

# BICOLA-FOCUSING IN THE POETIC BOOK OF JOB<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This article investigates the word order in the biblical Book of Job by analysing focus structures within the bicola of the book. The theory of focusing that is developed in this article is based on Adina Mos-havi's work on focus structures. The conditions that need to be met for a focus structure to occur, as well as the typology of focusing, will be developed. There is also a brief analysis of the placement of (bicola) focusing within the poetic Book of Job.

**Keywords:** Biblical Hebrew syntax, Pragmatic Linguistics, Biblical Hebrew, the Book of Job

## AN INTRODUCTION TO POETIC FOCUS STRUCTURES IN THE BOOK OF JOB

To tackle material as demanding as the poetic texts of the Hebrew Bible one must leave no stone unturned and be prepared to alter one's perspective to gain new clues to analyse these texts. In addition to reliable tried and tested methods in Biblical studies a keen eye should always be kept on innovations in other areas, such as linguistics, which can help us improve our understanding of both modern and ancient texts. This article aims to do just that, namely by exploring the possibility of re-evaluating what a marked word order in a poetic clause—associated so far mostly with the syntactic aspect of the *chiasmus* feature—can reveal when analysed using a combination of the theories of information structure and activation. Marked word order clauses with a finite verb will be investigated and, as such, are referred to as *focus structures*.

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The poetic text that has been analysed for this article is the poetic Book of Job. It is certainly one of the most difficult poetic texts due to the large number of different poetic profiles found there<sup>2</sup>. This, however, also makes it a perfect text for this experiment<sup>3</sup> as word order variation can be observed on a large scale and the use of well-known and reliable poetic markers (such as the positioning of  $\imath$  at the beginning of second bicola or deictic particles/presentatives<sup>4</sup> as indicators of the beginning of new chapters/strophes) seem to have frequently lost their bearings.

## FOCUS STRUCTURES

The concept of focusing has, together with the closely related term topicalization, been around since the middle of the 20th century<sup>5</sup>. Numerous authors have dealt with this topic<sup>6</sup>, but the author's current approach has been influenced mostly by Adina Moshavi's approach to focusing<sup>7</sup>. There are two ways in which her treatment of this term stands out:

1) She uses Knut Lambrecht's well-known theory of focusing in information structure (1994) but focuses only on the notion of argument (or constituent) focus<sup>8</sup>, which in Biblical Hebrew is marked by placing the focused constituent at the head of the clause and before the verb which

<sup>2</sup> The different "voices" (not referring to the different characters, rather to different combinations of narrative, genre and stylistic choices) in the Book of Job have been a discussion point through the history of research on the book, from a diachronic perspective (e.g. Kaiser 2006, Nömmik 2010, Vermeylen 1986) and a synchronic one (e.g. Tur-Sinai 1967, Newsom 2009, Van der Lugt 2006).

<sup>3</sup> For a previous example of a successful attempt at analysing the material in the Book of Job for a stylistic feature that encompasses both semantics and textual placement in bicola, see Noegel's work on the Janus parallelism (1996).

<sup>4</sup> Defined as such by many, for example Lipinski (2000: 472–473), Muraoka (1985).

<sup>5</sup> Research into information structure began with the Prague School, specifically Mathesius (1915, 1947), Firbas (1966), Svoboda (1968), Kuno (1972), etc.

<sup>6</sup> Heimerdinger (1999), Shimasaki (2002), Gross (2001), Talstra (1999), van der Merwe (1999) to name a few.

<sup>7</sup> Moshavi (2010), where she defines focusing as "signalling a relation between the clause and the context of the addressee's attention state," and topicalizing as "signalling a relation between the clause and the linguistic context that accompanies it" (p. 90).

<sup>8</sup> According to Lambrecht, focusing can be classified into three categories: predicate focus, argument focus and sentence focus. These categories have different connotations on a clause-structure level and the only focus that can be used to explain a preposed constituent in the clause is argument focus (1994: 223)

would, in the case of neutral or unmarked word-order, be the first constituent of a clause.

