

## TRACING USE AND SEMANTIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE L-SUFFIX CONSTRUCTION IN BIBLICAL HEBREW AND CLASSICAL SYRIAC

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### ABSTRACT

The dative of ethic or *dativus ethicus* is a grammatical feature that occurs regularly in Biblical Hebrew as well as in Classical Syriac. Several studies have been undertaken to understand and define the DE's grammatical character, yet there is still no consensus among researchers as to its semantic import. Contributing to this subject of research, the present paper brings into dialogue some of the previous findings, re-examines some instances where the *dativus ethicus* occurs in the relevant literature, and thus attempts to provide further insights on its semantic references. A further unique aspect of the present research is an attempt to trace common characteristics in the DE's use between the corpora of Biblical Hebrew and Classical Syriac. By undertaking this study in both these languages, it is postulated that there are similarities or comparable differences in their use of the feature. This study is carried out by way of bringing into dialogue the past researches on the subject, as well as re-examining the semantic references of the feature in contexts culled from relevant literature. Particular attention in these re-examinations is given to the role players involved in such contexts. The study concludes that the DE feature profiles an aspect of separation and /or motion by a theme, away from a point of interest towards a new one.

### INTRODUCTION

The so-called dative of ethic or *dativus ethicus* (hereafter DE) is a grammatical feature that occurs regularly in the Biblical Hebrew (BH) as well as in the Syriac of the first few centuries AD, namely Classical Syriac (CS).<sup>1</sup> Several studies have been undertaken with the intention of coming to an understanding of the DE's grammatical character and its semantic reference. However, alternative solutions remain to be explored, as the

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<sup>1</sup> Although on most occasions, the present study refers to Classical Syriac, the field of study focuses largely on those Syriac texts that are part of the OT and NT Syriac texts. This article, however, also makes unsystematic references to Classical Syriac texts outside of the biblical canon, contemporary with biblical Syriac texts.

present article seeks to demonstrate. Contributing to this area of research, the present discussion brings into dialogue some of the previous findings, re-examines some instances where the feature occurs in the relevant literature, and thus attempts to provide further insights on the grammatical use of the DE.

A further unique aspect of the present research is an attempt to trace common characteristics in the DE's use between the corpora of the BH and the CS. By undertaking this study in both CS and BH, it is postulated that there are similarities or comparable differences between the two languages' use of the feature. Such a situation may help scholars understand the semantic references of the DE in either one, or both, of the linguistic areas mentioned.<sup>2</sup> This step is necessitated by the fact that a study already undertaken on the matter makes the implication that the feature has similar grammatical characteristics in both the two linguistic fields concerned.<sup>3</sup>

### **Position of current scholarship on the study of the DE feature**

As mentioned above, several attempts have been made to ascertain the grammatical identity and function of the feature originally denoted as the DE. Typically, this feature is characterised by the preposition ל/ל + a pronominal suffix immediately following a verb, in Hebrew or Syriac (otherwise known as the *l*-Suffix). With respect to this DE feature, the pronominal suffix points back to the subject of the verb. In relatively early attempts to define this feature, scholars understood it as casting back the action expressed by the verb onto the subject. In the process, this feature portrays a measure of pathos, interest, satisfaction, or completeness, with which the action is accomplished or to be accomplished (Brown et al. 1979).

This understanding of the feature in the Semitic languages apparently is derived from the DE as understood in languages such as Greek and Latin (and rarely in English). Recent studies of the feature in both Hebrew and Syriac are unanimous that the feature as used in the Semitic languages cannot be described validly as a *dativus ethicus*. In

<sup>2</sup> Although Muraoka's study was done primarily on the Biblical Hebrew corpus, his introductory analysis of the problem shows that he understood the use of the feature to be similar in at least both Hebrew and Aramaic. He goes on to give a general character to the feature in the context of Semitic languages as a whole (Muraoka 1978:495).

<sup>3</sup> See Muraoka (1987:73).

Muraoka's words, "Whatever etymology one might adopt for the epithet *ethicus*, its application to ךָּ of Gen. xii. 1 and countless similar examples in Hebrew and Aramaic is obviously ill-advised" (1978:495). Both Naudé (1997:131) and Joosten (1989:474) also reject the traditional description of the Semitic feature.<sup>4</sup> For continuity with previous studies, this article will refer mostly to this feature as the DE, otherwise the *l*-suffix – as postulated above.

Aiming to solve the issue of the DE, Whitley (1975:225-8) has proposed that it should be viewed as a grammatical feature emphasising the subject of the related verb. In other words, the DE ought to refer back (with emphasis) to the subject of the verb as the entity that undergoes the action. This view has found no support, and at any rate fails to explain why this feature occurs with certain types of verbs only, if emphasis is its sole semantic import.

Muraoka has also contributed to the study of the feature, by referring primarily to Gen 12:1. The scholar's analysis of the term reportedly is based on the analysis of biblical data, but also on his reading of non-biblical material, particularly from Modern Hebrew. He observes that the clitic basically provides a centripetal effect to the meaning of the verb. In his words the DE:

Basically, [it] serves to convey the impression on the part of the speaker or author that the subject establishes his own identity, recovering or finding his own place by determinedly dissociating himself from his familiar surrounding (sic). Notions of isolation, loneliness, parting, seclusion, or withdrawal, are often recognizable (Muraoka 1978:497).

The foregoing, and a number of Muraoka's other findings will be discussed as they are incorporated into the present discussion.

