

Martin Staszak

# The Preposition Min

Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament

Kohlhammer

**Kohlhammer**

**Beiträge zur Wissenschaft  
vom Alten und Neuen Testament**

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# The Preposition Min

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# Abbreviations

Allqu	Allquantifying
ePP	enclitic Personal Pronoun
inf	infinitive
pers	person
pl	plural
ptc	participle
sg	singular

Within the sentence structure of BH<sup>t</sup>:

a, b, c	sentences within the same verse
aI	infinitive depending on sentence a
aP	pendens construction with matrix set a
aR	relative clause depending on sentence a

At the beginning of a word, the letters *bgdkpt* are written without a dagesh.

# Preface

The idea for the present study on the preposition  $\eta$  arose during a discussion about E. Jenni's three well known basic volumes dealing with the prepositions *Beth*, *Kaph* and *Lamed*. It quickly became clear that a further study of the third most common preposition in Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic was a scholarly desideratum, especially because Jenni's last volume was published almost a quarter of a century ago.

This study is presented here, naturally in the knowledge that, given the wealth and complexity of the text material, it must necessarily remain incomplete and flawed. Nevertheless, it is my hope that it will advance linguistic research on the Old Testament and will also help to clarify a number of linguistic doubts in order to enable better translations and interpretations. Anyone familiar with ancient Hebrew grammar will quickly recognise that some new paths are being taken: The polysemous network that forms  $\eta$  is systematically presented, the system of Hebrew prepositions is expanded to include a new overall theory and the question of the logical subject in passive sentences is answered in a new way.

I owe my sincere thanks to my colleagues Christian Frevel (Bochum), Erasmus Gaß (Augsburg), Holger Gzella (München), Adrian Schenker (Fribourg) and Camil Staps, PhD candidate (Leiden) for their valuable advices and suggestions for corrections. C. Staps provided me with his as yet unpublished dissertation and gave me the DOI-reference to the article he had written with Martijn Beukenhorst. Vladimir Olivero (Oxford, Harvard) made a chapter of his as yet unpublished doctoral thesis available to me, which deals with the question of assimilation of  $\eta$  (1.2.1). Jón A. Sigurvinsson (Reykjavík) provided me with the access to his yet unprinted doctoral thesis.

I would also like to thank the Dominican Convents in Toronto and Ottawa, where I was able to spend two months of intensive work on the book in 2022. I would also like to thank the staff of the Canadian libraries, especially of the John M. Kelly Library in Toronto, who were always on hand with help and advice to make my work easier.

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Martin Staszak OP, Jerusalem





# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 *Prepositional groups and their semantics*

### 1.1.1 The basic structure of prepositional groups

Before we consider the preposition מן (*min*) more specifically some remarks on the basic pattern of clauses containing a preposition are necessary. The considerations, however, will keep in mind that we are dealing with the semantics and the communicative functions of the preposition, not with all its syntactical issues.<sup>1</sup> We first take up the systematisation as established by E. Jenni.<sup>2</sup> Following his explanations, the basic pattern for prepositional expressions is:

$$X - r - Y$$

The letter “r” stands for “relation” expressed by a preposition, X and Y are the two correlatives. We can precise that r - Y is the prepositional group, formed by the preposition and a noun or pronoun, which may also be a nominalised infinitive. The correlative X, however, is much more variable:

Jg 13,2: “There was a man of Zorah” (וַיְהִי - מִצֹרָחָה) which functions like a nominal clause, וַיְהִי just indicating past tense.

Gn 2,9: “Yahweh God caused to grow from the soil every kind of tree”. In this case, the correlative X represents a whole verbal clause: וַיִּצְמַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים - כָּל-עֵץ; the correlative Y is formed by the prepositional group מִן-הָאֲדָמָה, placed between the first syntagm (the subject) and the second one (object).

