 “Esau is Edom.” (Peshitta Gen 36:8 = 96 above)

- (112) *w-Yawseḫ hū=yū*                      *šalīt*            *ʿal-ʿarʿā*  
 and-Joseph PRO.3MS=COP.3MS governor over-land  
 “And Joseph is governor over the land.” (Peshitta Gen 42:6 = 97 above)<sup>87</sup>

In the corresponding construction in the NENA Barwar dialect (108 above) the copula is apparently standing by itself. Comparison with NENA dialects such as Qaraqosh would lead us to expect that the subject in the Barwar construction has undergone a similar displacement by left dislocation. In the position where the Qaraqosh dialect has a visible resumptive pronoun, however, Barwar has a gap. This can be identified as a gap that is coindexed with the initial displaced subject:

87 This can be compared to the use of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic construction *היינו* (< *הדין הדין*, i.e., demonstrative + copula) in identificational clauses, e.g., *ר' יהודה היינו תנא* *קמא* “R. Judah is the first Tanna” (*Ketub.* 71a). Elitzur A. Bar-Asher Siegal, *Introduction to the Grammar of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* (2nd ed.; LOS 111/3; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2016), 114. The construction *והו* is used in an equivalent function in Amoraic Hebrew.

- (113) *Yōsap* —=*’ile*      *báb-at* *Gwīrgis*<sup>l</sup>  
 Joseph<sub>i</sub> —<sub>i</sub>=COP.3MS father-of Gwīrgis

The copula would, therefore, be functioning as a focus marker on the gap coincided with the displaced subject. According to generative terminology the displaced nominal would be an “operator” that binds the variable represented by the gap, just as displaced interrogative words bind a gap. This is how so-called *ex situ* focus movement, e.g., fronting, has been analysed in other languages.<sup>88</sup> Indeed a copula that is otherwise clitic would not be expected to be floating without a complement.

A similar analysis could be applied to BH sentences such as (99–102):

- (114) *’Ēsōw* —*hū*      *’Edōm*  
 Esaw<sub>i</sub> —<sub>i</sub> COP.3MS Edom

The BH construction would, therefore, have a copula functioning as a focus marker on a gap bound by a displaced subject. Possible evidence for this gap is the regular prosodic separation of the initial nominal from the copula by a disjunctive accent, even when the initial nominal is monosyllabic, e.g., *וְהָיָה אָבִי כְנָעַן הוּא* (Gen 9:18). Such prosodic disjunction of an initial subject does not regularly occur in nominal sentences without the copula, e.g., *שְׁמִי יַעֲקֹב*, “your name is Jacob” (Gen 35:10), *וְהַבָּנוֹת בְּנֹתַי וְהַבָּנִים בְּנֵי וְהַצֹּאֵן צִאֲנִי*, “the daughters are my daughters; the children are my children; the flocks are my flocks” (Gen 32:43). The BH NP *hū* NP construction would, therefore, be based on the pattern of, and have the pragmatic function of, an informative presupposition cleft. It would put presentational focus on a topically salient referent.<sup>89</sup> This analysis would conform to the pattern of corresponding constructions in Syriac and NENA, which have a clitic copula. It would bring the use of the BH copula in constructions such as (99–102) into line with the syntax of the copula in other constructions in the language, where it is a clitic or quasi clitic. Crucially it would be compatible with the discourse function of the BH constructions, i.e., their use as background comments. As in the corresponding constructions in NENA, the content of the construction is packaged as an informative presupposition, as a known fact, with demoted assertion, rather than a direct assertion of new

88 Drubig and Schaffar, “Focus Constructions,” 1085.

89 Zewi, “Nominal Sentence,” 163, by contrast, analyses the copula as the predicate of what follows it in such constructions, e.g., she translates Gen 42:6: “And Joseph, it was he who was the vizier of the land.” This would imply contrastive focus.

information that is central to the foreground of the discourse. Moreover, as in NENA, this construction is not used in interrogative sentences.

