Reciprocal Constructions in Biblical Hebrew

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ABSTRACT
Reciprocal constructions of Biblical Hebrew are described and examined in light of the recent surge of scholarship that has expanded the understanding of reciprocals in the field of linguistics. The study of Hebrew’s lexical reciprocals has found them unified under a common semantic role suppressed in argument reduction, and has distinguished their semantic possibilities using the Mohanans’ Conceptual Salience Condition. The study of syntactic reciprocals maps the co-indexing and anaphora that the complex semantics of reciprocals have imposed on Hebrew syntax. This analysis broadens the discussion of Biblical Hebrew reciprocals to include the idiomatic bipartite constructions that became grammaticalized in ancient times and only a trace of which remain in the reciprocals of Modern Hebrew.

1. INTRODUCTION
Very few reference grammars even of major languages have devoted much attention to reciprocal constructions. Only in the last two decades have these constructions found a more prominent place in theoretical discussions and in cross-linguistic studies (see König and Kokutani 2006). Descriptive analyses of reciprocal constructions have been done in some individual languages (including Modern Hebrew, see Siloni 2005, Rubinstein 2007, etc.), but the unique reciprocal constructions of Biblical Hebrew have not been given much attention.

It is the goal of this paper to describe and briefly analyze the two primary methods of reciprocal construction in Biblical Hebrew. The first method, presented in Section 3, uses lexical reciprocals. The second method, presented in Section 4, uses syntactic reciprocals, specifically, bipartite constructions employing a floating quantifier. In Section 5, I will compare these two methods using the hierarchy presented by König and Kokutani (2006).

2. WHAT IS A RECIPROCAL?
To identify reciprocals in this paper, I will borrow Haspelmath’s (2007) mutual situation, which he describes as

a situation with two or more participants (A, B, ...) in which for at least two of the participants A and B, the relation between A and B is the same as the relation between B and A.\(^1\)

\(^1\) As Evans (to appear) notes, some languages express “less than completely symmetric situations” with standard reciprocal marking (e.g. “The students followed each other onto the stage”). This type of situation is not included in Haspelmath’s mutual situation, which I have chosen to use, not having found an example of such clear asymmetry expressed in the Hebrew reciprocal constructions.

Sigrid Beck (2001) proposes four semantic readings of elementary reciprocal sentences: strongly reciprocal, weakly reciprocal, situation-based weakly reciprocal, and collective. While his criteria would be useful in the analysis of Biblical Hebrew, it is not within the scope of this paper to analyze the semantic nuances of the reciprocal constructions in this data, but rather to focus on their syntactical and grammatical aspects.
I will use the term *mutual situation* to describe reciprocal events in this data. The following sections will describe and analyze several patterns of expressing these situations in Biblical Hebrew.

### 3. Lexical Reciprocals

Two verbal stems in Biblical Hebrew carry the bulk of lexical reflexivity and reciprocity: the *Hithpa’el* and the *Niphal*. Both stems (also called *binyanim*) have a broader semantic range and function, but they share a common grammatical component: a **reduction of arguments** of the verb’s basic stem, producing verbs that ‘cannot govern an object’ (Weingreen 1959:126). This decrease in valency encompasses the passive, middle, unaccusative, reflexive, and reciprocal functions. For the purposes of this Sections 3.1 and 3.2, I will limit the examples to *Hithpa’el* and *Niphal* verbs that carry a “double-status” (reflexive or reciprocal) meaning. As the examples show, both verbal stems demonstrate the capacity to turn the action of the verb back on its subject, and in the process, to suppress one argument (the subject or object) of the verb.

#### 3.1. Hithpa’el

We will first look at the *Hithpa’el* and begin with its most common function, the **reflexive**. Examples (1) and (3) are included to illustrate the transitive verbs (non-*Hithpa’el*) from which the *Hithpa’el* reflexive forms are derived in (2) and (4).

