PARK, G.J. — Focus Construction with *kî ʾim* in Biblical Hebrew. (Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic, 17). Penn State University Press, Eisenbrauns, University Park, PA, 2023. (23,5 cm, XVIII, 282). ISBN 978-1-64602-246-5. $ 109.95.

The central thesis of this work is that the wide range of meanings usually attributed to Biblical Hebrew *kî ʾim* can in fact be analyzed as belonging to a single pattern of usage. This pattern is characterized by (a) a negative sentence before *kî ʾim*, (b) formal identity or semantic similarity of the verb phrase before and after *kî ʾim*, and (c) contrastive focus marked by word order after *kî ʾim*. Park treats *kî* as a nominalizer, typically leaving it untranslated, and argues that *ʾim* introduces a universally elided conditional protasis. In the example of Gen 35:10 (*lōʾ yiqqārēʾ šimḵā ʿôḏ yaʿăqōḇ kî ʾim yiśrāʾēl yihyê šəmeḵā*), this leads to the analysis: 'your name shall no longer be called Jacob, if [your name is called anything], Israel, your name shall be' (throughout, brackets indicate ellipsis and not constituent boundaries). The three elements of the construction are recognizable as (a) the negation marker *lōʾ*, (b) semantic similarity of *yiqqārēʾ šimḵā* and *yihyê šəmeḵā*, and (c) fronting of *yiśrāʾēl*.

Chapter 1 sets the scene: in earlier work, *kî ʾim* has generally been treated as a frozen unit with both adversative and exceptive meaning – the difference being that the two linked clauses contradict each other only in the latter ('Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, *but* roasted…' vs. 'I will not let you go *unless* you bless me', respectively; p. 4). Park argues that the distinction is difficult to maintain, because a single instance of *kî ʾim* can have both an adversative and an exceptive meaning at the same time (Ezek 44:22; p. 15). By contrast, she proposes that *kî ʾim* is not a frozen unit but that its meaning is obtained compositionally from that of its component parts. In her analysis, *kî ʾim* has the single function of marking contrastive focus, and the distinction between adversative and exceptive is derived from context.

After this introduction, chapter 2 describes *kî* as a nominalizer, based on earlier work by the same author.[1]) This approach can economically account for various functions of *kî*: in general, *kî* can be used to mark an utterance as "dependent" on the surrounding discourse; the exact interpretation is context-dependent. While I agree with this outcome, I am not convinced the label "nominalizer" is ultimately needed or helpful for *kî*. In the typological literature on nominalization the point is made that one first needs a clear, language-particular definition of "nominal",[2]) which

[1]) Park, Grace J. 2016. 'Stand-alone nominalizations formed with *ʾăšer* and *kî* in Biblical Hebrew'. *Journal of Semitic Studies* 61(1): 41–65. https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/fgv030.

[2]) See p. 6 in Overall, Simon E., & Katarzyna I. Wojtylak. 2018. 'Nominalization in Northwest Amazonia: Introduction', *STUF – Language Typology and Universals* 71(1): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1515/stuf-2018-

Park does not provide. The argument that *kî* is a nominalizer is based on (a) the claim that nominalization already exists in Biblical Hebrew (with *ʾăšer*) and (b) the functional overlap of *kî* with nominalizers in other languages. However, at first sight it seems that *kî* clauses are "less nominal" than *ʾăšer* clauses – for instance, *ʾăšer* occurs far more frequently after prepositions, and after a wider variety of prepositions, than *kî*. Furthermore, the functional overlap is limited to areas that are commonly covered by complementizers in other languages, so it is not clear that a complementizer analysis can be set aside, or what is to be gained with a nominalization analysis. Nevertheless, the chapter is to be commended for the more precise claim that *kî* is lexically underspecified and primarily marks an utterance as related to the broader discursive context.[3])

Chapter 3 looks at *ʾim* in more detail. Some scholars have claimed that *ʾim* has lost all meaning in the *kî ʾim* construction (e.g. Brown-Driver-Briggs). However, based on a comparison with other constructions with *ʾim* where (part of) the protasis is elided, Park concludes that it "is not pleonastic … but rather is tasked with generating the focus construction … by introducing an elided conditional protasis" (p. 65). This claim is substantiated in the rest of the book.