The direct assertion of *NP Predicate-hū* constructions with definite referential predicate nominals is clear from the context. The copular sentence in (43 = Num 21:26) is not explanatory background concerning the city of Heshbon with non-assertive informative presuppositional content. Rather it is a direct assertion central to the foreground of the discourse in that it justifies why in the preceding verse (Num 21:25) Heshbon is specifically named as a city in which the Israelites settled after their defeat of Sihon, i.e., because it is the city of Sihon. Likewise, the context of (35 = Jer 31:9) suggests that the content of the predicate is asserted. The fact that Ephraim is God's firstborn is a central theological argument for God's act of salvation, and so is directly asserted.

A construction such as *וְהָיָה הוּא אָבִי כְנָעַן* may have developed diachronically from a left-dislocation construction with an extra-clausal adjunct: *Hām* [<sub>s</sub>*hū* *ʔbī Kəna'an*], “As for Hām—he is the father of Canaan”. It is preferable to assume that the anaphoric pronominal subject in such a construction developed into a copula of the same nature as the affix-like copula placed after attributive predicates. This is the case in the corresponding constructions in Syriac and NENA. We, therefore, need to adopt the interpretation of the construction that is offered above. This could have been the result of the reanalysis of a left dislocation construction such as *Hām<sub>i</sub>* [<sub>s</sub>*hū*, *ʔbī Kəna'an*] > [<sub>s</sub>*Hām<sub>i</sub>* ∅, *hū* *ʔbī Kəna'an*].

In a few *NP hū NP* constructions the copula pronoun agrees with the predicate:

- (115) *וְהַקֶּרֶן הַגָּדוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר בֵּין עֵינָיו הוּא הַמֶּלֶךְ הַרְאִשׁוֹן*  
 “and the great horn between his eyes is the first king” (Dan 8:21)
- (116) *זָקֵן וְנִשְׂוֵא-פָנָיִם הוּא הַרְאֵשׁ*  
 “The elder and honoured man are the head.” (Isa 9:14)
- (117) *כִּי בְתֵי עָרֵי הַלְוִיִּם הוּא אֲחֻזָּתָם בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*  
 “for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their tenured land among the people of Israel” (Lev 25:33)

These can be analysed as specificational sentences (see Section 1). Examples (115) and (116) are exegetical statements of the allegorical meaning of visions or words. The subject has the status of a domain the referential content of which requires specification. In (115), for example, “the great horn between his eyes”

is a descriptive property, i.e., it is what has the property of being “the great horn between his eyes”, and “the first king” is the individual referent it refers to. The exegetical gloss has a different structure in (116). The word “head” appears in the previous verse in the statement *וַיִּכְרֹת יְהוָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל רֹאשׁ וְזָנָב*, “and the Lord cut off from Israel head and tail” (Isa 9:13). In (116) the “head” has the status of the referential item and “the elder and honoured man” are attributive domains, i.e., “those that have the property of being an elder or honoured man” has the referent of the “head” in the previous statement.

In construction (117) “The houses of the towns of the Levites” is attributive, i.e., “what has the property of being the houses of the towns of the Levites” has the referential content of “their tenured land”, i.e., they constitute a legal proxy of the tenured land of the Israelites.<sup>90</sup>

As has been discussed above (Section 1), in many languages a copula agrees with the predicate of a specificational sentence rather than the subject. This may reflect a reversal of subject and predicate at an underlying level<sup>91</sup> or could be explained less abstractly by the fact that a referential item is more worthy of being a subject than an attributive item.<sup>92</sup> It is not satisfactory to refer to the agreement of the copula with the predicate simply as “attraction”.<sup>93</sup>

These agreement patterns in specificational sentences can be taken as evidence that the pronoun is not an anaphoric pronoun resuming an extra-clausal adjunct but rather is a clause-internal agreement index.