Joosten has also made a study of the DE feature, but focused primarily on Classical Syriac (CS). In that regard, Joosten (1989:474–475) asserts that the clitic introduces a new state in the action denoted by the associated verb. The DE is therefore understood to indicate an entering into a new state denoted by the verb. In Joosten's discussion of the feature, we identify important observations, which help describe the nature of the

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<sup>4</sup> See also Whitley (1975:225).

verbs connected to the DE, selectively to BH but largely to CS. In brief, this scholar notes that the DE occurs together with certain intransitive verbs and possibly all passive verbs. Furthermore, this feature typically immediately follows the verb-form it is referring to – allowing no other linguistic feature between the two (Joosten is aware of one known exception in Syriac at Matt 11:18, but there is a possibility of more cases).<sup>5</sup>

According to Naudé, the DE clitic modifies the verb by adding a reflexive dimension (“-self”) to the verb. Naudé, who uses the transformational grammar approach of Chomsky to analyse the linguistic feature at issue, concludes that: (1) the DE should normally be understood as a clitic since it displays synonymous characteristics (Naudé 1997:145-8); and (2) the DE proper can only be an anaphor, or an expression that specifically depends on an antecedent, and hence it should be a reflexive pronoun (Naudé 1997:153).<sup>6</sup> Although the observation that the DE may have the function of an anaphor is worth investigating further, the claim that the DE basically adds a reflexive dimension to the verb is problematic, as will be demonstrated further in this article.

### **Current thesis: The DE modifies the semantic dimensions of the verb by profiling movement and/or separation**

At a theoretical level, the investigation of the DE is faced with a specific problem. The so-called DE can scarcely be defended as a feature used consistently where it was needed semantically or grammatically. This poses problems when employing certain

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<sup>5</sup> The interposition of articles such as *ܐܢܝܢ*, *ܕܢܝܢ* and *ܕܥܝܢܝܢ* should be attributed to the attempt by Syriac NT translators to conform as much as possible to Greek grammatical structure rather than to idiomatic Syriac in terms of the Syriac parole of the time.

<sup>6</sup> A reflexive pronoun proper basically turns the action denoted by the verb, back towards the antecedent. In other words, where the antecedent is a subject, the reflexive pronoun causes the subject to become the object of the action as well. Undeniably this (reflexivity) is the literal meaning that can be drawn from the reading of any DE in either Hebrew or Syriac. However, not all instances can allow, even for a literal reading, reflexivity in these contexts. In other words, although a literal reading of the reflexive pronoun could be possible, the actual semantic import of the DE clitic should not be understood reflexively. For example, citing Naudé’s own typical study case, the Hebrew sentence of Lam 1:4 cannot be translated validly, “and she is bitter to herself” which entails a typical literal and reflexive rendering. This is not quite the same as “she herself is bitter” (NASB). On this basis, the claim for reflexivity in Naudé’s thesis, as is the case of centripetal aspect in Muraoka’s study, may not apply to all cases of the DE.

theories of language that depend on consistencies in the use of linguistic features, as in the case of frame semantics. For frame semantics, one must be able to determine the minimal core elements necessary for a specific frame to be evoked. However, regarding the DE feature, there is evidently no known case of consistency in the use of the feature in any specific frame. Therefore, in any of the linguistic systems of the Semitic languages, if the presence of the DE represents a unique frame in the Hebrew language system, there is no way of establishing the exact nature of that frame since the DE is employed inconsistently in the frame of that language system. As a result, the rest of the present study observed and analysed the specific cases in which the DE does occur. Statistical analyses were used minimally, seeing that the feature is scarcely used consistently in the relevant literature. The present investigation pays particular attention to the behaviour of the frame elements or role players involved in the action under focus in each case of the occurrence of the feature. The purpose being to analyse the role of the DE in influencing those behaviours.

The current thesis puts forward firstly, that the DE feature profiles an aspect of separation due to movement by the Theme (moving entity) away from a previously occupied point of interest towards a new one. This is not a completely new description of the DE as the discussion below will clarify. Secondly, we also postulate that with other verbs, especially those that do not refer to motion, the DE feature tends to profile an aspect of movement from one state to another. It is found that the semantic import of the DE in all cases implies movement and separation, or perhaps transition, even though there is some difference in the nature of movement and separation apparent between these two groups of verbs. In the ensuing discussion, the focus will firstly be on the semantic function of the DE regarding verbs of motion, followed by the analysis of its function in non-motional verbs.

## MOTION VERBS WITH THE DE

### The semantics of הלך + the DE (BH)

In BH, הלך is an intransitive verb. This verb primarily denotes movement, especially directional movement undertaken by humans or animals, from one point to another. In certain contexts, it may simply denote movement, without particular start and end points, thus possibly referring to general motion. Motion that does not profile either a starting point or an endpoint may require instead, instantiation of the locality where the movement takes place as a necessary frame element, for example, to walk *on the highway* (Isa 35:8). Metaphorically, the verb can also be extended to denote movement of inanimate phenomena, such as water or other mostly natural elements.<sup>7</sup>

After investigating several instances in the MT where the DE is employed in sentences with the feature הלך + DE, it was observed that emphasis is placed on the separation of the Theme (moving entity) from a specified interested individual/entity or locality. The latter will hereafter be called the point of interest (PI). In other words, the DE with the verb הלך instantiates movement away from one point, towards another, where the greater emphasis is placed on the aspect of the Theme's separation from the PI. Therefore, in most instances where הלך occurs with the DE, the source of the movement is foregrounded (becomes the primary focus), rather than the Theme's point of termination (this is also the case with the Syriac verb of motion ܕܠܚܘܿܫܐ). The general words suited to these contexts are: "separate", "depart", "go away (from)", and "leave". Genesis 12:1 is subsequently presented as a classic example.

#### 1. Gen 12:1

MT: ויאמר יהוה אל־אברם לך־לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל־הארץ אשר אראך

Tr:<sup>8</sup> And Yahweh said to Abram, "Go *away* from your motherland and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you."

In the verse above, two points are mentioned in relation to Abram's travel, namely the point of departure and that of arrival. However, in this case the DE specifically indicates

<sup>7</sup> For a complete analysis see Brown et al. (1979).

<sup>8</sup> Tr denotes my translation.

that the Theme (Abram) is to separate himself from his land of birth. This is communicated especially by the adverb “away” in the provided translation. It is further important to note that the subject of the verb (הלך) is the Actor or performer of the action denoted by the verb. For purposes of this article, it is necessary to define further what has been referred to as the PI (the source from which the motion starts or a point from which the Theme is to be separated).

