THE APPLICABILITY OF SEMANTIC FUNCTIONS TO BIBLICAL HEBREW

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In traditional grammars of Biblical Hebrew semantic relations between the different elements in sentences are either ignored or integrated with syntax. What is presented as syntax (even in the newest reference grammars like Waltke and O'Connor's Biblical Hebrew syntax and Jonson and Muraoaka's A grammar of Biblical Hebrew), is in fact a mixture of syntax and semantics. Therefore, it has become necessary to consciously try for a better distinction between these two levels of linguistic description, although they can never be separated completely. One of the ways in which this can be done, is by testing the applicability of a semantic theory to sentences in Biblical Hebrew in order to try to identify the semantic categories more clearly. In this paper S.C. Dik's theory of functional Grammar is used for this purpose, in particular the sections on semantic functions. Following a short definition of every semantic category which is relevant for the analysis of logical relations in sentences, examples from Biblical Hebrew are given to test the validity of the various categories and their definitions and to show how the theory can be applied to Biblical Hebrew. It is found that the theory of semantic functions in Functional Grammar can be applied very well to Biblical Hebrew and that a semantic analysis of a sentence can be undertaken in addition to the morphological and syntactic analyses.

In traditional grammars of Biblical Hebrew semantic or logic relations between the different elements in sentences are either ignored or integrated with syntax. What is presented as syntax, is in fact a mixture of syntax and semantics. In the standard grammar of Gesenius, Kautzsch and Cowley there is only a section on syntax, but not one on semantics. However, in the part on syntax, many semantic issues are discussed, for example the so-called "adverbial accusative" of place, time, measure, cause and manner (1976:372-376, § 118). The same approach is found even in the newest reference grammars like Waltke and O'Connor's Biblical Hebrew syntax and Jonson and Muraoaka's A grammar of Biblical Hebrew, Part Three.

Therefore, it has become necessary to consciously try for a better distinction between these two levels of linguistic description, although they can never be separated completely. One of the ways in which this can be done, is by testing the applicability of a semantic theory to sentences in Biblical Hebrew in order to try to identify the semantic categories more clearly. In this paper S.C. Dik's...
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terms in a predication can be either arguments or satellites. Arguments are the obligatory terms and satellites are optional terms. Arguments and satellites can have semantic functions. On the other hand some semantic functions can be occupied by either arguments or satellites. There is a non-rigid relationship between morphological case, syntactic and semantic functions (cf. Dik, 1989:302, 309:314 and Buth, 1987:38, 43).

Semantic functions specify the "roles" which the referents of the terms involved play in the predication (Dik, 1989:24). Semantic functions are the logical or meaning relations in a sentence. The following semantic functions, which can be occupied by arguments and satellites, are distinguished (cf. Dik, 1989:101-103, 195-198, 206-208):

Agent: The entity controlling an action (first argument).

Positioner: The entity controlling a position (first argument).

Force: The non-controlling entity instigating a process (first argument).

Processed: The entity that undergoes a process (first argument).

Zero: The entity primarily involved in a state (first argument).

Patient: The entity affected or effected by the operation of some controller (agent/positioner), force or processed (cf. Dik, 1989:87; "John finally kicked the bucket" - idiom for "John finally died") (second argument).

The finer distinctions between accomplishments, activities, changes and dynamisms, as well as experiences, are not relevant for the distinctions of semantic functions in Dik's Functional Grammar. However, Junger (1983:120-121) distinguishes between the separate semantic functions of *experiencer* and *phenomenon*.

Functional grammar can be regarded as a kind of valency grammar (cf. Dik, 1985b:95-110, 1989:98-110; Junger, 1987:148-151; Lowery, 1985:311-314). A predication is the combination of the predicate and the terms associated with it. Different subjects can change the kind of predication - compare the examples with the verbs "דָּבָר" and "הָלַךְ" above. A predicate in itself cannot be called an action, a position, etc. However, they can be called action-predicate, position-predicate, process-predicate and state-predicate if the whole predication is taken into consideration in determining this.