In Syriac and NENA dialects in which the copula is cliticized to an explicit pronoun in such constructions, rather than a gap, the pronoun and copula agree with the predicate when they are specificational, e.g.

- (118) Syriac  
*w-qarnā rabbəθā d-īt                      bēt                      ‘ayn-aw hū=yū*  
 and-horn big                      which-COP between eyes-his PRO.3MS=COP.3MS  
*malkā qaḏmāyā*  
 king first  
 “The great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.” (Peshitta Dan 8:21)

90 Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 177.  
 91 Moro, *Raising of Predicates*; Heycock, “Specification,” 209–240.  
 92 Doron, “Verbless Predicates,” 89–90 observed that when the Modern Hebrew copula agrees with the predicate the predicate is referential.  
 93 Cf., e.g., Yaakov Levi, *Die Inkongruenz im Biblischen Hebräisch* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987), 125–127.

- (119) NENA Qaraqosh  
*rəxmúθ-i 'ánh=ina yàl-i.*<sup>1</sup>  
 love-my PRO.3PL=COP.3PL children-my  
 “My love is my children”

The agreement patterns suggest that the pronouns have the status of agreement indexes rather than resumptive pronouns, i.e., they are “bound variables” in generative terminology. One can assume that, just as the subject agreement of the copula has been reversed, so has the item that is displaced been reversed, i.e., it has been displaced to the right. So the construction is a mirror image of the normal construction. A similar reversal of displaced items would apply also to BH.

## 5 Copula as a Predicate Focus Marker

In a few copular sentences that are not specificational the copula agrees with the predicate. This applies, for example, to (120):

- (120) כִּי־חֻקֹּת הָעַמִּים הַבֵּל הוּא  
 “For the customs of the peoples are wind” (Jer 10:3)

Here the copula agrees with an attributive predicate containing an indefinite noun. We can interpret this as a type of predicate focus, similar to what is found in some African languages such as Rendille and Boni (Section 1), in which the copula takes the predicate as its only complement without being coindexed with the subject argument of the clause: “The customs of the peoples—it is wind”. The copula agrees in number and gender with its complement. In this respect it resembles a cleft construction in which the 3rd person pronoun agrees in number and gender with its complement in the cleft clause. In principle, therefore, a construction such as (120) could have developed from a cleft construction such as “it is X that it is”. Alternatively, the pattern of the focusing main clause of a cleft construction may have been extended to be used as a focus marker for either clause arguments or clause predicates independently of cleft constructions.

Another example where the copula could be interpreted as reflecting predicate focus is (121):

- (121) גַּם־אַתָּם כּוּשִׁים חֲלָלִי חֲרָבִי הֵמָּה:  
 “You also, O Ethiopians, are slain of my sword.” (Zeph 2:12)

Here there is a discrepancy between the copula and the subject in person. Moreover, as we have seen (Section 2), sentences with independent pronoun subjects in principle do not have copulas. It is more appropriate, therefore, to interpret the pronoun as a predicate focus marker, which is not coindexed with the subject: “You also, O Ethiopians—it is slain of my sword.”

It was remarked in Section 2 that the occurrence of a copula after the predicate was optional and so could be assumed to express some kind of discourse prominence of the sentence. We could hypothesize that the sentence copula gave prominence to the proposition of the sentence as a whole whereas a copula functioning as a predicate focus marker gave prominence specifically to the predicate. Of course, a copula that is a predicate focus marker can only be formally distinguished from a sentence copula when it transparently agrees with the predicate rather than the subject in number and gender. The predicate may consist of a nominal that has the same agreement features as the subject, in which case the distinction between the two functions of the copula is formally neutralized.

The function of the copula as a predicate focus marker is found also in NENA dialects. This can be identified, for example, in sentences such as (122–124) that express mistaken identity:

(122) Ankawa  
*xəšbon-e    ʾana ʾayət=yet*  
 thought-his I    you=COP.2MS  
 “He thinks that I am you.”

(123) *xəšbon-e    ʾayət ʾana=yen*  
 thought-his you    I=COP.1MS  
 “He thinks that you are me.”