1. wa-tə-ṣadq-ı ʾet-āḥɔta-yik
   and-2SG-justify\PIEL-F ACC-sister-2SG.F
   You have **justified** your sisters (made your sisters [appear] righteous). (Ezek.16:51)

2. ū-mah nišṭadaq
   and-what 1PL\HITH-justify
   ‘How shall we **justify ourselves** (make ourselves righteous)? (Genesis 44:16)

3. wə’et—ḥārōn wə’et—banayw ʾə-qadēš lə-kahēn lī.
   and-ACC—Aaron and-ACC—sons-3SG.M 1SG-consecrate\PIEL to-priest to.1SG
   ‘And Aaron and his sons I will **consecrate** for priests to me.’ (Exodus 29.44)

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2 Haspelmath (2007) would call these **Grammatical Reciprocals**, preferring to reserve the term **Lexical Reciprocal** for verbs which ‘express a mutual configuration by themselves, without necessary grammatical marking.’ In this paper, however, I will use the term **Lexical Reciprocals**, following Reinhart and Siloni (2005), to describe the *Hithpa’el* and *Niphal* verbal forms, which are formed in the lexicon.

3 Seven *binyanim* are the primary, or most common, verbal stems. They may be used and abbreviated as follows in the examples in this paper: *Qal* (*QAL*), *Niphal* (*NIPH*), *Piel* (*PIEL*), *Pual* (*PUAL*), *Hiphil* (*HIPH*), *Hophal* (*HOPH*), and *Hithpa’el* (*HITH*).

4 Note: In the Bible, some Hitpa’el and Niphal forms are not derived from transitive verbs, e.g. hit-halak from halak ‘to walk.’ (c.f. Genesis… Psalm 58:7, etc.) These forms illustrate a function of the verbal templates broader than reflexive/reciprocal, and I have not included them in the discussion here.
4. וַאֲגָם הַקֹּהֲנִים הַנִּגָּשִׁים אֶל-יְהוָה יִתְקַדְּשׁוּ אֶל-יְהוָה:  
wa-gam ha-kohanim-ha nigaš-îm ʾel-yəhwah yit-qadaš-û  
‘And also the priests, who approach the Lord, must consecrate themselves.’  
(Exodus 19:22)

Having illustrated the valency-reduction of the Hithpa’el stem, I include below two of the rare examples of a plural Hithpa’el with a reciprocal meaning. As noted in the gloss, (6) could be interpreted as either plural reflexive or reciprocal, based on the criteria I address in section 3.3.

5. וַיִּתְרֹצֶצוּ  
wa-yit-roṣaš-û ha-banim bo-qiraba-h  
‘And the children [twins] struggled together within her [Rebekah].’  
(Gen 25.22)

6. וַאֲגָם הַקֹּהֲנִים הַנִּגָּשִׁים אֶל-יְהוָה  
wa-gam ha-kohanim ha-nigaš-îm ʾel-yəhwah  
‘And the priests, who approach the Lord, must consecrate themselves.’  
(Exodus 19:22)

3.2. Niphal

The Niphal stem is frequently referred to as the “passive of the Qal.” It often carries a passive meaning in Biblical literature, but scholars such as Waltke and O’Connor (1990) believe that the “common denominator” of the range of the Niphal is the middle voice. One application of this general function in Biblical literature is the reflexive meaning (7, 8, 9), and, occasionally, the reciprocal (10, 11).

7. וַאֶנָּקְמָה אוֹיְבֵי:  
wa-i-naqmah mē-ʾōyāb-ay.  
‘I will avenge myself on my enemies.’  
(Isa 1:24)\(^5\)

8. והַשָּׁמֶרָה בַּבּוֹקֶר  
hišmer-î na’ ba-boqer  
‘And now, guard yourself in the morning.’  
(1 Sam 19:2)\(^6\)

\(^5\) See Joshua 10:13 for this verb in the Qal: ‘And the sun and moon stood still until the nation avenged his enemies.’