A predicate need not be expressed by a verb - it can also be expressed by a nominalised verb (cf. Mackenzie, 1983:32-38, 50 and Vet, 1983:136-137). Verbs and nominalised verbal predicates do not have semantic functions. The
| Recipient: The entity into whose possession something is transferred (second or third argument). |
| And she also gave to her husband (2nd. arg.) with her (action) (Gn. 3:6) |
| I have given your brother (3rd. arg.) a thousand (pieces) of silver (action) (Gn. 20:16) |
| (When you till the ground,) it (force) will no longer give its yield to you (3rd. arg.) (process) (Gn. 4:12) |

| Location: The place where something is located (the place at which a certain predicate takes/took place) (second or third argument, or satellite). |
| And he sat down on his throne (2nd. arg.) (action) (1 K. 2:19) |
| Keep them (my words) in the midst of your heart (3rd. arg.) (position) (Pr. 4:21) |
| Seven ears (processed) grow on one stalk (satellite) (process) (Gn. 41:22) |
| The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha (2nd. arg.) (state) (2 K. 2:15) |

| Direction: The entity towards which something moves/is moved (the terminal point of a movement) (second or third argument, or satellite). |
| And they put dust on their heads (3rd. arg.) (sublative) (action) (Is. 7:6) |
| And they pray to Yahweh in the direction of the city (satellite) (allative) (action) (1 K. 8:4) |
| The wind (force) goes to the south (2nd. arg.) (allative) (process) (Ex. 1:6) |
| And the iron (processed) fell into the water (2nd. arg.) (illative) (process) (2 K. 6:5) |

| Source: The entity from which something moves/is moved (point of origin of a movement) (second or third argument, or satellite). |
| I drew him out of the water (3rd. arg.) (elative) (action) (Ex. 2:10) |

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| And for years he will stand away from the king of the north (2nd. arg.) (ablative) (position) (Dn. 11:8) |
| And it (the wind - force) brought quails from the sea (3rd. arg.) (ablative) (process) (Nu. 11:31) |
| And it (the wind - force) hisses at him from its place (satellite) (elative) (process) (Job 27:23) |
| It (the mantle - processed) fell from him (2nd. arg.) (delative) (process) (2 K. 2:13) |
| And the plan of the wicked is far away from me (2nd. arg.) (ablative) (state) (Job 22:18) |

| Reference: The second or third term of a relation with reference to which the relation is said to hold (second or third argument). |
| (God) teaches my hands with regard to war (3rd. arg.) (action) (Ps. 18:35) |
| And she felt sorry for him (2nd. arg.) (position) (Ex. 2:6) |
| And his messengers (processed) reached Gades (2nd. arg.) (process) (Is. 30:4) (cf. Dik, 1989:105-106) |
| No tree in the garden of God looked like it (2nd. arg.) with regard to its beauty (satellite?) (state) (Ezek. 31:8) |

The following semantic functions appear as satellites only:

**Interested (party):** The person or institution for whose benefit (sometimes: against whose interest) the predication is effected. It requires a controlled predication. 4

| And she took for him a basket of papyrus (action) (Ex. 2:3) |
| And he stores up wisdom for the upright (position) (Pr. 13:22) |

**Company:** An entity together with whom the predication is effected.

| And Saul ate with Samuel that day (action) (1 S. 9:24) |

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50  ISSN 1018-7820  S.Afr.Tydskr.Taal., Suppl. 33
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Stay here with the donkey (position) (Gn. 22:5)

For the son of this female slave (processed) shall not inherit along with my son Isaac (process) (Gn. 21:10)

And I will lie (dead) together with my ancestors (state) (Gn. 47:30)

Instruments: The tool with which some action is carried out or a position is maintained. It requires a controlled predication.

And I will kill you with the sword (action) (Ex. 22:23)

Manner: The way in which an action is carried out, a position is maintained, or a process occurs. It requires a controlled and/or dynamic predication.

And the judges must inquire diligently (controller-orientated) (action) (Dt. 19:18)

And I will settle them in safety (patient-orientated) (action) (Jr. 32:37)

And you will live securely (predicate-orientated) in your land (position) (Lv. 26:5)

With pain (predicate-orientated) you will bear children (process) (Gn. 3:16)

Speed: The amount of action/process run through per unit of time. It requires a dynamic predication.

Come up to us quickly (action) (Is. 10:6)

And you (processed) will perish quickly off the good land (process) (Dt. 11:17)

Role: The role/function/authority by virtue of which an action is carried out, or a position is maintained. It requires a controlled predication.

And I appeared to Abraham as God Almighty (action) (Ex. 6:3)

And he stayed there as few people (position) (Dt. 26:5)

Path: The orientation (or route) of a movement.

And you may not go up by steps to my altar (action) (Ex. 20:26)

And Ahasia (processed) fell through the lattice (process) (2 K. 1:2)

Time: The time at which/from which/until which a predication takes place.

Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land (action) (Ex. 9:5)

And she stood from then in the morning (and) until now (position) (Ru. 2:7)

On the fifth of the month ... the word (processed) of the Lord came indeed to Ezekiel (process) (Ezek. 1:2-3)

I am not a man of words - neither from yesterday and the day before yesterday (state) (Ex. 4:10)

Duration: The period of time in which a predication takes place (cf. Dik. 1978:26).