(124) *xəšbon-e    ʾana ʾawwən=ile*  
 thought-his I    he=COP.3MS  
 “He thinks that I am him.”

Here the copula agrees with the predicate. These cannot be interpreted as specificational sentences. Indeed in languages that exhibit agreement of the copula with the predicate in specificational sentences, such as Italian, the copula agrees with the subject in constructions such as (122–124).<sup>94</sup> Rather, the cop-

94 See Section 1 and Heycock, “Specification,” 214.

ula in the NENA constructions has the function of a predicate focus marker and takes the predicate as its only complement without being coindexed with the subject argument of the clause: “I—it is you”, “You—it is me”, “I—it is him”. Predicate focus would be expected to be pragmatically appropriate in such contexts.

Cases of syntactic disconnection between the subject and the copula include constructions that have an initial generic relative phrase, e.g.

- (125) וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִקַּח אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אָחִיו נִדְּהָ הוּא  
 “A man who takes his brother’s wife—it is impurity.” (Lev 20:21)
- (126) מִשִּׁיב דָּבָר בְּטָרָם יִשְׁמַע אֹזְלוֹת הָיָא־לוֹ וּכְלָמָה:  
 “Whoever gives answer before he hears—it is folly for him and shame.”  
 (Prov 18:13)

Here the explanation is that the generic relative phrase functions like a pro-tasis and expresses a hypothetical proposition. The copula is referring to the proposition.

## 6 Relative Clauses

When a relative clause that is introduced by a relative particle is a nominal clause that takes the referent of the antecedent nominal as its subject, the relative clause may contain a 3rd person pronoun. When this is the case the pronoun is often put at the front of the relative clause cliticized to the relative particle with *maqqeph* or a preceding conjunctive accent, e.g.,

- (127) וְהָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־הוּא טָהוֹר  
 “and the man who is clean” (Num 9:13)
- (128) וּמִן־הָעִיר לָקַח קָרְיִס אֶחָד אֲשֶׁר־הוּא פְּקִיד | עַל־אֲנָשֵׁי הַמְּלָחָמָה  
 “and from the city he took an officer who was a commander of the men of war” (2 Kgs 25:19)
- (129) יַעַן בֵּיתִי אֲשֶׁר־הוּא חָרַב  
 “because of my house, which is ruined” (Hag 1:9)
- (130) וְלֹא־תִקְחוּ כֶּפֶר לְנַפְשׁ רֹצֵחַ אֲשֶׁר־הוּא רָשָׁע לְמוֹת  
 “You shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death.” (Num 35:31)

In many NENA dialects the copula, which is normally cliticized to the predicate, is cliticized to the relative particle at the front of a relative clause, e.g.,

- (131) Qaraqosh<sup>95</sup>  
*maθwáθ d=ina xáðran Bağdèdè*  
 villages REL=COP.3PL around Bağdedè  
 “villages that are around Bağdedè (i.e., Qaraqosh)”

We may interpret such constructions in NENA as the use of the copula to express focus on the relative particle, coindexed with the antecedent noun, as a strategy to demote the assertion of the clause. This would be the same strategy that we have seen in several contexts throughout this chapter. It would have originated in cleft constructions, but has been extended to monoclausal constructions, including subordinate clauses. The motivation to express demotion of the assertion of the clause is that restrictive relative clauses are non-assertive. Once it had developed in non-restrictive relative clauses, it was subsequently extended to non-restrictive relative clauses, e.g.,

- (132) Qaraqosh<sup>96</sup>  
*şálm-aḥ d=ilə bahùra*  
 face-her REL=COP.3MS radiant  
 “her face, which is radiant”

A similar analysis can be applied to the BH expressions, in which the position of the pronoun can be interpreted as marking focus. As in NENA, this construction is used both in restrictive clauses (131–132), where it may be hypothesized to have originated, and also in non-restrictive clauses (133–134).