Chapter 4, the last general chapter, defines a "full" and a "reduced" form of the *kî ʾim* construction. In the reduced form, part of the apodosis of the *ʾim*-clause is elided: *lōʾ yaʿăqōḇ yēʾāmēr ʿôḏ šimḵā kî ʾim yiśrāʾēl* 'your name shall no longer be called Jacob; if [your name is called anything], Israel, [*your name shall be called*]' (Gen 32:29) (contrast the full form in Gen 35:10 above). Park draws a useful comparison between the full form and well-known examples of parallelism, and shows that the ellipsis in the apodosis follows general, cross-linguistic principles.

The next four chapters deal with more complex instances of the *kî ʾim* pattern. Before reviewing them I would like to devote some space here to the role of ellipsis in the analysis and more general matters of argumentation. The work under review provides detailed, insightful syntactic analyses of frequently complicated passages, and the results are contextually appealing. What remains unclear to me, however, is that the suggested syntactic analysis is the *only* or *best* option, or that it is required for all newly proposed readings. I will first give an example of the latter and then circle back to questions related to ellipsis.

As mentioned above, Park makes a strong case that a distinction between "adversative" and "exceptive" *kî ʾim* cannot be maintained. From this she concludes that *kî ʾim* should not be analyzed as a unit, leading to her analysis that *kî* is a nominalizer and *ʾim* introduces an elided conditional protasis. An example of a problematic adversative reading is 2 Kgs 23:9: 'But the priests of the "high places" did not go up to the altar of Yahweh in Jerusalem, *but* they ate portions among their brethren' (§8.3.2). It is problematic because it seems to contradict Deut 18:6–8, a contradiction which can be resolved by a different syntactic analysis: 'The priests of the high places shall not go up to the altar of Yahweh in Jerusalem [under any circumstances]; if [they go up to the altar … under any circumstances], once they have eaten the unleavened bread among their brothers, [then afterwards, they will go up]'. Though indeed appealing, this reading does not depend on the elided protasis but on the addition of 'once'. We can also obtain it taking *kî ʾim* as 'except': 'they shall not go up…, *except once* they have eaten…'. In this way, several examples from the book are *compatible with* an analysis based on ellipsis, but do not provide *independent support* for it.

Coming back to the point about ellipsis, then, we should be aware that ellipsis is a rather powerful tool in the linguist's arsenal, as one may think that just about anything can be elided. Park refers to constraints on ellipsis described for Biblical Hebrew by Cynthia Miller,[4]) but allows herself some freedom in applying them. Most importantly, there is a constraint that "the elided constituent and the antecedent should be identical" (p. 86). Given this constraint, it is not clear that an object can be silently deleted from an elided verbal phrase to yield the 'anything' reading Park assumes (*lōʾ yiqqārēʾ šimḵā ʿôḏ yaʿăqōḇ kî ʾim* [*yiqqārēʾ šimḵā ~~ʿôḏ yaʿăqōḇ~~*]). The fact that 'anything' is not spelled out in Biblical Hebrew (pp. 7–13) is not enough to license this, because it is the deletion of the object from the elided constituent that is problematic. One can compare verbs which can take implicit arguments, like *eat*. Even though *John has eaten* can mean 'John has eaten something', in an elliptical site, an object is understood if possible: *Mary hasn't eaten an apple, but John has* is only true if John has eaten an apple, not if John has eaten something else: the elided constituent is *eaten an apple*, not *eaten ~~an apple~~*. Without any overt linguistic material, the language user cannot figure out that the object is to be deleted.

In some cases we have parallel examples for the assumed "full" form, which may constitute evidence for ellipsis. For instance, Park convincingly argues that when the clause following *kî ʾim* is in the suffix conjugation, it is often a precondition for an elided clause ('then afterwards, they will go up' in 2 Kgs 23:9 just discussed). The case is strengthened by the attestation of the "full" form in Lev 22:6–7 ('once he has washed…, *wəʾaḥar yōḵal* then afterwards, he shall eat…'). However, for the ellipsis most central in the analysis – that of the protasis of *ʾim* – no such parallel is attested. This raises some questions: why would the full form be so much less frequent? Do related languages provide evidence for the assumed underlying form? And are there no alternatives for the presumed underlying form? Besides "your name will not be Jacob; if [your name will be anything], Israel, your name will be", it seems to be possible to analyze these constructions with an elided apodosis as well: "your name will not be Jacob; but/only/except if Israel, your name will be, [it could be Jacob]". On this view, the conditional clause would express that the set of possible worlds in which the name is Jacob is a subset of the worlds in which the name is Israel, with the implicature that the name is only Israel. In sum, it seems that some more questions have to be answered, and

0001. The definitional issue is not trivial; cf. Shibatani, Masayoshi. 2019. 'What is nominalization? Towards the theoretical foundations of nominalization'. In Roberto Zariquiey, Masayoshi Shibatani, and David W. Fleck (eds.), *Nominalization in Languages of the Americas*, 15–167. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/tsl.124.02shi.