And for three years they strengthened Rehoboam (action) (2 Ch. 11:17)

And he waited yet another seven days (position) (Gn. 8:10)

Upon your belly you (processed) will go and dust you will eat all the days of your life (process) (Gn. 3:14)

And there was total darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days (state) (Ex. 10:22)

Frequency: The number of times that a predication is repeated in a certain period (cf. Dik. 1978:26).

And they gathered it every morning (action) (Ex. 16:21)

Once every three years the fleet of ships (processed) of Tarshish came in (process) (1 K. 10:22)

(Your seed - force) that comes forth from the field yearly (process) (Dt. 26:5)
And my reproach was there every morning (state) (Ps. 73:14)

Circumstance: A predication presented as obtaining concurrently with the predication expressed in the core predication. It is embedded within the main predication.

And the Philistine came on and drew near to David (action) while the shield-bearer was in front of him (I S. 17:41)

... they linger in the evening (position) while wine inflame them (Is. 5:11)

And the pivots on the thresholds (processed) shook at the voice of the caller (process) while the house was filled with smoke (Is. 6:4)

The storm (force) will come to him (process) while he does not know it (Ps. 35:8)

While they were walking and talking, and behold, there was a chariot of fire and horses of fire (state) (2 K. 2:11)

Result: A predication presented as being established as a consequence of the predication presented in the core predication. It is embedded within the main predication.

Because he gave of his offspring to Molech (action) defiling my sanctuary (Lv. 20:3)

Or shall the potter be considered as clay (position) so that the product can say about its maker ...? (Is. 29:16)

Can a woman (processed) forget her baby (process) so that she does not love the son of her womb (Is. 49:15)

When does the new moon (force) passes (process) so that we may sell grain? (Am. 8:5)

God is not a man (state) that He will

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lec (Nu. 23:19)

Purpose: A motivation for the occurrence of controlled predicate-1 by specifying a future predication-2 that the controller wishes to achieve through predicate-1. The purpose is necessarily ascribed to the controller. It is embedded within the main predication.

And the daughter of Farah went down (action) to bathe at the Nile (Ex. 2:5)

I kept your word in my heart (position)

that I might not sin against You (Ps. 119:11)

Reason: A motivation for why a controlled predicate took place in terms of a causal ground ascribed to the controller. If the reason is a second predication, it is embedded within the main predication.

Because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you (action) (Is. 43:4)

And he did not keep anything from me except you (position), for you are his wife (Gn. 39:9)

Cause: A motivation which is not ascribed to any of the participants in the predication, but which is advanced by the speaker as an explanation for the occurrence of the predication. If the cause is a second predication, it is embedded within the main predication.

But the dove did not find a resting-place for the sole of its foot (action) because the water was on the surface of the whole earth (Gn. 8:9)

The chief jailer paid no heed to anything in his hands (position) because Yahweh was with him (Gn. 39:23)

Streams of water (force) go down from my eyes (process) because they do keep your law (Ps. 119:136, cf. Ezek. 13:10-11)

The tongue of the infant (processed) sticks to the roof of its mouth (process) because of thirst (Lm. 4:4)

The mountains (processed) tremble
because of Him (process) (Neh. 1:5)
You are children of the death (state)
because you did not keep watch over your lord (1 S. 26:16)

Causer: In causative constructions the causing entity acts as the causer. In BH causative constructions are not expressed by auxiliary verbs, but by separate verbal forms or stem formations (hifil and piel). A root in a certain stem formation can be viewed as a separate lexeme (stem). Consequently, the causer can be viewed rather as the agent of the causative verb. The agent or positioner of a non-causative verb becomes the patient of the related causative stem. The classification of a non-causative predicate and its related causative stem does not have to be the same. Compare, for example, תִּשָּׂא he stood (position) with קָבַל he stationed (action).

וְתַחַךְ נֵסָרָה לָאָרֶםוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵלוֹ And the Egyptians oppressed (= let serve²) the Israelites with violence (Ex. 1:13)
וְתָשִׂיתוּ נַחֲלַי לָאָרֶםוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵלוֹ And I will settle (= let live¹¹) them in safety (Jer. 32:37)
וְתָשִׂיתוּ נַחֲשִׁים לָאָרֶםוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵלוֹ And I will shake (= cause to shake¹⁵) the heavens (Is. 2:6)
וְתָשִׂיתוּ נַחֲשִׁים לָאָרֶםוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵלוֹ I reared (made great¹³) children (Is. 1:2)