The PI is not always specified in textual occurrences of the DE feature, as will be observed in the examples presented below. Nevertheless, one of its most important characteristics is that this point does not move. In other words, it is presumed to be a fixed point. In the example above, God commands Abram to “go away from your motherland ...” In this instance, the Source is the land of Ur, a fixed geographical point. In other instances, however, this Source could be the person speaking as in the sentence where someone addresses another person in commanding language, “Go away!” In such a case, it is clear that the Source, denoting a living entity, is also potentially capable of motion. Therefore, to avoid possible subtle ambiguities introduced by using the word “Source”, it must be assumed that the PI is stationary for the relevant duration of the action implied by the verb in a DE construction (as in the example above).

Another typical example of this departure frame can be demonstrated by analysing 1 Sam 26:11-12. In this case, David refuses to harm Saul who sought to kill him, when he had caught Saul asleep. David instead commands his generals to fetch Saul’s spear and water, and to leave. David’s words are presented in the verse below.

## 2. 1 Sam 26:11

MT: חלילה לי מיהוה משלח ידי במשיח יהוה ועתה קח־נא את־החנית אשר מראשתו  
ואת־צפחת המים ונלכה לנו

NET: “But may the Lord prevent me from extending my hand against the Lord’s chosen one! Now take the spear by Saul’s head and the jug of water, and let’s get out of here!”

From the example above, it is clear that the PI is known to be the place where David and his generals were located, which coincides with the place where Saul and his army

were sleeping. When David commands his men to *וּלְכוּ לָנוּ*, he is instructing them to leave this place and go away. Notably, the PI is the point from which separation is to occur. The place or point to which David and his generals are to go is, however, unspecified in this instance. Therefore, it can be concluded that in cases where the DE is used with the verb *הֵלֵךְ*, the PI is the point of departure and is usually the one foregrounded.

The type of language discussed in both examples above is similar to English expressions as demonstrated in the sentence below.

### 3. The mechanic responded in anger, “Away with you!”

In the expression “away with you”, the mechanic giving this command is ordering the object (the commanded person) to leave the presence of the mechanic. Evidently in the mechanic’s words, the verb representing the process of going is not mentioned, but the combination of the adverb “away” and the prepositional phrase “with you,” shows that the mechanic wants the Theme (addressed as “you”) to be the one to leave his presence. Therefore, it creates the notion of motion that would be represented by a word such as “go”. In such an expression, English speakers assume the presence of the verb “go” so that the phrase is understood to mean, “You, go away from here.”

In a similar vein, the Hebrew expression, *לֵךְ-לְךָ* (go – you) may be an elliptical expression representing the sentence, “go away”. In the Hebrew sentence, the adverb “away” (signifying separation) is not explicit but can be assumed from the combination of the motion process + the mention of the Theme, with some notion of distancing being evoked since in such implied motion of the Theme it is understood that the PI remains stationary. Similar mechanisms should apply in the alternative understanding of the Hebrew DE as well, where the feature can be read as saying, “go by yourself”.

As is apparent from the examples above, this type of speech, which is called ellipsis, happens when a necessary component of a sentence is omitted deliberately. Other instances where similar semantics can be attributed to this construction are Josh 22:1, 1 Sam 26:12 (*וַיֵּלְכוּ לָהֶם*, and they left/departed); Jer 5:5 (*אֵלֶיךָ-לֵי*, I will go off); Ps 58:8 (*יִתְהַלְכוּ-לָמוֹ*, like water that flows away); Song 2:11 (*הֵלֵךְ לוֹ*, *the rain* has gone); Song 2:13 (*וּלְכִי לְךָ*, and come away), Song 4:6 (*אֵלַי לֵי*, I will go off/away).



For these examples, it is evident from the context that the notion of separation caused by a Theme's movement from one point towards another, is included as part of the semantics conveyed by the construction vb (הלך) + DE. Reportedly, Sokoloff, has made a similar observation, taking note that verbs of motion used with the DE indicate ingressive instead of the stative aspect of an action. According to Muraoka (1978:496), an expression such as הלך לו would be represented as "he went off, departed". Muraoka (1978:497) further states that the feature conveys "... notions of isolation, loneliness, parting, seclusion, or withdrawal ...". Such an observation is generally not far from the assertion being made in the present study, especially in the context of the verb הלך.

Furthermore, it is noticeable with constructions involving the DE feature that, in most cases, the Theme personally and deliberately performs the action denoted by the verb. This is also the case even in situations where the feature is employed with a verb in the imperative mood. Although the motivation for the movement may be a command, the Theme still moves on its own volition, under its own effort.

Other motion verbs that profile separation when used with the DE include: שׁוּב (Num 22:34, Deut 5:27), בָּרַח (Gen 27:43, Num 24:11, Song 1:8), נֹס (Isa 31:8, Am 9:1), מָלַט (Amos 9:1), בָּדַד (Hos 8:9) and אָזַל (Prov 20:14).

### The semantics of ܕܝܢ + DE (OT Syriac)

Regarding the Syriac language, we confined our studies of the DE feature to the Peshitta OT, the Peshitta NT (Matthew to Revelations), the Old Syriac Gospels and a few exceptional cases from non-biblical material in the form of the Demonstrations of Aphrahat. In this section, the focus is on the use of the feature in the Old Testament Peshitta version (OTP).

In the OTP, the use of the DE is such that the translators mostly followed the form of their Hebrew text whenever they encountered the grammatical feature. Therefore, regarding the classic example in Gen 12:1, לך־לך in the MT is rendered as ܕܝܢ ܕܝܢ in the OTP. In such instances, it is uncertain whether the OTP translators understood the significance of the DE in each case where it appeared in the OT or not. There are, however, instances where the OTP verb ܕܝܢ is used with the DE in the Syriac text while

this feature is absent in the corresponding Hebrew text. In these instances, it was found that the DE was used to evoke similar semantic information as is it does in the Hebrew text in general. These occurrences, evidently show that the OTP translators understood the use of the feature in the MT. It may indicate further that this feature also formed part of the Syriac grammar of the time. Regarding the instances where the feature occurs in the OTP but is absent in the corresponding Hebrew source text, typical cases are presented below.