\(^6\) See Genesis 17:9 for this verb in the Qal: ‘And you shall keep my covenant.’
9. יִסָּמֵך יִשָּׂרֵאֵל וְנַקְבָּהּ בְּכַפּוֹ וּבָא עָלָיו אִישׁ יִסָּמֵך
yi-samēk yēšārēl ʾēnēqah bə-kô ʾal-ayw ʾū-ba yēḵšēk ʾîš yē-ḵšēk
3 SG.M-support\NIPH man on-3 SG.M and-enter in-hand-3 SG.M
ū-naqab-ah
and-pierce-3 SG.M.OBJ
‘If a man supports himself on it, it will come in and pierce his hand’ (Isa 36.6)⁷

10. וּנְקָבָהּ בְּכַפּוֹ וּבָא עָלָיו אִישׁ יִסָּמֵך
wə-kô ʾēnēqah bə-kô ʾal-ayw ʾū-ba yēḵšēk
and-COND 3 M-struggle\NIPH-PL man\PL
‘If men struggle (with each other)’ (Exodus 21:22)

11. הֲנִי לְחָלָה שֵׁם-זֶקֶר בַּלְתִּי שְׁנַיִם הֲיֵלְכוּ
hə-ney-lə kem-zəḵer bəltî ʾənayim ənayim
Q-3 M-walk-PL two together without COND-meet\NIPH-PL
‘Do two walk together without having met?’ (Amos 3:3, JPS⁸)

3.3. ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL VERBS

What actually happens in the argument structure and semantic roles (agent and patient) of these verbal stems? More specifically, is it the agent or the patient that is not expressed, and how are the two linked to refer to one another in double-status (reflexive and reciprocal) constructions?

These questions are addressed by Mohanan and Mohanan (1998). They make their observations on the Hithpa’el in Modern Hebrew, but these observations hold true for both the Niphal in and the Hithpa’el Biblical Hebrew as well. The Mohanans suggest that the creation of lexical reflexives requires two mechanisms of meaning-argument linking: 1) co-indexing, to indicate identity of reference, 2) suppression, to make a semantic participant unavailable for syntactic expression. In Hebrew, they observe, both mechanisms apply to create reflexives and reciprocals. So in (2) and (9) above, for example, the agent and patient are co-indexed, and then one of them is suppressed so as not to appear in the syntax.

Further observation reveals that co-indexing does not always apply to these stems (e.g. in the passive, unaccusative, etc.), and these occurrences actually clarify which semantic role is being suppressed. Consider the following examples, which may be interpreted without co-indexing.

**Hithpa’el**

12. Dan hit-gile’ax.⁹ [Modern Hebrew]
Dan [HITH] shaved.
‘Dan shaved himself / got himself shaved (by another).

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⁷ See Genesis 27:37 for this verb in the Qal: ‘With grain and wine I have supported him.’
⁹ Example from Modern Hebrew (Mohanan & Mohanan, 1998). I found it difficult to find an example in the Biblical data of a Hithpa’el stem with no co-indexing, that is, with no reflexive connotations. This stem is consistently co-indexed to involve the SUBJECT in both receiving and initiating the action.
In the above examples, it is clear that the agent is suppressed (as normally happens with passive constructions) and that the patient appears as subject. This agent-suppression seems to be the general pattern for all Hithpa’el and Niphal stems; the grammatical subject is the semantic patient, which may be co-indexed to the agent to form a reflexive or reciprocal construction.

Having discussed the functional distinctions between double-status and passive constructions, we still face the ambiguity between plural reflexive and reciprocal constructions. With plural subjects the Niphal and Hithpa’el stems may carry either meaning. As the Mohanans have formulated the question, Why must some verbs have only the option of plural reflexivity (e.g. ‘shave’), and others only the option of reciprocity (e.g. ‘kiss’)? This question could be extended to the entire semantic range of the Niphal and Hithpa’el: Why must some verbs have only the option of passivity (or middle voice, or unaccusative subject, etc.)?

The Mohanans have proposed the concept of ‘conceptual salience’ to help explain this constraint on verb meanings. That is, a verb can only carry a meaning that is a “salient concept” in the known world of its speakers. For example, two people kissing one another is a salient concept, but kissing themselves is not a salient concept (at least, not kissing oneself on the lips). The Mohanans have formulated a Conceptual Salience Condition:

The semantic structure of a word must correspond to a salient concept in the known world. 10

How could we apply the Conceptual Salience Condition to the Biblical examples above? In (10), for example, we understand that it is not a salient concept that two men would ‘struggle with themselves’ or that two men would each ‘meet themselves’ before walking together (11).