For example, Lev 22:13

וְשָׁבָה אֶל-בֵּית אָבִיהָ

(And) [she] returns to her father's house [...]<sup>9</sup>

is a clause with an unmarked word—order as the verb of the clause (שוב “to return”) is in the clause-initial position followed by the adjunct clause (אֶל-בֵּית אָבִיהָ). This can be compared with Gen 24:38

אֶל-בֵּית-אָבִי תֵלֵךְ

**To my father's house** you shall go [...]

which has the adjunct “to my father's house” preposed in front of the verb, marking it as the focus of the clause. The entire focused clause consists of the focused element and at least a predicate (תֵלֵךְ), just like in the above example. The entire thought structure with the preceding clause (which the focus-structure reflects on) can be found below (Gen 24:37–38)<sup>10</sup>:

לֹא-תִקַּח אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִבְּנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי יֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרְצוֹ: אִם-לֹא אֶל-בֵּית-  
אָבִי תֵלֵךְ

You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; but **to my father's house** you shall go [...]

The initial introduction to the theme/idea can be found in Gen 24:37 where God tells Abraham not to stay in Canaan to take a wife from there. The focus structure that then reflects on this statement is in the following section (Gen 24:38), where the focus “to your father's house” has been preposed before the verb, thereby marking the entire clause as a focused clause.

<sup>9</sup> Unless stated otherwise, translations are from NASB. Changes in word-order of focused clauses have occasionally been made to highlight the author's point. Conjunctive particles have been bracketed not to remove attention from the focus structures.

<sup>10</sup> All following examples of focus structures (as with the current one) will have the focused constituent in bold and the entire focus structure (clause with a focused constituent) underlined. Prose examples are from Moshavi (2010).

Focused constituents can be both single words (as we will see in some future examples) or phrases (as in the abovementioned examples). Focus structures of this kind can only be observed in clauses where a verbal predicate (a finite verb) is present as the author(s) of the text need(s) to have had the possibility of using an unmarked word order which they then decided against<sup>11</sup>. This means that verbless (or nominal) clauses are beyond the scope of the current analysis as their word order is a lot more fluid and the difference between marked and unmarked word order is often unclear. Participles and infinitives, if present, have been analysed according to the syntactic functions they hold in particular clauses<sup>12</sup>.

## ACTIVATION

Another important notion that plays a substantial role in defining focusing is *activation*. The dimension it gives helps us understand the psycholinguistic motivations behind proposed focus structures. Moshavi applied Kintsch's "Construction Integration" model (Kintsch 1998; Moshavi 2010: 94–96) to specify what exactly happens when a reader encounters focusing. From this perspective focusing is "updating currently activated themes/ideas."

For example, in Gen 20:9

מה-עשית לני [...] מעשים אשר לא-יעשו עשית עמדי

What have you done to us? [...] **Things that ought not to be done** you have done to me.

the activated idea is that Abraham has done something to Abimelech. The first clause in the example behaves as an activator moving this concept into the short-term memory of the reader. The second clause then updates

<sup>11</sup> Unmarked word order refers to V-S-X(O) clauses (Watke, O'Connor 1990: 128; Moshavi 2010: 7, also Muraoka 1985: 28). On the complexity of defining unmarked word order in non-finite clauses, see Andersen (1970), Muraoka (1985: 11–28). For a thorough overview of the functions and conditions of a verbless (non-finite) clause and the different perspectives in research, see Miller (1999). For an approach that refuses the terms "subject" and "predicate" entirely, and instead, takes to the informational structure terminology of "topic" and "comment," see Michel (2004).

<sup>12</sup> Unlike, for example Collins (1978), and O'Connor (1997), who both group infinitives and predicates differently from Moshavi.

the existing activated idea by specifying what kind of deeds have been done (*things, that ought not to be done*).

The essence of Kintsch's model is that texts are understood through mental models that readers build. Connections are formed between ideas expressed in the text and relevant prior knowledge. This means that as a reader progresses through the text, corresponding themes from long-term memory are activated and stored in the short-term (working) memory. Each sentence that the reader processes will cause an activation of themes/ideas from the long-term memory to the short-term memory. Each subsequent sentence also becomes an activator, but the first-hand new information in it is constantly being compared to the information activated immediately prior to the sentence. The activated proposition from the previous sentence is therefore updated when new information from the following sentence is activated as short-term memory and this adjusts the information that the reader had in their short-term working memory from the previous sentence. The only way this is possible is if the information that is constantly being updated (the initial activated information) is accessible for this updating and the new information evokes similar themes/ideas to be activated (Kintsch 1998:98).