#### 4. Gen 26:16

MT: ויאמר אבימלך אל־יצחק לך מעמנו כִּי־עצמת־ממנו מאד

Tr: Then Abimelech said to Isaac, “Go *away* from us because you have become exceedingly more powerful than us.”

OTP: ܘܐܡܪ ܐܒܝܡܠܚ ܐܠ ܝܨܚܩ ܠܚ ܡܥܡܢܘ ܕܟܝ ܥܘܨܡܬ ܡܡܢܘ ܡܥܕ.

Tr: Then Abimelech said to Ischak, “Depart from us, because you have become much more powerful than us.”<sup>9</sup>

From the above, it is noticeable that, while the context in the Hebrew text clearly implies the notion of separation, the authors did not employ the DE feature to express this separation. The Syriac translators, however, incorporated the feature, to express clearly the specific semantic element of motion that refers to separation of the Theme from the PI. We could identify five other similar cases in the OT, where the DE feature is employed with the verb ܐܠܝܢ in the OTP but absent in the source Hebrew text. These cases and the denotation of the feature are presented in Table 1 below. These findings pertaining to the way the DE was used between the MT and the OTP confirm that the DE was generally not used on every occasion, where according to the article’s present understanding of it, it would have been necessary, at least in the case of BH.

<sup>9</sup> The LXX equivalent for ܠך is Ἀπελθε, “go away, depart”.

**Table 1:** Occurrences of the DE in the OTP where it is absent in the MT

Text	Text form	Translation	LXX reading	notes
Gen 26:16	ܩܕ ܕܝ	Be on your way	ἀπέρχομαι	Denoting movement and separation
Gen 27:43	ܩܕ ܕܝ <sup>10</sup>	Be on your way	ἀποδιδράσκω	Movement and separation (flee!)
Exod 10:28	ܩܕ ܕܝ	Find your way out of here. Disappear, go away.	ἀπέρχομαι	Pharaoh dismissing Moses, thus separation
1 Kgs 2:26	ܩܕ ܕܝ	Depart, go away,	ἀποτρέχω	Separation
1 Kgs 19:20	ܩܕ ܕܝ	Go your way, go away	ἀναστρέφω	Separation
1 Kgs 11:22	ܩܕ ܕܝܪܕܝܪ	Depart, go back, return	ἀπέρχομαι	Separation
2 Sam 15:21	ܩܕ ܕܝ	Go ahead, cross over	Variant reading	Movement, temporary separation

### The feature ܕܝܪ + DE in the NTSyr<sup>11</sup>

The DE feature is also used by the NTSyr translators generally to indicate similar semantic features as those observed in the OT. This entails motion causing the distancing between the moving Theme and point of interest. Noticeably in the Syriac NT texts, this use is even more significant. A typical example provided below is from Matt 4:10. At the third temptation attempt on Jesus, Satan enticed Jesus to worship him, but Jesus responded in the words recorded in the verse below.

#### 5. Matt 4:10

GNT: τότε λεγει αυτω ο Ιησους. Υπαγε Σατανα.

Tr: Then Jesus said to him, “Go away Satan.”

PNT: ܩܕ ܕܝܪܕܝܪ ܕܝܪܕܝܪ ܕܝܪܕܝܪ ܕܝܪܕܝܪ

<sup>10</sup> One early Syriac ms (7a1) does not have the feature ܩܕ.

<sup>11</sup> NTSyr = New Testament Syriac. Although the main text of reference for the Syriac New Testament will be the Peshitta New Testament (PNT), occasional references may be made to the Old Syriac Gospels (OSG) as well.



**Table 2:** The occurrence of the ܕܘܪ + DE in the NTSyr

Place	Theme (Mover)	OSG S	OSG C	PNT
Luke 13:31	You Jesus	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Matt 4:10	You, Satan	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐܘܬܐ (ܘܪܐܘܬܐ)؟	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Matt 16:23	You, Simon Peter	No witness	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ (ܘܪܐܘܬܐ)	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ (ܘܪܐܘܬܐ)
Matt 10:6	Disciples	ܘܪܐܘܬܐ ܕܘܪܐ	No witness	ܘܪܐܘܬܐ ܕܘܪܐ
Matt 25:41	Those on the left who are cursed	ܘܪܐܘܬܐ ܕܘܪܐ	No witness	ܘܪܐܘܬܐ ܕܘܪܐ
Mark 3:7	Jesus	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	No witness	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Mark 5:17	Jesus	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	No witness	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Luke 4:42 (2)	Jesus	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	No witness	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Luke 8:37	Jesus	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
John 4:3	Jesus	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
John 10:40	Jesus	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	No witness	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
John 11:31	Mourning crowd in Mary's house	ܘܪܐܘܬܐ ܕܘܪܐ	No witness	ܘܪܐܘܬܐ ܕܘܪܐ
John 11:54	Jesus	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	No witness	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
John 12:19	Whole world	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ	No witness	ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Acts 1:25	Judas			ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ <sup>14</sup>
Acts 9:26	Paul			ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Acts 10:7	Angel			ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Acts 12:17	Paul			ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Acts 13:13	John (Mark)			ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Acts 18:22	Paul			ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
Acts 20:1	Paul			ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ
2 Tim 4:10	Demas			ܕܘܪ ܕܘܪܐ

## Other verbs of motion or change of position <sup>15</sup>

### Vb (ܝܫܒ) + DE

The lexical unit ܝܫܒ typically evokes the Change-posture frame, within the FrameNet framework. The Change-posture frame is considered to be one in which “a Protagonist changes the overall position and posture of the body”.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The action conveyed by the verb is not necessarily spatial movement; nevertheless, it refers to separation.