Judges 20:22 (6 above) is ambiguous, for both interpretations are salient concepts on the battlefield of that context. Each soldier may have “strengthened himself” for the following day, or the soldiers may have “strengthened each other.” Again, the ultimate point must be that, by whatever agent, the soldiers were strengthened, which is further evidence that it is the patient, not the agent, that is the expressed subject.

Of course, this ambiguity of the identity of the agent makes some Biblical verbal constructions controversial, and English translations differ over their interpretation. A prime example is the Hithpa’el of barak ‘bless’ in Genesis 22:18, below.

10 Mohanan and Mohanan stress that although this condition represents a common pattern, it is not an inviolable constraint. Rather, it is a “preference” constraint.
And-3M.HITH-bless-PL in-offspring-2SG all nations DET-earth
‘in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed / bless themselves.’

(Genesis 22:18 ESV/JPS¹¹)

The difference between the Christian (ESV: passive) and Jewish (JPS: reflexive or reciprocal) translations may also be explained by the Conceptual Salience Condition.

In the Jewish worldview, Abraham and his offspring (the Jewish nation) are the topics of a “blessing formula” used by “all the nations of the earth” (the agent). The use of blessing formulas (e.g. “May the Lord bless you like He blessed _________”) is a salient concept to Jewish people, and also fits well with the view that the Jewish people are the model of blessing for others to pattern.

In the Christian worldview, this passage points to one “offspring,” namely Jesus Christ (see Galatians 3:16, Acts 3:25-26), the Agent that will bless all nations. The extension of blessing to all nations is a salient concept to Christians, many of whom are not of Jewish descent, while the use of a “blessing formula” is not a familiar concept.

Both salient concepts share a common semantic role; the patient, not the agent, is the subject of the verb. The views differ on the identity of the suppressed role, the agent. The nations will be blessed, yes … but by whom?

4. SYNTACTIC RECIPROCALS

The preferred¹² reciprocal construction in Biblical Hebrew uses idiomatic reciprocal anaphors in a construction that Evans (to appear) calls a bipartite quantifier.¹³ These appear consistently after plural verbs as a pair of singular pronouns (e.g. ze…ze ‘this…that’), a pair of numerals (e.g.


¹² I obtained the majority of this data by searching English translations for the words ‘each other’ and ‘one another,’ using Logos Bible Software. The New Living Translation produced the most results on this search, of which 75 are MUTUAL SITUATIONS explicit in the Hebrew. Of these, 68 (91%) employ the syntactic, bipartite construction, with Hithpa’el or Niphal used in the other nine percent.

¹³ The term bipartite quantifier is adapted from König and Kokutani’s (2006) Quantificational Strategy. Haspelmath (2007) objects to this term, illustrating with Lezgian what may seem true in Hebrew as well: a non-quantifier bipartite expression. Haspelmath points out that a quantificational anaphor need not be bipartite (e.g. Finnish toinen). He prefers the term anaphoric reciprocal construction, or alternatively, argumental reciprocal constructions, which is a term based on the fact that these anaphors behave like arguments of the verb.

Evans (to appear) mentions that the representative phrase ʾîš el ʾaḥîw, ‘a man to his brother’, is “on road to grammaticalization as bipartite quantifier, since it is also used in situations where ‘brother’ is not literally appropriate, e.g. curtains in tabernacle” (see Exodus 26:5).

Evans also uses the term bipartite quantifier (or binomial quantifier in Evans et al 2007) to describe Italian’s l’uno il altro, Spanish’s (prep.) los unos (prep.) los otros, Russian’s drug druga, etc., as well as English’s each other and Biblical Hebrew’s ʾîš el ʾaḥîw. Other terms have also been used to describe or modify such constructions, such as nominal reciprocal (see Evans, et al 2007), or quantifier-like (Dimitriadis 2004).
exad...šeni ‘one…the second’) or, most often, a pair of generic, singular, common nouns (e.g. ʾîš...ʾaḥîw ‘a man…his brother’).

As the data in this paper will illustrate, this bipartite construction uses a variety of common nouns (see footnote 14 below), as well as accepted quantifiers. I have chosen to use the term quantifier in this paper to describe these bipartite constructions, and will operate under a definition borrowed from Floor (2004), to describe words whose meaning “always indicates that the referent to which they refer is an addition or limitation of another referent.”