The reason *why* the concept of activation is vital to the investigation of focusing is that it allows the researcher to analyse the text from a pragmatic perspective. It helps the researcher to see beyond simply a grammatical marked/unmarked constituent order and delve into the ways in which the previously activated proposition is being updated or, to put it simply, *what is the focus structure drawing our attention to?*

By combining these two theories Moshavi identifies "the speaker's/writer's motivation in choosing the more unusual preposed constituent order over the corresponding unmarked constituent order" (Moshavi 2010: 86). It also helps us to view and experience the text as a first-time reader.

## TYPES OF FOCUS STRUCTURES

The way in which Moshavi has chosen to set specific boundaries to what focusing means (and does not mean) makes it easier to also locate focus structures in the text. By confining her research to preposed focus structures, she makes the clauses under investigation stand out in a narrative

text. Therefore, on a morphosyntactic level, focusing is unmistakable. This makes the identification process relatively straightforward and decreases the chance of subjectivity. Having analysed the focus structures, it became evident to Moshavi that there are four main types that the focus structures fall under (Moshavi 2010: 127):

- identificational focusing (proposition X is new information regarding an activated idea/theme),
- descriptive focusing (proposition X is a repetition of information we already have on an activated idea/theme),
- substitutional focusing (proposition X opposes all or some of the information we have about an activated idea/theme),
- additive focusing (proposition X indicates a nuance about an activated idea/theme).

All of these focus structures occur in biblical prose texts to subjects, complements and adjuncts of clauses. For example, in Gen 41:16 the focused constituent is the subject God and typologically this is substitutional focusing. The entire thought structure reads as follows (Gen 41:15–16):

וְאֵנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי עָלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר תִּשְׁמַע חֵלֹם לְפִתּוֹר אֲתוֹ: וַיַּעַן יוֹסֵף אֶת־פְּרֵעָה לֵאמֹר  
בְּלִעְדֵי אֱלֹהִים יַעֲבֹד אֶת־שְׁלוֹם פְּרֵעָה

(And) I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” Joseph then answered pharaoh, saying: “It has nothing to do with me; **God** will give pharaoh an answer for his own good.

The activated idea or proposition is that Joseph has the ability to interpret dreams. With the focused clause, Joseph speaks against this and explains that it is not him but God who can do this, substituting the existing proposition of Joseph as the dream interpreter with the notion that it is God who does the actual interpreting.

In Gen 23:9 the adjunct “for the full price” is the focus and typologically this is additive focusing.

וַיִּתְּנֵנִי לִי אֶת־מְעָרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה אֲשֶׁר־לִי [...] בְּכֶסֶף מָלֵא יִתְּנֶנָּה לִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם  
לְאַחֲזֵת־קֶבֶר

(That) he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, [...] **for the full price** let him give it to me in your presence as a burial site.

The activated proposition is that Abraham wishes to purchase the cave of Machpelah. The nuance that is added to this idea is that Abraham wishes to make this purchase at a fair price. Therefore, the passage becomes an evident appraisal of Abraham as a righteous man.

The seemingly redundant, but practically defining, factor of the concept of focusing is that it is unnecessary. There is no need to add it to the text, yet the author has deliberately decided to do so for stylistic effect. It is a widely known fact that well-placed stylistic ornaments make a text more engaging for the reader and this especially applies to changes performed on the surface structure of a parallel line (Berlin 1992: 135). This leads to the next part of this article, which examines the group of texts where an abundance of stylistic features is the second defining feature next to their other discernible aspect—parallelism. The activation process and constituent focusing is relatively clear-cut in narrative texts, but how can we recognize it in poetry?

### FOCUSING IN POETRY

Returning to the frame of Kintsch's activation theory, the way the reader processes new information from a poetic text essentially works in the same way as with a prose text: 1) new information activates themes from the long-term memory to the short-term working memory, 2) these themes/ideas are updated when the activated idea/theme occurs with new aspects to the same theme/idea, only instead of longer narrative units (where new information constantly updates/adds to the initial proposition stated at the beginning of the narrative) readers process information by *bicola*. *Bicola* are the most prominent thought structures of Biblical Hebrew as they contain its most distinguishable feature—parallelism<sup>13</sup>. However, there are ideas and themes that carry through whole strophes, chapters or even entire poems. This means that focusing can occur, in terms of how information is distributed, on a bicolon level or over a wider scope in the poem.