<sup>15</sup> See Joosten (1996:139).

<sup>16</sup> FrameNet (undated).

From the definition above, it is clear that the Change-posture frame does not profile the notion of spatial motion, as was the case with frames evoked by a verb such as הלך. The movement that is involved with these verbs is localised – being confined to body postures. Further, the verb ישב is used metaphorically in Biblical Hebrew to represent the semantic reference where an entity in motion ceases from such motion. In other words, in certain instances, the verb may not necessarily refer to the Change-posture frame, but to a situation where an entity, already in motion, deliberately ceases to continue that movement. In terms of the equivalent English lexical units, this imply such words as: “stay behind”, “remain”, “leave behind”, “wait”, “residue”, or “stay”. This metaphorical sense is the one in which the DE is mostly found to be applied in the MT.

Typically, from the corpora in the MT, the use of the verb with the DE feature supposes a situation where at least two entities were in synchronous motion originally. Thereafter, one or some of the individual units terminate motion while the other(s) continue, which means the entity with terminated motion ends up in a “stay-behind” situation. The two entities (or groups) are thus separated, typically by cessation rather than initiation of motion (as would be in the case of a verb such as הלך). With regard to ישב + DE, the focus is on the entity that ceases motion, which is normally the subject of the verb. A number of typifying examples follow.

#### 7. Gen 22:5

MT: ויאמר אברהם אל־נעריו שב־לכם פה עם־החמור ואני והנער נלכה עד־כּה ונשתחוה ונשובה אליכם

ESV: Then Abraham said to his young men, “**Stay here** with the donkey;

I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.”

For the words in bold, the LXX equivalent is Καθίσατε αὐτοῦ, (sit here) and the Syriac equivalent is ܘܫܒܘ ܠܚܘܡܝܗܘܢ. It is evident that the Syriac translator, by using the lexical unit ܘܫܒܘ, understood the Hebrew metaphorically to imply that Abraham’s servants were to remain behind while Abraham and Isaac proceeded. The Hebrew vb (ישב) + DE, therefore, represents a separation of two groups by the cessation of one of the group’s motion, while the other continues.

The other sense involving the verb **ישב**, is that of being “apart”, “isolated”, or “separated”. In this context, the sitting, or dwelling takes place, separated from the subject’s point of interest. The case in Job 15:28 below seems strained, but should perhaps be understood in this context.

#### 8. Job 15:28

MT: וישכון ערים נכחדות בתים לא־ישבו למו אשר התעתדו לגלים

NIV: He will inhabit ruined towns and houses where no one lives, houses crumbling to rubble.

In this verse, the context is clearly about deserted habitations. Should anyone be found to dwell in these places, he or she would certainly be considered isolated, separate or apart from the rest of mankind. Probably this was the thought included in the expression, “dwelling places where they do not dwell”, that is, dwellings that are deserted, forsaken and, therefore, *apart from other men*. A more typical case of this frame occurs in Gen 21:16 below.

#### 9. Gen 21:16

MT: ותלך ותשב לה מנגד הרחק כמטחוי קשת ...

ESV: Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot ...

It is possible in the case above that the whole action of “going off, and sitting down” may have resulted in the inclusion of the DE after the second verb. In several instances, the DE feature indeed occurs after two consecutive verbs, usually only linked by a *waw conjunctive* (e.g., Matt 13:2 and Mark 4:1). However, the study of the DE’s significance in this type of constructions falls outside the scope of this article. With reference to the given example, the semantic implication of using the DE with the verb of “sitting” appears to be that Hagar sat down, separate or apart from her son.

Associated with this frame is another verb, more appropriate for habitation or dwelling, namely **שכן**. By using this verb, Ps 120:6 indicates that the complainant is mourning about having spent a long time dwelling with people who oppose his values







Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, thereby being separated from his parents because of his cessation of motion!

In the examples that have been investigated above, the DE feature has little to do with the action of sitting or dwelling itself (change posture frame) than with the aspect of separation that occurs between the subject (who undergoes the action) and the PI of that subject as informed by the context.

### **The seemingly contrary case of the “Arriving frame” verbs + DE (Syriac NT)**

Noticeably, not all verbs can easily suggest movement resulting in a type of separation when considered by themselves. In Syriac, a verb such as ܕܠܐ is associated more with instances where a moving Theme separates from a PI, rather than the action of arriving at any point. Conversely, a verb such as ܠܗܠܐ is characterised more with instances where a Theme approaches the Goal of the movement than where it leaves the point of departure.

However, from Joosten’s list on verbs of motion that have the *qatfīl* adjectives, there are noticeable verbs of motion which rather relate to arriving in terms of frame semantics,<sup>18</sup> and thus with convergence rather than separation, when taken at face value. Three of these verbs can be noticed immediately from the list: ܠܗܠܐ, ܕܠܐ and ܘܠܐ. Despite associations with frames of convergence, it can be noted that where such verbs are used with the DE, the notion of movement and separation nonetheless remains part of the semantic reference of these verbs. Therefore, where a verb such as ܠܗܠܐ, is used with the DE, the semantic reference is one of motion that causes separation between the moving Theme and the PI. In this instance, the PI is not the point of arrival but one of departure (or the backgrounded circumstances of origin). For instance, according to Mark 6:31, Jesus commands his disciples to withdraw to a quiet place so that they may have time to rest and eat. The words of Jesus to that effect are presented below.

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<sup>18</sup> See Mushayabasa (2014).



Barnabas' act of leaving the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch (and thereby the unbelieving Jews).<sup>19</sup>

A typical case where the verb ܠܘܢ is used with the DE becomes clear from a number of passages in the OT. In 1 Sam 22:5, as king Saul was in pursuit of David, the prophet Gad warned David, who was in the stronghold at Mizpah, to leave the stronghold and go to the land of Judah. The words of Gad and David's subsequent action in verse 5 follow.