The variety of uses and broad range of antecedents for this construction show that it was more than just an idiom in Biblical Hebrew; it was becoming a grammaticalized construction. Prototypical examples are (16) and (17) below. This construction could be used to describe non-human participants (19), and even inanimate objects (18).

16. לא ראו איש אשתו
loʾ-raʾû ʾîš ʾaḥîw
NEG-see-3M.PL man ACC-brother-3M.SG
‘They did not see one another.’ (Exodus 10:23)

17. כל אלה אל זה זה הלילה:ו לא קרב
wa-loʾ-qarab zeh ʾel-zeh kal-ha-laylah.
and-NEG-draw_near3SG.M this to-this all-the-night
‘They did not come near one another all night.’ (Exodus 14:20)

18. חמישה חומת עשרים חמשה חומות
ḥâmēš ha-yashar-ot ti-hyey-na ṣobār-ot ʾišah ʾel-ʾāḥot-ah
five DET-curtain-PL.F F-be.PL coupled-PL.F woman to-sister-3F.SG
“Five curtains shall be coupled to one another.” (Exodus 26:3)

19. ו어야ו את כל אלה בניו ביתה
wa-yi-qah-lô ʾet-kal-ʾēleh wa-ya-batër ʾot-am ba-tawek
and-3M-take-to3SM.G ACC-all-these and-3M-divide\SG ACC-3M.PL in-middle
 wa-yi-tên ʾiš-bitar-ô li-qarâʾt rēʾeh-û
and-3M-give\SG man-half-3M.SG INF-meet neighbor-3M.SG
“And he brought him all these [animals], cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other.” (Genesis 15:10)

14 In Biblical Hebrew, the options for common nouns are actually quite extensive: maʿaracah li-qrat maʿaracah ‘army to meet army’ (1 Sam 17:21), gibor b-gibor ‘warrior on warrior’ (Jeremiah 46:12), mošel ‘al-mošel ‘ruler against ruler’ (Jeremiah 51:46), ṣîš ba-ʾamīyto ‘man to his neighbor’ (ʾamīy Leviticus 19:11), adam b-adam ‘man on man’ [lit. ‘male on male’] (Ecclesiastes 8:9), atiyq el-pney-atiyq ‘gallery against gallery’ (Ezekiel 42:3). Determiners are also used: elleh ‘these’ (1 Kings 20:29) and ze ‘this’ (Isaiah 6:3).

Today the bipartite construction in Modern Hebrew, as it is discussed in linguistics, is primarily limited to forms of ze...ze ‘this...that’ and exad...šeni ‘one...second’. These have been termed reciprocal pronouns by Siloni (2005), but that term is too narrow to encompass their predecessors, the creative idioms that transformed common nouns like ʾîš ‘man’ and gibor ‘warrior’ into quantificational reciprocals.

15 See also Genesis 7:2, where ṣîš v-ʾêsto is used for the animals entering the ark, ‘a male and its mate.’
As König and Kokutani (2006) say, expressions like these should be analyzed as anaphors, that is, as variables that are bound to their governing category. For clarity, I adopt the term mutuant (see Haspelmath, 2007) to refer to a given participant in these mutual situations; mutuant A indicates the referent of the first variable in the bipartite construction (e.g.ʾîš ‘man’), while mutuant B indicates the referent of the second variable (e.g.ʾaḥîw ‘his brother’).

The primary questions on which this section of the paper will focus are these:

How are the mutuants co-indexed to yield a cohesive reciprocal meaning?

What are the grammatical relation(s) and syntactic category(s) of this construction in a sentence?

4.1. RECIPROCAL CO-INDEXING

Consider (20) below, which contains an explicit plural subject, unlike the pro-drop (omission of subject) that often occurs in Biblical Hebrew. Example (21) also has an explicit plural antecedent, although this time it is the clause’s object, not subject.