The semantic functions of satellites which indicate the attitude of the speaker or which transform the proposition into a linguistic act are not on the level of the internal structure of the predication and will therefore not be discussed here (cf. Dik, 1988:247-262). Non-verbal predicates can be expressed by nouns, adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases. In non-verbal predicates the copulative verb is optional and only used to express tense, aspect and mood (cf. Lyons, 1967:390). Buth (1987:37-39) calls the semantic relations expressed by non-verbal predicates semantic functions as well. These semantic functions are (cf. Dik, 1980:90-110, 1989:161-182, especially p. 180):³⁴

Possessor:⁵⁰ A non-verbal predicate (cf. De Groot, 1983:117) which indicates the possessor of the subject term, expressed in a Biblical Hebrew sentence by the preposition עַל.

I (am) my beloved's (Sgs. 6:3)

Identification: A nominal predicate which identifies the referent of the subject term with its own referent. In a sentence both the subject and predicate are determinate.

I (am) the God of your father (Ex. 3:6)

Quality:⁶⁵ An adjectival predicate which qualifies the referent of the subject term.

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מִשְׁפָּר יֵשֵׂרָאֵל He (was) beautiful (Ex. 2:2)
של מסר עביד Your servants (are) twelve (Gn. 42:13)

Class: A nominal predicate indicating the class of referents of which the subject is a member. If the subject of the sentence is determinate and the predicate term indeterminate, the semantic relation of the subject to the predicate term is class-membership. If the subject and the predicate term both are indeterminate, the relationship is class-inclusion, indicating that every member of the set indicated by the subject, is a member of the set indicated by the predicate term.

עִירָאָבֵרָה יְרָדִית A man is a head to his family⁸⁰
עַדְבָּרָה יְרָדִית (Nu. 1:4)

Existence: An empty locative predicate indicating the existence of the subject. In a sentence the subject is indeterminate. The nominal predicates יִשָּׁר and יִשָּׂר can also express the existence/non-existence of the subject in Biblical Hebrew.

וּבִין בָּית נוֹבָּר There is a lion in the road (Pr. 26:13)
וּבִין בָּית נוֹבָּר There is holy bread (1 S. 21:5)
וּבִין בָּית נוֹבָּר And there is no understanding (Pr. 17:16)

Non-verbal predicates can also have some of the semantic functions mentioned above, like location, time, recipient, purpose, etc. These are called appositional predicates (cf. Dik, 1985a:32-34). The subject has the zero semantic function in sentences with non-verbal predicates.

From the discussion above it can be concluded that all the semantic functions in predications distinguished by S.C. Dik are also found in Biblical Hebrew. Therefore, a semantic analysis of a sentence can be undertaken in addition to the morphological and syntactic analyses.

This study proceeded from the theory to the application. In a wider and deeper study, however, one should also work from the Biblical Hebrew text back to the theory to determine whether the list of semantic functions cover all the logical relationships in Biblical Hebrew satisfactorily, and whether the definitions of the semantic functions are adequate or whether they should be adapted for Biblical Hebrew.
END NOTES

1 In syntax compulsory and optional syntags are also distinguished (Richter, 1980:18).
2 Dik (1989:103) uses the term goal which can be confused with aim and purpose.
3 The marker *TR is used here possibly not to mark the syntactic category of the direct object, but the semantic category of the processed which has logical similarities with the affected patient. However, the processed must be a first argument and the patient a second argument.
4 Dik calls this semantic function beneficiary, but according to Lyons (1967:395) "one needs a neutral term".
5 Dik (1989:137) uses the term quality which is used, however, by classical grammarians for property assignment. See the semantic function quality below.
6 [essentiali (Williams, 1980:45).
7 Although, speaking strictly syntactically, circumstantial clauses in BH are coordinate, semantically speaking, they are imbedded in the main predication (cf. Wallike and O'connor, 1990:649-652).
8 The way-copulative plus cohortative following an imperfect indicates a (at least semantically) subordinate construction.
9 The way-copulative plus imperfect following a nominal clause indicates a (at least semantically) subordinate construction.
10 *he Israeletes serve is an action.
11 *hey live is a position.
12 *The heavens shake is a process.
13 *The children are great is a state.
15 Dik (1989:180) uses the term possession. However, possession is the relationship between the subject and the predicate. The predicate (or rather the complement of the copula) indicates the possessor.
16 Dik (1989:180) uses the term property assignment. The term quality is better known by classical grammarians. See the semantic function role.
17 Bare nominal predicates with the semantic function of property assignment do not occur in BH (cf. Dik, 1989:170).
18 Compare Wallike and O'connor (1990:133, 298).

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