14. 1 Sam 22:5

MT: לא תשב במצודה לך ובאת־לך ארץ יהודה וילך דוד ויבא יער חרת

Tr: "Do not stay in the stronghold. Leave and get to the land of Judah." Then David left and came to the forest of Ḥereth.

OTP: ܠܐ ܬܘܫܒ ܒܡܥܘܕܬܐ ܠܚܝܩܐ ܘܬܘܫܒ ܐܪܥܝܢ ܝܗܘܕܐ ܘܝܠܝܚ ܕܘܕ ܘܝܒܐ ܝܥܪ ܚܪܬܐ ܕܗܫܝܘܬܐ.

Tr: "Do not stay at Mizpah. Leave and enter into the land of Judah." So David left and entered into the forest of Ḥiziuth.

Evidently the entering or arrival of David into the forest of Ḥereth implies that he had left the stronghold (MT) identified to be Mizpah in the OTP. In other words, by entering Ḥereth, David was simultaneously separating himself from the Stronghold, in this instance, the PI. A similar case of using the verb ܠܘܢ with the DE occurs in 2 Sam 14:3.

Therefore, it is evident that even in the case of verbs which evoke the Arriving frame such as "come", "enter", or "approach", the association of such verbs with the DE still profiles a situation where there is transition. This movement separates the Theme away from one point while in motion towards a new point. The PI however usually remains the point from which the Theme originates.

<sup>19</sup> It is possible that the use of the accusative pronoun after the infinitive verb in the Greek text may have influenced the Syriac choice to use the DE at this point.

## The interpretive element to Psalm 110:1 in certain Syriac biblical texts

If this understanding of the feature provided above is correct, one may deal with the case of an interpretative element in the OTP to the text in Ps 110:1 of the MT. This interpretive element is an addition, and it appears both in the OTP and in several places of the NTSyr texts, thus also Matt 22:44 and other parallel passages in the NT.

### 15. Ps 110:1

MT: נאם יהוה לאדני שב לימיני עד-אשית איביך הדם לרגליך

NIV: The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

OTP: ארבו זרע לכו, הולכ לך כן יתנו בידו האשם קלובכתי בספר לך ללך.

Tr: The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit [apart] at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

In the interpretive translations of the Syriac texts as indicated above, the translator seemingly implies that the seating down of Jesus at the right hand of Yahweh simultaneously profiles a separation from an element of interest. The question would be, “Which element of interest?” Viewed from the perspective of the resurrection, this may denote that Jesus as the only one who rises from the dead, is one who is thus separated from the rest of the human race. Furthermore, he is the only one who ascends into heaven, thereby moving away from mortality (PI), and in distinction to every other person that ever lived (PI), he is the only one who has the right and does occupy the right hand of God the Father. While the right hand of the Father does not profile separation with the Father, it does, however, highlight separation between Christ and the rest of the human race and indeed separation from mortality (PI). Thus, in the context of Syriac interpretation, “sit at my right hand” has the connotation of a special privilege reserved only for the Son, who willingly and obediently takes such a seat, separated from mortality; therefore, the translation above, “*Sit apart ...*”

Alternatively, with the consequent line of the same verse of Psalm 110 in view, the DE could only be highlighting the distinction between the Messiah and his enemies (PI),

who should soon be placed under his feet. In this sense, there is a separation between the Messiah and his enemies, due to movement in two opposite directions: the Messiah is being exalted but his enemies are gradually being crushed further downwards, under his feet. The sole mandate to power and rule thus belongs to the Lord (interpreted as Christ).

Any of the above two strands of thought could have influenced the Peshitta interpretations of Ps 110:1. However, it is difficult to identify the most likely one at this stage.

### **Summary: The DE with verbs of motion**

Regarding verbs of motion and change of position, the effect of the DE can be summarised semantically as follows: In a frame where there is a Theme that either engages in spatial directional motion, or in a change of body position, the DE indicates that the Theme is, due to this action, separated from a point of interest (PI) by moving towards or attaining the new position or situation.<sup>20</sup> In spatial directional motion, this new position can be specified or left unspecified in any speech instance. In the rest of this summary, features are described that characterise constructions involving the DE.

#### **Transitive or intransitive?**

Firstly, this article has observed together with other researchers that the DE feature does not occur with transitive verbs. Muraoka does not provide this qualification explicitly. Nevertheless, his observation that the DE cannot be employed with a verb such as בנה (transitive) but rather with הלך (intransitive), may be viewed as pointing towards such a qualification (1978:498). Joosten (1989:474) explicitly makes this qualification, although in a later publication he seems willing to consider the DE's use with transitive verbs as well.<sup>21</sup> Naudé, however, qualifies that both transitive and intransitive verbs can be used with the DE. His claim about the DE occurring with transitive verbs, probably stems from the conclusions of his findings that the DE is, grammatically speaking, an

<sup>20</sup> In some instances, the ingressive element of entering into a new situation is more subdued, as in the case where the verb concerns "dwelling apart from one's interests for a long period."

<sup>21</sup> See Joosten (1996), esp. p. 141.

anaphor or a reflexive pronoun. Generally, reflexive pronouns can be used by both transitive and intransitive verbs (Naudé 1997:154–157).

A strong objection against considering the valid use of transitive verbs with the DE, is that the resulting construction (when the verb is transitive) can also easily qualify as a *dativum commodi* (dative of advantage), rather than a dative of ethic. In a typical DE verbal construction, the DE pronoun can only point to the subject. However, this is not always the case for transitive verbs, where the pronoun can point to something/someone else besides the subject. Thus, taking Muraoka's objection as a case in point: In a typical DE construction with an intransitive verb, one can only say (1) "הלכתי לי אל ההר," but with a transitive verb such as בנה, the sentence (2) בניתי לי בית can easily be transformed to (3) בניתי לך בית (Muraoka 1978:498). Due to this behaviour, the l-suffix feature often tends to be understood as a dative of advantage when used with transitive verbs. Furthermore, with a transitive verb, the position of the DE (*lamedh* + pronoun) can be changed easily and the original sense retained, while this is scarcely possible with intransitives. In this regard, one can say (4) בניתי בית לי and still retain the meaning as in (2), but cannot possibly say (5) \*הלכתי אל ההר לי and retain the same meaning as in (1).