In a broad sense the way new information (which then acts as an activator) is distributed in a bicolon can be divided into three categories:

<sup>13</sup> This is regarded as one of the few statements researchers of Biblical Hebrew poetry can all agree upon, that parallelism is statistically more frequent in texts regarded as poetry, e.g. Watson (2005: 50).

1. New information in the first colon, second colon repeating the same information or adding some nuances (semantically parallel bicolon with or without antithetic word-pairs). This type supports the appearance of focusing in the second colon of a bicolon.
2. New information in the first colon, new information in the second colon (synthetic, or extrapolative<sup>14</sup> bicolon). This type supports focusing over a wider scope in the text (if the new information fits into the frame of a theme/idea discussed over a longer thought unit). In addition, this type covers multiclausal cola where activation occurs within the confines of one colon (first clause of the colon activates a theme/idea and the second clause contains the focused clause).
3. New information is spread out over both of the cola (enjambment, subordinated clauses etc.). This type supports focusing over a wider scope in the text.

As indicated before, focusing falls into two categories: focusing on a bicolon level and focusing on a wider level. The first of these accounts for focusing within the information structure limits of a single bicolon with the first colon as the activator, whereas the second category allows for activation to occur in a more flexible area (not just in the colon preceding the focused clause). The distance between activation of a theme/idea and its update cannot, however, be very long (Kintsch 1998: 411). How long a theme/idea stays in the short-term working memory is debatable, but it is clear that with additional stylistic features in the mix it is unlikely that an idea/theme stays in the short-term working memory if the bicola following it activate a completely different theme/idea.

Current research is connected to the first category for two reasons. First of all, focusing on a larger strophic level beyond a bicolon already has implications on a semantic level, i.e. what defines an idea or theme? If an entire poem is about the glory of God, is that the information that is being updated? Or the different strophes discussing his strength, the help he offers to the weak or the strophe where he crushes his opponents? Neither of these approaches is technically incorrect if we rely only on the semantic structuring of the text. Therefore, a structured approach based

<sup>14</sup> According to the definition of Nõmmik (2012).



on the bicolon and an analysis on the syntactic functions of its constituents through the activation process is more fruitful for determining the focused elements in Biblical Hebrew poetry. Secondly, as the purpose of this article is to help determine whether syntactic data points match up with other stylistic devices (notably semantic and formal features), it is only natural to refrain from making automatic larger connections between the different parts of the text so any actual patterns illuminated by syntactic features would become more visible. These aspects are also what sets the author's approach apart from previous investigations of focusing in Biblical Hebrew poetry<sup>15</sup>. However, it is clear that an analysis of focus structures motivated by activation on a larger (e.g. strophic) level is necessary to fully describe the scope of this phenomenon.

Next, some general statements will be presented that apply to the bicola under discussion.

1) Bicola where focusing (at the beginning of the second colon) occurs must be semantically parallel. This means that the activator (the proposition that activates a theme/idea from the long-term to the short-term working memory) must be present in the first colon of the bicolon. Bicolon focusing does not occur in extrapolative bicola<sup>16</sup> nor in bicola where enjambment is present.

For example, Job 6:23b is considered as a focused structure

וּמִלְטוֹנֵי מִיַּד־אֹיֵב  
וּמִיַּד עֲרִיצִים תִּפְדּוּנִי

6:23a (or) save me from the hand of the enemy,

6:23b (or), **from the hand of the tyrants** redeem me.

The theme is activated in the first colon (deliverance, rescue) and the second colon repeats this theme by focusing the adjunct (*from the hand of the tyrants*), thereby creating a nice thought structure where an aspect of the activated theme is emphasized at the beginning of the following clause/colon.

Job 26:14b is, for comparison, not a focused clause:

<sup>15</sup> Especially Lunn (2006), Floor (2005).

<sup>16</sup> As suggested before, it may occur when the activation occurs on a strophic level.