[3]) I present a similar treatment based on the traditional analysis of *kî* as a complementizer in chapter 4 of Staps, Camil. 2024. *The persistence of space: Formalizing the polysemy of spatial relations in functional elements*. Leiden University dissertation. https://doi.org/10.48273/LOT0673.

[4]) Miller, Cynthia L. 2007. 'Constraints on ellipsis in Biblical Hebrew'. In Cynthia L. Miller (ed.), *Studies in Semitic and Afroasiatic linguistics presented to Gene B. Gragg*, 165–180. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

alternatives considered, before Park's elided protasis analysis can be considered not only a possible but also the most probable analysis.

The fact that the assumed-elided protasis is never spelled out is interesting. Assuming that this is not to be chalked up to historical accident, there are two options. First, the protasis may never have been spelled out at any stage of the language. But if so, is the presumed underlying form anything else than a theoretical construct to explain the semantics of the construction (which is then more accurately described as carrying an implicature)? Alternatively, it may be that the protasis was spelled out in an earlier stage of the language but is now always elided. However, would this not speak in favor of a grammaticalization analysis, under which *kî ʾim* constructions were not only shortened by ellipsis but may also have acquired new meanings? This would essentially lead to a "frozen unit" analysis for which the underspecified adversative-exceptive meaning can be historically explained by ellipsis, without requiring to fit every instance into the straightjacket of the assumed underlying form. The ellipsis analysis may still be correct, but on a diachronic rather than a synchronic level, explaining the grammaticalization path of *kî ʾim*. The option of grammaticalization may have been set aside too easily.

One might also see grounds for a grammaticalization analysis in chapter 5, which deals with cases of right dislocation after *kî ʾim*, such as Jer 9:23: *bəzōṯ yiṯhallēl hammiṯhallēl haśkēl wəyāḏōaʿ ʾōṯî* 'in *this*$_1$ the one who glories shall glory: *understanding and knowing me*$_1$' (subscripts indicate coreferentiality). According to Park, right dislocation is also an option in reduced *kî ʾim* constructions, in which case the resumptive element ('this' in Jer 9:23) is elided together with the verb. Thus, Ezek 12:23 is analyzed as follows: *wəlōʾ yimšəlû ʾōṯô ʿôḏ bəyiśrāʾēl kî ʾim* [*yimšəlû bəyiśrāʾēl*] [*ʾeṯ haddāḇār hazzê*] [*yimšəlû bəyiśrāʾēl*] *qārəḇû hayyāmim ûḏəḇar kol ḥāzôn* 'and they shall not say it anymore as a proverb in Israel. If [they shall say anything as a proverb in Israel], [this thing]$_1$ [they shall say as a proverb in Israel,] "the days …"$_1$'. Although this analysis reaches the contextually expected meaning, three consecutive instances of ellipsis (protasis of *ʾim*, resumptive element for right dislocation, and verb phrase in the apodosis) seems a bit of a stretch. It is also not clear why, in cases of the reduced *kî ʾim* construction with right dislocation, the resumptive element is always elided: why do we not find *kî ʾim* ***ʾeṯ haddāḇār hazzê*** *qārəḇû*…? Given that such constructions are not attested, we might also claim that *kî ʾim* has grammaticalized to a conjunction meaning something along the lines of 'but rather'. Thus, while we can reconstruct the right meaning assuming ellipsis in various places, there can be debate over whether this best reflects the underlying linguistic system.

In chapter 6, different ways to express negation before *kî ʾim* are discussed. Besides standard negation markers like *lō*', negation can also be expressed by a positive rhetorical question (which has the same illocutionary force as a negative assertion), or by a negation embedded in a positive matrix clause (e.g. 2 Kgs 5:15: '*I know that* there is *no* God anywhere on earth; if [there is God anywhere on earth], in Israel [there is God]'; p. 138, emphasis added). For rhetorical questions introduced by *ʾim*, Park proposes a new analysis of the use of *ʾim* and *kōh yaʿăśê ʾĕlohîm wəḵōh yôsipū* 'thus may God do and thus he may add' in oaths: *kōh* does not refer to some negative action that God may perform, but rather to the content of the oath, for which God is invoked to ensure that it will happen. Thus, in 1 Sam 14:44, God is asked to ensure that Jonathan will die: 'Thus$_1$ may God do and more, [*kî môṯ tāmûṯ yônāṯān* you will certainly die, Jonathan!]$_1$'. The reversed polarity in oaths with *ʾim* then arises from an interpretation of the *ʾim*-clause as a rhetorical question: 'Thus$_1$ may God do for me and more, [will the head of Elisha … stay on his shoulders…?]$_1$' (2 Kgs 6:31). I remain unconvinced by this new analysis of the oath formula,[5]) but ultimately it does not seem to be necessary for the treatment of *kî ʾim*, which only relies on the interpretation of preceding *ʾim*-clauses as rhetorical questions – an interpretation that can be justified independently.