20. אִישׁ גִלְעָד שָׂרֵי הָעָם אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ

wa-y-o’mar-û ha-ʿam šar-ê gilʿad ʾîš ʾel-rêʾēh-û

and-M-say-PL DET-people, leader-PL Gilead, man to-neighbor-3M.SG

‘And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said one to another …’ (Judges 10:18)

21. אֶל־אָחִיו אִישׁ וְנִפַּצְתִּים

wa-ʾnipa-ṣtî-m ʾîš ʾel-ʾaḥ-îw

and-dash-1SG-3M.PL.OBJ man to-brother-3M.SG.

‘I will dash them, one against the other …’ (Jeremiah 13:14)

The English glosses of (20) and (21) could be indexed as illustrated below. This co-indexing shows that the mutuants are members of group (x,y), that mutuant B is linked by possession to mutuant A, and that mutuant A and mutuant B cannot have the same identity.

and-M-say-PL [DET-people](x,y), [leader-PL Gilead](x,y), [man](x) to-[neighbor](y)[3M.SG](x)

and-dash-1SG-[3M.PL.OBJ](x,y) [man](x) to-[brother](y)[3M.SG.](x)

Of course, both of the mutuant positions in the idiom may refer to any and all of the members of the plural subject, to communicate that virtually any or each of the members may fill the role of either mutuant. However, the nonidentity requirement of reciprocals must apply to this construction (see Dalrymple, Mchombo, and Peters, 1994), such that the entity linked to the filler of the first argument (e.g.ʾîš ‘man’) cannot simultaneously be the entity linked to the filler of the second argument (e.g.ʾaḥîw ‘his brother’). In other words, this reciprocal construction cannot be construed as a reflexive construction.

4.2. SYNTACTIC CATEGORIES AND GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS

Next we examine the grammatical relations and syntactic categories of this anaphoric reciprocal construction. Evans et al (2007) point out that, unlike the lexical reciprocals above, this construction does not affect valency in any way. Rather, the construction supplies the reciprocal expression (i.e. mutuant B) to fill the lower argument slot (e.g. the object or oblique).
The grammatical relations of mutuant B are quite evident from its case marking or preposition, and it stands as a noun phrase and argument of the verb. However, the relation of mutuant A presents more difficulty. As may be seen in the above examples, this first element of the construction seems to fill the upper argument slot, for example, the subject (20) or object (21). However, this upper argument is already (usually) filled by a plural constituent, either explicit or implicit (through pro-drop). In addition, we find a lack of agreement between the singular constituent of mutuant A and the plural verb that normally accompanies it. Consider the following examples.

22. We are separated on the wall from one another. (Nehemiah 4:19)

23. The sons of your people… say to one another, each to his brother…’ (Ezekiel 33:30)

24. Everyone deceives his neighbor.’ (Jeremiah 9:5)

25. (You) teach your daughters a lament, and each (to) her neighbor a dirge.’ (Jeremiah 9:20)

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16 This verse presents problems on several accounts: Although it contains a plural subject (ban-ē ‘sons’), and two parallel bipartite constructions, the verb is singular. At this point, I can only propose that the verb’s number may be influenced by ‘amä-ka ‘your people.’ This collective noun, when it is a subject, often occurs with a singular verb.

17 Jeremiah 9:20 (example 25). The group under this imperative is understood to include the women and their neighbors, but not their daughters. That is, the daughters will be taught a lament, and the women will teach one another a dirge.
And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts…”

(Isaiah 6:3)

‘They help every one his neighbor, and (each) says to his brother, “Be strong!”’

(Isaiah 41:6 Darby, ESV)

Although the nominal components of the idiom must agree with the verbal subject-agreement in gender (compare 27 and 25 above), they do not generally agree in number (see 16, 22, 23, 25, etc.) or person (22, 25). Each mutuant must be understood as coreferential with members of an explicit or understood plural group. The antecedent group is usually the subject of the clause (see 20), but may be the object (21, 32).

In other words, the verb’s underlying upper argument does not agree in number with mutuant A of the construction, yet the verb selects mutuant B as its lower argument. For example, (27) includes two verbs, each of which selects a different grammatical relation for mutuant B to complete its argument structure. Ya‘azorū ‘help’ selects an accusative object, while yo‘mar ‘say’ selects an oblique argument with the preposition lə- ‘to’.