An example of a transitive verb that tends to take what appears to be the DE feature is לקח in the OT. However, invariably, almost all scenarios in which this l-suffix occurs with the mentioned verb, can reasonably be argued to show the dative of advantage. Invariably in such cases, the l-suffix feature functions as a reflexive pronoun that refers back to the subject.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, if accepted that intransitive verbs may be used with the DE, it would be difficult to distinguish genuine cases where transitive verbs are used in the DE construction and where they are used with the dative of advantage. Due to these difficulties, this article at present maintains, contra Naudé, that transitive verbs generally do not occur with the DE feature.

### Active or passive?

Secondly, in all cases where the DE is used with verbs of motion, the subject (Theme) must deliberately perform the action represented by the verb. In other words, the DE is

<sup>22</sup> See Joosten (1996:141).

not found in cases where an extra element is causing the action represented by the verb. In simple terms, the verb can neither be passive nor causative (Naudé 1997:155). On this aspect, Naudé's findings are in agreement, noting that the passives cannot be used with the DE in BH, with regard to verbs of spatial motion and change of position (1997:157).

### **Ingressive (inceptive) or not?**

Thirdly, it has been noted that the action of the verb modified by the DE is generally ingressive or inceptive (as mentioned above). If this is the case, it would disqualify the use of the DE with verbs in the participle or the infinitive mood. For Classical Syriac, Joosten (1989:489) has observed that verbs in the participle form do occur with the DE. However, this state does not refer to the ordinary durative nature of the participle, but in most cases approximates to a theoretical situation (e.g., the apodosis).<sup>23</sup> With non-durative actions such as "sit down", "stand up" or "turn", the possible emphasis is on the Theme's personal performance of the specific action, rather than the ingressive aspect of this action. However, the fact is that in other instances, the DE feature seems to apply to a longer duration of the action as already mentioned, for example in Ps 120:6.

## **THE STATIVE, PASSIVE AND REFLEXIVE VERBS WITH THE DE**

Interestingly, the DE feature has been witnessed with several more verbs and verb inflections in CS than in BH. As noted above, thus far it is known that the feature does not normally occur with passive verbs in BH. As a result, the appearance of the DE with passive verbs in CS seems confined to Syriac and other Aramaic dialects (which include Syriac, Aramaic, and possibly Persian).<sup>24</sup> It has been observed that there were even further developments in the use of the feature in periods subsequent to that of CS (Bar-Asher Siegal 2014). Apart from this observation, it must be noted that, in light of the

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed explanation, also see Joosten (1996:141).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Bar-Asher Siegal (2014:61).



discussion of the DE with intransitive verbs, certain continuities must be accepted between the BH and the CS corpora.

It stands to reason, due to the already wide scope of the present discussion, that this phenomenon of the DE in CS will not be explored comprehensively in the current paper. Nevertheless, seemingly the intransitive verbs used with the DE in Syriac fall into two further categorisations. This article already pointed out the occurrence of the DE in CS (as well as in BH) with intransitive verbs of motion and change of position. Two other categorisations are occurrences of the DE with active stative and passive and reflexive verbs in CS.

### Active stative verbs

Usage of the **intransitive, active stative verbs** with the DE is not completely absent from the Hebrew since we find several stative verbs in Hebrew that are used with the DE. Such verbs include מרר (be or become bitter, 2 Kgs 4:27; Isa 38:17;<sup>25</sup> Ruth 1:13;<sup>26</sup> Lam 1:4<sup>27</sup>) and בטח (trust,<sup>28</sup> 2 Kgs 18:24; Isa 36:9; Jer 7:4).<sup>29</sup> As is apparent in these instances, most of the words in Hebrew occurring with the DE have their semantic references centred on the cognitive, emotional aspects such as bitterness, trust, and sadness. However, not many words from this frame of reference are used with the DE in the Hebrew OT, as opposed to Syriac. For example, it is found that verbs such as מוּת, שָׁכַב, and חָרַשׁ among many others do not occur with the DE in the MT, in contrast to their cognates or equivalents in the NTSyr and other Classical Syriac documents. This already points to a unique use of the feature in the Syriac (or Aramaic) dialects that does not take place in BH.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> It is unclear whether the verb should be understood as used with the DE, or as a dative of advantage.

<sup>26</sup> Again, this could be a dative of advantage rather than the traditional DE.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Naudé (1997:134).

<sup>28</sup> Although in English it is possible for this verb to have a transitive function, in Hebrew it is almost always used intransitively (i.e., with an indirect object prefixed by a preposition). The general grammatical understanding is that verbs taking indirect objects are classified as intransitive.

<sup>29</sup> The Syriac equivalents in all these cases are either the *Ethpeel* or the *peal* of ܐܘܬܦܝܠܐ.

<sup>30</sup> Other strands of Classical Hebrew such as Mishnaic and Medieval Hebrew are excluded from this analysis. See for example Kutscher and Kutscher (1982).







(covenant), which has been awaiting fulfilment, did undergo a process of fulfilment and that process has been completed. Although this information can probably still be understood from the verb ܠܚܠܝܩ alone, the inclusion of the DE with this verb indicates that the **transition** from a state of non-fulfilment to that of fulfilment is being highlighted here. The DE is thus used to profile the subtle change from one state to the other. This change occurs within the Subject that is undergoing the action.