הַרְאֵלֶּה קְצוֹת דְּרַבְּ(י)  
וּמַה־שִּׁמְזָן דָּבָר נִשְׁמַע־בוֹ

- 26:14a (Behold) these are the fringes of His ways;  
26:14b (And) how faint a word we hear of him!

This is an example of a synthetic or extrapulative bicolon where the two lines are not semantically parallel. The outcome is still a beautifully hopeless cry about how little human beings understand God, however preposing motivated by activation is not present.

2) Regarding clause type: focusing occurs in bicola in cases where both cola are verbal clauses (V+V bicola) or in cola where the first colon is verbless and the second colon is verbal (VL+V). Bicolon focusing does not occur in an entirely verbless bicola (VL-VL) nor in a bicolon where the second colon is verbless (V+VL). This restriction is due to the fact that constituent focusing can only be observed if the otherwise unmarked word order has clearly been changed to marked word order.

Also, as syntactic functions can only be observed at a clause level, a distinction needs to be made between cola that consist of a single clause and cola that contain several clauses. To do this, the following distinctions will be made: “colon/bicolon” refers to “single-clause cola” and “multi-clause colon” marks cola that have more than one clause.

An example of a V+V bicolon is Job 18:8:

כִּי־שָׁלַח בְּרֶשֶׁת בְּרַגְלָיו  
וְעַל־שִׁבְכָה יִתְהַלֵּךְ

- 18:8a (For) he is thrown into the net by his own feet,  
18:8b (and) **on the webbing** he steps.

Here the activated proposition is that the wicked are thrown into a trap by their own feet and the focus structure specifies this by indicating the manner in which he does it (“on the webbing he steps”).

An example of a VL+V bicolon is Job 10:4:

הֲעֵינֵי בָּשָׂר לָךְ  
אִם־כְּרֵאוֹת אָנוּשׁ תִּרְאֶה

- 10:4a Eyes of flesh do you have?  
10:4b (or) **as mankind sees** do you see?

Here the activator is the first colon where Job activates the notion of “seeing” and accuses God of not being able to see as he does. This induces a focus structure at the beginning of the second colon where Job specifies what he meant by “eyes of flesh” in the first colon, thereby making it clear what he accuses the divine of.

An example of a multi-clause colon is Job 6:22:

הֲכִי־אֶמְרֵתִי הֲבוּ לִי  
וּמִכֶּהֶם שִׁחֲדוּ בְעֵדָי

6:22a Have I said “Give me!

6:22b (And) **from your possessions** bribe for me.<sup>17</sup>”

Here, the first colon has two clauses but only the second one activates the proposition that Job asks (or, in this case, has not asked) his friends for help. The focus at the beginning of the second colon specifies what kind of help Job has in mind (“from your possessions”).

It is important to note that as the current article is a first attempt at creating a typology of focusing in poetic texts, the author has concentrated on occurrences of focusing where the feature can be relatively safely isolated from other poetic features. Specifically, as visible from previous examples, deictic particles and presentatives (כִּי, הִנֵּה־נָא, כִּי, בְּן, הִנֵּה־נָא, כִּי, עֲתָה, זִכְר־נָא, אַף etc.) as elements that adjust the information structure of the clause/colon that they front have been left out of this study<sup>18</sup>. As they regularly occur as unmarked preposed constituents or nonpreposed preverbal constituents (Moshavi 2010: 68–78), they are not considered as constituents in the nearby clauses at all. This means that in the Book of Job they are not considered as meaningful data points for determining (or obfuscating) occurrences of focusing. The reason why this has been decided against is that the evidence from the Book of Job shows that these elements are often (within the limits of that book) not performing the function they are most closely associated with, namely emphasizing an aspect of the text or alerting the hearer (Lipinski 2000: 472).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Translation by the author here.

<sup>18</sup> This is counter to what Lunn (2006) has done in his approach to focusing.

<sup>19</sup> Some examples of this unbalance are Job 4:12a; 10:13a; 13:27a, 28a; 22:18; 29:17—use of ו at the beginning of the first colon; 8:9; 17:4; 31:18; 31:23—use of כ at the beginning of both cola; 21:16; 23:8; 32:11—use of ה at the beginning of the cola, etc.