The syntactic category of mutuant A can best be understood as a FLOATING QUANTIFIER, much like ‘each’ in the English bipartite quantifier ‘each other.’ (see 28 below) The quantifier has ‘floated’ from its position as a class noun modifying the plural group, and has become a possessor of the lower argument (mutuant B).

It is not strange that what seems to be a “common noun” should function in this role as a QUANTIFIER. David Stein (2008) shows that the term וָרֶשׁ (traditionally glossed ‘man’) is used in...
Biblical literature to speak of a participant member of the group in question. Stein’s work builds on the research of Alison Grant (1977), who tabulated all Biblical references to ʾîš. She found only 20% to refer to a specific (male) individual, while at least 74% of occurrences referred to “any or each member of a defined group or class.”

We find, then, in the data what we should expect: the plural group or class is only explicitly stated when necessary. When the group is understood (or intentionally underspecified to embrace humanity: see example 24), the bipartite quantifier works on its own, whether its verb is plural or singular.

Several aspects of the English floating quantifier in (28) below are analogous to the ‘floating’ mutuant A in Hebrew.

28. a. Each child is hitting-SG the other.
   b. Each is hitting-SG the other.
   c. The children each are hitting-PL other.
   d. The children are hitting-PL each other.

In Hebrew, as in English, the verb referring to a mutual situation can be either singular (17, 23, 28a,b) or plural (20, 24, 25, 28c,d). The quantifier may ‘float’ independent of either its plural group (22, 23, 28d) or its fellow-MUTUANT(S) (27, 28a, 32). The quantifier may modify its antecedent group (22, 23, 28a), or stand itself as an argument of the verb (26, 28b).24

The flexibility of this floating quantifier (mutuant A) and its companion (mutuant B) should not mask the semantic stability that it conveys. The quantifier always functions as a variable, a singular representative of a plural group.

4.3. ADDITIONAL FEATURES

When referring to an antecedent of only two individuals, this bipartite quantifier construction is inherently symmetrical. That is, both members of the group participate equally in both semantic roles as mutuants. Deviation from this norm requires additional specification to indicate otherwise. An example of such a specification is seen in example (29).

29. וַיִּגְדִּיל׃ עַד־דָּוִד אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ אִישׁ וַיִּבְכּוּ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ אִישׁ וַיִּשְּׁקוּ ‘and they kissed one another and they cried (with) one another, but David more.’

(1 Samuel 20:41)

23 While I speak of ʾîš here, I do not forget the other common nouns that are found in this bipartite construction (see footnote 14). In each of those contexts, the singular noun is used, like ʾîš, as a representative, or limitation, of another referent (the group). According to the definition used in this paper, then, they also are quantifiers.

24 It is rare in the Biblical data to find an instance where MUTUANT A is a term argument (SUBJ or OBJ), but (33) is a likely example. Two conditions are met: 1) the verb agreement is singular, and 2) there is no other explicit term argument as its antecedent in the sentence.
Occasionally, the bipartite construction demonstrates an interesting capacity. Here the reciprocal relationship is not between two members of the group directly, but between a member and a part or tool of another member. These could be compared with the English example in (30).

30. ‘They kissed one another’s cheek.’

31. לא שמעו שלש…
...אשר לו ימוא-ו איש שפאת רפיהו.
...that NEG 3M-hear-PL man lip neighbor-3M.SG
‘…that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ (Genesis 11:7)

32. ובדכל המחנה והרעם איש חרב את יהוה
wa-ya-šem yahwah ṭet ḫereb ḫîš bo-rē‘ēh-û
and-3M-set SG ‘Lord’ ACC sword man on-neighbor-3M.SG
and-on-all DET-camp.
‘and the LORD set every man’s sword against his neighbor
and against the whole camp.’ (Judges 7:22)

33. והנה חרב איש ברעהו
hay-tah ḫereb ḫîš bo-rē‘ēh-û
be-3F.SG sword man on-neighbor-3M.SG
‘The sword of every man was against his brother.’ (1 Samuel 14:20)

34. והנה אחד מהכללה איש ברעהו
wa-ḥa-nišar-ôt t-o’kal-nah ḫîšah ṭet-bo-šar ro’u-ṯah.
and-DET-one left-PL F-eat-3.PL woman ACC-on-flesh neighbor-3F.SG
‘And let those [sheep] who are left devour the flesh of one another.’
(Zechariah 11:9)