## 7 אֲנִי הוּא

The combination of the 1s person pronoun and a following 3ms pronoun אֲנִי הוּא is found in various self-proclamations of God. This first occurs in the Song of Moses:

- (133) אֲנִי הוּא | עֲתָה כִּי אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא | וְאִין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּךְ (Deut 32:39)

95 Khan, *Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Qaraqosh*, 475.

96 *Ibid.*, 476.

The construction is subsequently used in various passages by Deutero-Isaiah, who may have been influenced by its occurrence in the Song of Moses. The history of interpretation of this divine self-proclamation has been surveyed in detail by Williams.<sup>97</sup> Her general conclusion is that it was intended to be an assertion of exclusive divinity and unique sovereignty.

In Deutero-Isaiah the two components of the construction אֲנִי הוּא are bonded prosodically by a conjunctive accent or by a *maqeph*. Comparison with the other constructions discussed in this chapter would make it most likely that the 1st person pronoun is the predicate of the construction if it is used as an independent clause, i.e., “It is me”, rather than “I am he”, which is the normal translation in modern Bible versions. If it is a proclamation of exclusivity, there would be a contrastive focus on the 1st person pronoun. The interpretation of it as an expression of exclusivity is based primarily on the passage in the Song of Moses due to it being followed by the clause וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי, “and there is no god beside me”. An indication of how the construction אֲנִי הוּא of the Song of Moses was understood in the Masoretic tradition, not mentioned by Williams, is found in a manuscript with Babylonian vocalization described by Yeivin, in which the first אֲנִי is marked by a *dagesh* sign.<sup>98</sup> The vocalization of the Babylonian manuscript represented here by Tiberian signs is: אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא. In the Babylonian vocalization system the *dagesh* sign is often used to distinguish the meaning of homophones.<sup>99</sup> Very frequently homophones that can have a divine and non-divine denotation are distinguished in this way. This is sporadically found also in the Tiberian tradition, e.g., אֲבִיר, “powerful” (human) vs. אֲבִיר, “powerful” (divine). As in this example from the Tiberian tradition, the Babylonian *dagesh* is used in the non-divine homophone and the divine homophone is left without the *dagesh*. Yeivin argues that the vocalization אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא reflects the fact that the first אֲנִי was interpreted as a normal 1st person pronoun, i.e., one used also by humans, whereas the second אֲנִי without the *dagesh* was divine in the sense that it was part of the divine name.<sup>100</sup> So, the construction was interpreted: “I am *ʾānī hū* (i.e., my name is *ʾānī hū*)”. This would mean that there is no direct assertion of exclusivity, but only a declaration by God of his name.

97 Catrin H. Williams, *The Interpretation of 'Anī Hū' in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

98 Israel Yeivin, *The Hebrew Language Tradition as Reflected in the Babylonian Vocalization* (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1985), 1102 (in Hebrew).

99 *Ibid.*, 355–363.

100 *Ibid.*, 1102.

In most of the passages where the construction occurs in Deutero-Isaiah, a proclamation of exclusivity is not obvious from the context. Rather in most contexts an existential interpretation would be more appropriate, and this can find support in the Targum and early versions, e.g.

- (134) וְעַד־זְקֵנָה אֲנִי הוּא וְעַד־שִׁיבָה אֲנִי אֶסְבֵּל  
 “until old age I am (exist), and to gray hairs I endure” (Isa 46:4)

Cf. LXX ἕως γήρους ἐγὼ εἰμι καὶ ἕως ἄν καταγηράσητε ἐγὼ εἰμι, “until old age I am and until you grow old I am”; Targum Jonathan: וְעַד עֲלָמָא אֲנָא הוּא וְעַד עֲלָמָא אֲנָא קַיִם מִימְרֵי קַיִם, “and until eternity I am and until eternity of eternities my *Memra* exists”.