In this case, Joosten views the verb + DE as profiling the change of state from unfulfilled to being fulfilled. Further, a critical observation made in the present study is that, since the fact of the change from one state to another connotes a notion of “subtle process”,<sup>39</sup> this change should rather be described in terms of movement or motion. The emphasis is that the DE, in this context, profiles movement away from one state towards a new one. Evidently, there is some similarity between Joosten’s definition and the one advocated in this article. The only difference is that the present study understands the DE as attempting to communicate the aspect of process and hence movement, rather than the simple fact of the change from one state to another. In other words, it is clear that the DE feature profiles movement as part of the change affecting the subject. In the case of ܠܚܠܝܩ, this movement is away from a situation where the prophetic law is not yet fulfilled, to a stage where it becomes fulfilled. Similarly, in the case of the resurrection, the DE would profile movement away from being dead to being risen. Regarding the case of sorrow, this would denote movement away from being joyful to being sorrowful; and in the case of liberation, it would be movement away from being in bondage to being free.<sup>40</sup>

In the example from Aphrahat above, there is a second verb construction that contain the DE in the same sentence, which reads: ܠܡܥܠܡܝܢ ܠܡܥܠܡܝܢ (and they have become worthless). This evidently points to the fact that the verb ܠܡܥܠܡܝܢ (“to be” or a process of becoming), can also be used with the DE, as Joosten (1989:477) rightly points out. In

<sup>39</sup> The reasoning is that most of these non-motional verbs can be placed in a context where the change is observed as currently taking place, and thus can sometimes be described by participle verbs. For example, one can go through a process of dying (ܠܡܡܝܬ, Gen 35:18, 2 Cor 6:9).

<sup>40</sup> Most of these states are expressed in Syriac by stative adjectives, which often take the place of passive participles. See Joosten (1989:476).

this case the verb is used in the same sense as the Greek γίνομαι is often employed in the GNT.<sup>41</sup> As its Greek definition may imply, the verb refers to a process of change in an entity or situation, from one condition, state, or situation to another, thus the process of “becoming”. Unlike with verbs of motion, the significance of a PI is pushed further into the background with this latter group of intransitive verbs.

Following these observations, a common thread can now be drawn between the DE as used with verbs of motion and change of posture, and its use with active stative, passive and reflexive T-stem verbs. This relation, which is probably fostered at the conceptual level, makes it possible to postulate developments in the use of the feature through time and across the languages involved. The resultant golden thread is that the DE feature appears to refer to the movement away from one point and towards another (explicit or implicit), in the action of the verb it takes. For verbs of motion the movement tends to be spatial and describes the activity of the Theme in relation to a PI. For non-motion verbs, the movement happens to the condition, situation or emotion of the Subject, and is linked to two possible states of realisation.

Furthermore, as the literature indicated, the use of this DE feature does not seem to be a mandatory aspect of Syriac grammar, nor of the Hebrew of the MT. Rather, it appears that this feature was used only at the discretion and will of the authors/translators. The explanation for this, according to Joosten (1996:142), would be that the DE as such does not modify the meaning of the verb. Although this is true, it is apparent from the preceding discussions that the DE seems to contribute a nuanced semantics of the verb and thus of the event in question. This nuanced semantic contribution can usually be deduced from the context, which explains why it is not always necessary to show the DE feature explicitly in the text.

Finally, while all the stative active verbs should function as intransitives when used with the DE, the reflexive and passive (T-stem) verbs that were discussed can show a transitive function. Such transitivity, however, is only at a technical level. The reason is that in practice (or functionally), the reflexive T-stems and passive verbs normally do not take direct objects. Therefore, this functional intransitivity is because the DE tends

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<sup>41</sup> The basic glosses for this verb include: “to take place, come to pass, come on, happen, to be”. See Liddell and Robert-Scott (1996).

to refer to actions where there must be no apparent role player that causes the action, or where the so called anti-causative verbs or actions are used.<sup>42</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing study engages in discussion researchers who have contributed to the debate of the Semitic grammatical feature known as the DE, some in Hebrew, some in Syriac. Included are also researchers who have made limited attempts to study the DE from both the Hebrew and the Syriac corpuses. The present discussion, however, goes a step further to explore the use of the feature in more detail by allowing more or less equal weight in both corpora. In that regard, we examined possible similarities of use, or continuities and discontinuities between the BH and CS's use of the DE.<sup>43</sup> Subsequently, a strong basis was found for continuities and similarities between the BH and CS texts, mainly for verbs of motion. Regarding the CS's usage of the DE feature, there is still room for expansion of a study similar to the present one. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned findings are in accordance with those of Joosten about verbs of motion in CS.

At the level of active stative verbs, the present study found very limited continuities between the MT and CS. On one hand, a number of active stative verbs used with the DE in the Hebrew mostly appear in the Syriac as stative adjectives, or these verbs simply occur in the NTSyr without being used with the DE feature. On the other hand, the Syriac was found to contain several more active stative verbs employed with the DE, than in the BH. This observation may suggest a development in Syriac, possibly as part of a phenomenon taking place within the larger group of Aramaic dialects, from the turn of the 1st century onwards. Even more marked is the BH's lack of passive or reflexive verbs used with the DE feature. Such grammatical features appear to be confined to the Syriac and other Aramaic dialects, and as a result, showing distinct separation from the BH.

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Li (2013:70).

<sup>43</sup> By referring to continuities and discontinuities, this article does not necessarily imply a diachronic process, according to which one language group developed directly from the other. Nevertheless, the chronological aspect may be found to have resulted in some of the differences outlined in the study above.

Regarding the basic semantic contribution of the DE to the verb, it was noted that for motion verbs, the most apparent reference is to the notion of motion and separation, especially the latter. In this regard, no differences in use were found between the Hebrew OT and the Syriac texts. Furthermore, it was found that both the active stative and the reflexive and passive T-stem verbs intend to communicate movement in the process which the agent undergoes, as described by the verb. In a sense, this later group of non-motional verbs also entails an aspect of separation – movement away from one state towards another. Therefore, these verbs can be understood as profiling separation and movement between two states (i.e. away from one towards another, new state).

Along with the main lines of discussion above, this article has also reinforced other characteristics of the DE feature, namely intransitivity (or functional intransitivity) and the anti-causative nature of the action implied by the DE.

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