Instead, they seem to have been frequently used to make corruptions<sup>20</sup> in the text more “seamless.” There are also instances where these particles function as *anacrusis*<sup>21</sup>.

## FOCUSING IN THE BOOK OF JOB

Preliminary textual analysis in the Book of Job has discovered 52 cases of focusing on a bicolon level. Focused constituents can, just like in prose texts, be subjects, complements or adjuncts (both single words and phrases). The amount of V+V bicola is noticeably larger than VL+V bicola (ca 70% of focused cola are V+V).

Also, the number of adjuncts/complements compared to subjects in the focused position is considerably larger. This, however, was to be expected as the same applies to prose texts (according to Moshavi, around 16% of the focused clauses in Genesis were subjects [Moshavi 2010: 122]).

For example, in Job 17:9b we find subject focus:

וַיֵּאָחַז צְדִיק דְרָכּוֹ  
וַיִּטְהַר יְדָיִם יְסִיף אֶמְצָץ

17:9a (Nevertheless) holds the righteous to his way,

17:9b (And) **the one who has clean hands** will grow stronger and stronger.

Here the activated idea/theme is the steady path the righteous is supposed to be following with ease. The focus “the one who has clean hands” repeats what is meant by “the righteous” in the first colon.

Job 6:8b is an example of complement focus:

מִי־יִתֵּן תְּבוּאָה שְׂאֵלָתִי  
וְתִקְוֵתִי יִתֵּן אֱלֹהִים

6:8a (Oh, that) might come to pass my request,

6:8b (and that) **my hope** would grant God.

<sup>20</sup> Sections of texts that have been added or removed.

<sup>21</sup> By this is meant that they help total the number of letters to (closely) match the other line of the bicolon (or help perfect the colometry of the bicolon).

Here the activated proposition is a request that Job wishes God would fill (first colon), while the second colon clarifies that this is not only a plea that he wants to die but Job is placing his hope on the fact that God would kill him. These are truly the lines of someone who does not even care about redemption or an easing of his pain and Job's only hope is to die.

## TYPES OF BICOLA FOCUSING

So far, the following types of focusing have been observed:

1. Descriptive focus, in which the activated proposition is updated with a synonym that, in many cases, expresses another angle of the same proposition but without adding anything to the previously updated idea/theme.

For example, Job 6:23b:

וּמִלְטוֹנֵי מִיַּד־אֶרֶץ  
וּמִיַּד עֲרִיצִים תִּפְדּוּנִי

6:23a (or) save me from the hand of the enemy,

6:23b (or), **from the hand of the tyrants** redeem me.

In 6:23a, the idea of a rescue from the hands of the enemy is activated and the same idea is repeated in 6:23b in the focused clause. The only change is a synonym of the word “enemy” (“tyrant”).

Another excellent example of descriptive focusing is 28:19b:

לֹא־יַעֲרֹכְנָהּ פְּטֹדַת־כּוֹשׁ  
בְּקֶתֶם טְהוֹר לֹא תִסְלָהּ

28:19a The topaz of Cush cannot equal it,

28:19b (nor) **in pure gold** can it be valued.

An example of descriptive focusing in which the focused phrase even partially matches the activated preposition is 38:22b:

הֲבָאתְ אֶל־אֲצֻרוֹת שְׁלֹג  
וְאֲצֻרוֹת בְּרֹד תִּרְאֶה

38:22a Have you entered the storehouses of the snow,

38:22b (And) **the storehouses of the hail** have you seen?

This is by far the most popular type of focusing. A total of 37 cases of descriptive focusing were noted, amounting to nearly 70% of all cases.

This type of focusing roughly represents the typology X (focused clause) = A (activated proposition).

2. Specifying focus, in which the activated proposition gets narrowed to further enhance/intensify the idea/theme of it.

For example, Job 4:3b:

הִנֵּה יִסְרֶתֶ רַבִּים  
וַיְדִים רַפּוֹת תְּחַזֵּק

4:3a (Behold,) you have taught many,

4:3b (And) **weak hands** you have strengthened.

In 4:3a Eliphaz praises Job for the good work he has done (“you have taught many”) and in the second colon he specifies even further that he has given help to the needy, the weak of hand and the vulnerable. The focus “weak hands” specifically serves the purpose of intensifying the message of the first colon. Job has gone the extra mile.