- (135) גַּם־מִיּוֹם אֲנִי הוּא וְאִין מִיְדֵי מַעֲלִיל  
 ‘From the day I am (exist) and there is none that can deliver out of my hand’ (Isa 43:13)

Cf. Targum Jonathan: אַף מִמְשִׁיב הוּא וְלִית דְּמִן יְדֵי מְשִׁיבִיב, “and from eternity I am and there is none who saves from my hand”; Peshitta: *’āp men yawmā qad-māyā ’enā=nā*, “I am from the first day”.

- (136) מִי־פָעַל וְעֵשָׂה קִרְא הַדְרֹת מְרַאשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה רֵאשׁוֹן וְאַתְּ־אַחֲרָיִם אֲנִי־הוּא:  
 “Who has performed and done? The one who announces events in advance. I, the Lord, am first and with the last I am.” (Isa 41:4)

Cf. LXX: ἐγὼ θεὸς πρῶτος καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐπερχόμενα ἐγὼ εἰμι, “I (am) God first and until the future I am”; Peshitta: *’enā=nā māryā qadmāyā wa-ḥrāyā ’enā=nā*, “I am the Lord, the first, and I am the last.”

As remarked, the 1st person pronoun is the predicate of the construction. This is reflected also by the Syriac Peshitta rendering *’enā=nā*. The 1st person pronoun would be in focus, but this does not have to be a contrastive focus expressing exclusivity. An existential interpretation (“I am, I exist”) would be possible if the focus is presentational, i.e., it draws attention to the 1st person argument without the presupposition that there are other possible candidates. The construction could, therefore, be compared to constructions such as אַתְּ־הוּא מַלְכִּי, “you are my king” (Ps 44:5), which, as discussed, can be interpreted as giving presentational focus to the pronoun and have the pragmatic function of informative presupposition clefts, i.e., they express athetic situation. The construction אֲנִי הוּא without a following complement could be such athetic construction, with a focus marker on the 1st person pronoun, but no

predicate nominal as a complement, since the complement is lexically empty: “It is I (who is)”, i.e., “I am” (I exist). An instructive parallel to this is found in NENA dialects, in which a clause containing the 1st person pronoun as predicate to an enclitic copula, e.g.,

- (137) NENA Aqra  
 ’ana=wən.<sup>l</sup>  
 I=COP.1MS

can be used with the existential meaning of “I am” (I exist). In such a usage the copula marks a presentational focus. The construction can also be used with a replacing contrastive focus, e.g., “it is ME (not somebody else)”, or a completive focus, i.e., supplying an item asked about by a question word,<sup>101</sup> e.g., “Who is it?” “It is ME”. When it is used with a presentational focus, however, it presents an existentialthetic situation “I am” (i.e., I exist).

The existential meaning of the construction אֲנִי הוּא, “I am” and its identification as a divine name in Deut 32:39 (אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא, “I am ‘I am’, i.e., my name is ‘I am’”) would correspond to the declaration of the divine name in Exod 3:14, אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה. Many modern commentators interpret this as an expression of encouragement to Moses and God’s commitment to help his people in the future, e.g., “I will be” to Moses and His people “what I will be”,<sup>102</sup> “I am/shall be (with you)”.<sup>103</sup> The LXX, however, which is one of the earliest interpretations of this divine declaration, renders the constructions with an existential sense: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν, “I am the one being”. No claims of rival gods are alluded to in the context of the Exodus passage, so a non-contrastive existential interpretation (“I am who is”) is more appropriate than a contrastive one (“I [but not others] am who is”). Indeed the non-contrastive interpretation אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה as “I am who is” would correspond very closely to the proposed underlying structure of אֲנִי הוּא, i.e., “It is I (who is).”

101 Cf. Dik et al., “Typology,” 41–74.

102 Samuel R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus in the Revised Version with Introduction and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 24.

103 Godfrey W. Ashby, *Go out and Meet God: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 24; John L. Mackay, *Exodus* (Fearn / Ross-shire: Mentor, 2001), 77.