Example (32) also illustrates a rare phenomenon; mutuant B (here an oblique argument: ‘on his neighbor’) occupies a coordinate structure with a similar prepositional phrase (‘on the whole army’). However, unlike (27) above, the second phrase may not be a mutuant. It is not part of the mutual situation in the same way that is ‘his neighbor’, for ‘the whole camp’ (as a group) seems to participate more as a recipient than as an individual agent.25

25 This analysis could be called into question by defining mahāneh ‘camp’ as itself a group of individuals, and perhaps as a co-indexed source of participating mutuants. Such an interpretation could yield a third dimension to the disaster of this event, for if the ‘camp’ is a symmetric participant in this mutual situation, then each member (ʾîš) found himself not only attacking 1) his neighbor and 2) the whole camp, but also being attacked by both.
5. **Comparative Analysis**

In their typology of reciprocal constructions (2006), König and Kokutani classify into four strategies the methods of reciprocal construction in the languages of the world:

1) **The Affixal Strategy** derives reciprocal verbs from more basic verbal stems.

2) **The Pronominal Strategy** uses primarily reflexive pronouns.

3) **The Deverbal Strategy** uses a verb or verbal derivative. This strategy includes serial verbs, reduplication, and reciprocal markers derived from a symmetric predicate.

4) **The Quantificational Strategy** uses NP-like constituents to form reciprocal anaphors (c.f. Hebrew bipartite quantifier above). Unlike the other strategies, this strategy does not decrease the valency of a transitive verb.26

Using these four categories, König and Kokutani draw a hierarchy of reciprocal constructions (below) and make certain observations about characteristics along the spectrum.27

\[
\text{derivalional (I)} < \text{pronominal (II)} < \text{deverbal (III)} < \text{quantificational (IV)}
\]

When one compares Hebrew’s lexical reciprocals (e.g. *Hithpa’el* and *Niphal*) on one side with the syntactic reciprocals (the bipartite quantifiers, e.g. ʾrš ...ʾəḥnw) on the other, our data support König and Kokutani’s distinctive predictions.

On the left, as they predict, we find that Hebrew’s lexical reciprocals exhibit inherently symmetric predicates, a loss of independence, and a higher range of meanings and polysemy (producing ambiguity between reflexive and reciprocal). On the right, the hierarchy describes strategies (including Hebrew’s bipartite quantifiers) that are more emphatic, less economical, less restricted, and less ambiguous. The constructions in Strategy IV are said to demonstrate more semantic substance and manifest an NP-like behaviour. It is perhaps this clarity, versatility, and semantic capacity that pushed the quantificational strategy to the fore in the mutual situations of Biblical Hebrew.

6. **Conclusion**

The goal of this paper was to describe the reciprocal constructions of Biblical Hebrew and to examine them in light of the recent surge of scholarship that has expanded the understanding of reciprocals in the field of linguistics. The study of Hebrew’s lexical reciprocals has found them unified under a common semantic role suppressed in argument reduction, and has distinguished their semantic possibilities using the Mohanans’ Conceptual Salience Condition. In the study of syntactic reciprocals, I have attempted to map the co-indexing and anaphora that the complex semantics of reciprocals have imposed on Hebrew syntax.

In the world of Biblical Hebrew scholarship, this analysis also broadens the discussion of Biblical Hebrew reciprocals to include the idiomatic bipartite constructions that became

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26 A possible exception to the valency reduction of the first three strategies is the **Pronominal Strategy**. It is debated whether reciprocal pronouns (which usually also function as reflexive pronouns with singular verbs) reduce the valency (-arity) of their transitive predicates.

27 Some languages have more than one strategy, although König and Kokutani say strategies I and II are mutually exclusive. Hebrew uses strategies I and IV, as do Russian, Hungarian, Finnish, and Greek. French, German, and Italian use strategies II and IV, Japanese uses strategies III and IV, while Modern English uses only strategy IV.
grammaticalized in ancient times and only a trace of which remain in the reciprocals of Modern Hebrew.\(^{28}\)

7. References


\(^{28}\) See footnote 14.