Specifying focusing can also be found in 41:13b, where the creature’s invincibility is stressed through the different “layers of defence” it is covered in:

מִי־גָלָה פָּנָי לְבוּשׁוֹ  
בְּקַפְּלֵי רֶסֶגוֹ מִיָּבּוּא

41:5a Who can strip off his outer covering,

41:5b **his double armor** who can pierce?

The author wanted to indicate here that an attacker has no chance of beating the creature because even if he manages to strip off its outer covering, an even more powerful double armour awaits, thus intensifying the image of the animal’s impenetrable defence.

Another example of specifying focusing is 31:4 (same comparison, also in a focused clause, is used in 34:21):

כִּי־עֲנִינוּ עַל־דְּרָכַי־אִישׁ  
וְכָל־צַעֲדָיו יִרְאֶה

- 31:4a Does he not see my ways,  
 31:4b (And) **all my steps** count?

Job indicates God's omnipresence by indicating that He sees the paths Job has chosen but takes this idea even further by claiming that God numbers his every step, intensifying the image of an ever-watchful deity.

This type of focus corresponds to Kugel's classical definition of the thought structure of parallelism "A, what's more, B" (Berlin 1992: 64) or roughly, X (focused clause) = A (activated proposition)<sup>2</sup> (proposition squared = the meaning has intensified). This type of focusing was recorded 14 times.

3. Additive focusing, in which the activated information is updated with a nuance.

For example, Job 6:22b:

הֲכִי־אָמַרְתִּי הִבּוּ לִי  
 וּמִכֶּחֶם שִׁחַדוּ בְעַדִּי

- 6:22a Have I said "Give me!  
 6:22b (And) **from your possessions** bribe for me<sup>22</sup>"

In this example the adjunct "from your possessions" updates the previously activated proposition of Job demanding something from his friends, which is posited as a rhetorical question that continues through the second colon. With this expressive bicolon Job shows that all he wants from his friends is compassion and sympathy, nothing more. Nothing material, nothing that would decrease what they already have. He only wants what should not be so hard to give, that is understanding from his peers.

It is noteworthy that Job 6:22 was the only instance of additive focusing found in the scope of the current parameters.<sup>23</sup>

This type of focusing can be typologically defined as X (focused clause) = A (activated proposition) + B (additional information).

<sup>22</sup> Translation by the author here.

<sup>23</sup> This isolated case is still worth mentioning as, even though it falls outside of the current researched bicolon focusing, there are several examples of this in multicolon-focusing (mentioned in the second point on page 7, focusing where the first clause in the colon activates a proposition and the second clause contains the focused element).

## WHERE CAN FOCUSING BE FOUND?

Overall, bicolon focusing can be found throughout the Book of Job but two sections of the book stand out statistically. Chapters 5–7 account for 15 cases of focusing and 38–39 show six cases of bicolon focusing. In all the other chapters, the amount of focusing is between zero and two. There might be a slight temptation to assume (especially considering the amount of focusing in chapters 5 and 6) that this phenomenon might be connected to earlier layers of the Book of Job. However, we should not conclude too much from the current preliminary analysis as other forms of focusing have to be taken into consideration before allocating this stylistic device to a specific “voice” in the book. This is especially important as there are cases of focusing present in the (more or less agreed upon) oldest sections of the text, in addition to the well-defined additions (such as [sections of] chapters 28; 32–37; 40; 41).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In order to assess when and how useful it is to view poetic clauses with a marked word order from an information structure perspective it is important to first analyse the different tools and their uses that this new approach offers. From the above examples it is clear that viewing these clauses as focus structures ties them more closely together with the surrounding text and draws the reader’s/hearer’s attention to the (new or altered) meaning of the focused constituent. This allows us to observe the occurrences of focus structures alongside other literary features and to systematize them as part of the poetic profile of authors of the text.

According to scholarship on the poetic Book of Job three types of focusing in poetic texts have been established: descriptive, specifying and additive focusing. In the case of the Book of Job, the different types occur throughout the poetic text but with notable statistical differences. Further research is needed to reveal where in the text other kinds of focusing occurs and investigate how this information aides us to search for the stylistic “handwriting” of the different authors of this book.



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