As the examples become more complex, the book also begins to deal with cases on which commentators have disagreed, which allows Park to highlight the importance of careful syntactic analysis for exegesis and textual criticism. A great example comes from chapter 7, which deals with cases of the *kî ʾim* pattern with coordination after *kî ʾim*, such as Deut 12:13–14: '… do not offer your burnt-offerings at any place … if [you offer anywhere], at the place that Yahweh will choose in one of your tribes, *there*, you shall offer your burnt-offerings *and there*, you shall do everything I command you'. Recognizing this pattern, Park is able to provide a new and convincing reading of Ezek 44:9b–16, a passage important for the relative dating of Ezekiel and the Priestly source. In this reading, Ezekiel alludes to P rather than the other way around, so that P does not need to be written after Ezekiel.

Chapter 8 deals with cases where *kî ʾim* is followed by a precondition (such as 2 Kgs 23:9 and Lev 22:6–7, both discussed above). Again, the recognition of recurring syntactic constructions (in particular, the use of the suffix conjugation after *kî ʾim*) enables Park to make objective decisions about the scope of conditional protases and apodoses, leading to contextually suitable readings where previous commentators have been unable to reach agreement.

The final chapters discuss passages that do not exactly fit the *kî ʾim* pattern as defined by Park. Chapter 9 analyzes 38 passages in which *kî* is followed by *ʾim*, but where one of the three criteria is not met. Park shows that these cases can still be described using individual components of her analysis, such as stand-alone nominalization with *kî*, ellipsis after *ʾim*, or *ʾim*-clauses as rhetorical questions. Chapter 10 follows with passages that do display negation and marked word order, but where the negated clause is joined to the next either by *kî* without *ʾim* or by nothing at all. Park suggests that these may still be analyzed as belonging to the same construction, with *ʾim* or *kî ʾim* elided. We thus get examples

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[5]) A key example is 1 Sam 17:25–27: 'The Israelites said, "… If there is a man who kills him (Goliath), [the king will greatly enrich him…]$_1$" David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine…?" The people answered him as follows: "*Kōh* Thus$_1$ shall it be done to the man who kills him."' Based on such examples, Park argues that we should not assume an implicit negative referent for *kōh*, but should look in the immediate context for a suitable referent. In my view, however, 1 Sam 17:27 is a very clear example of a case where *kōh* must have a referent outside the text. It cannot refer back to the promises mentioned earlier, because David did not hear them. *Kōh* can only be understood if accompanied by some gesture illustrating these promises. This is also what is usually assumed for *kōh* in oaths: that it was accompanied by a gesture like slitting the throat; see p. 84 in Conklin, Blane. 2011. *Oath formulas in Biblical Hebrew*. Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 5. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

such as *gam ʾattâ lōʾ ṯāḇōʾ šām* [*kî ʾim yāḇōʾ šām*] *yəhôšuaʿ … hûʾ yāḇōʾ šāmmāḥ* ‘You also shall not enter there. [If anyone enters there,] Joshua…, he shall enter there’ (Deut 1:37–38). Though the contrastive word order in the second part is clearly worth pointing out, I am not sure that passages such as this require an analysis based on ellipsis of a *kî ʾim* construction, as they are perfectly understandable as they are: the word order in the second clause sets up the contrast with the first clause, which does not need to be marked otherwise. In my view, this is another case where ellipsis may be possible, but is not necessarily probable.

Concluding, this monograph provides a detailed descriptive overview of the *kî ʾim* pattern. The precise, data-driven approach, with a comprehensive appendix at the end of the book, is to be commended. There can be discussion about the exact syntactic analysis, but this does not detract from the claim that a large number of instances of *kî ʾim* fit the same syntactic blueprint and should be interpreted in the same way. The careful case-by-case description of at times complicated examples once again proves the value of linguistic analysis for exegesis and textual criticism.

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