To avoid incomprehensible or senseless clauses both correlatives, X and Y, should not be identical: \*“Yahweh God caused to grow from the soil every kind of soil”. On the other hand, they should not be completely different either: \*“There was a tree of Zorah”. To obtain well-shaped sentences, indispensably, the correlatives must have at least one semantic feature in common, at least one must be different.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, it is necessary to take into consideration both correlatives (the syntagmatic relation or word combination).<sup>4</sup> If we compare our example Gn 2,9 (“Yahweh God caused to grow from the soil every kind of tree”) with 2,7

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<sup>1</sup> For this reason we will not outline the very interesting approach by R. W. LANGACKER 2008, 117, 122, 420. He shows that prepositions and prepositional groups can have adverbial uses specifying a verbal clause: “Escape from Babylon”, Jr 51,6 (נוס מן), the prepositional group specifies the verb in an adverbial sense. Conversely, adverbs and connecting particles may function like prepositions.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. JENNI 1992, 11–39.

<sup>3</sup> E. JENNI 1992, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. St. L. SHEAD 2011, 22.

(“Yahweh God shaped man – (as) soil of the ground”), we notice that the Y correlative both times has an identical wording: מִן־הָאֲדָמָה. The prepositional group, however, has to be noted in two different categories. In Gn 2,7 the ground represents the material from which man is taken and shaped. Here, we have to do with a realisation marked by the preposition מִן; the ground is, so to speak, the resource of God’s shaping man. The difference to Gn 2,9 is obvious because in this sentence, the Y correlative designs the local origin and the carrier of the trees.

On the other hand, the ground/ soil is well distinguished from a city or village. The מִן־הָאֲדָמָה marks a space in a general sense, not a locality that can be described geographically. In both cases, Gn 2,7,9, the expression מִן־הָאֲדָמָה represents already a transfer of the original local meaning and function of the preposition מִן. We will explain the transfers further down.

### 1.1.2 The preposition מִן and its meaning compared to the Hebrew basic prepositions

We can assume that the prepositions represent paradigmatic sense relations. This means that everyone of them has a meaning and function that cannot be replaced by another because “a different choice at a particular point would alter the meaning of the sentence”.<sup>5</sup> The basic prepositions as expressions of the most general relations between the correlatives are complementary to each other: a choice is made which relation is aimed, the relations are not interchangeable. On the other hand, there must be a relation; it is not possible that any relation between them would be absent.<sup>6</sup>

In this system, the prepositions כּ and ל mark the difference between unitive and diversive relations: the preposition כּ identifies the two correlatives X and Y as regarding to place, time, action or function, according to the particular issue of the clause. The preposition ל, despite the relation it establishes between X and Y, maintains the difference between both: giver and recipient, material and product, person and social role, to name only a few examples.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the three prepositions כּ, כ and ל have the most general meanings that express identity, partial identity and difference between the correlatives. On the background of this system, מִן represents a preposition of higher specialisation introducing a

<sup>5</sup> St. L. SHEAD 2011, 15. There are slight exceptions in Hebrew: אִתּוֹ and עִמּוֹ meaning “with” with minor differences; the same is true for אֲרָא and עַד meaning “until”.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. E. JENNI 1992, 30–31.

<sup>7</sup> E. JENNI 1992, 30–31 with the complete list of semantic areas. The preposition כּ expresses a partial identity, respectively a partial dissimilarity, cf. E. JENNI 1992, 37–39 and E. JENNI 1994, 11–12.

directional axis that indicates a separation of X from Y.<sup>8</sup> However, this classification has to be specified. As we will see below, there are a couple of interchanges between  $\aleph$  and  $\beth$  and  $\daleth$ , even in Biblical Hebrew,  $\beth$  and  $\daleth$  also expressing distinction/separation. This use of the prepositions shows analogies to the Ugaitic system which did not know a preposition similar to  $\aleph$ .

If originally the meaning and function of  $\aleph$  was neutralised by northwest-semitic *b* and *l* (for Eblaite *mi-nu* see 1.2.1), then our preposition, as a new element, has to be defined in contrast with *b* and *l* and is, so to speak, the “cancellation” or, better, the overstepping of their functions in a given clause and the reaching of a new level. Defining  $\aleph$  as preposition that expresses a directional axis would not be sufficient, although it is an important function of it.<sup>9</sup> Rather,  $\aleph$  expresses what distinguishes X from Y, insofar one is the origin or base of the other. Thus, two correlatives that, in another context, are equalised (“A man in Zorah”) are now distinguished from each other: “A man from Zorah” designating his origin, regardless if, at this moment, he is in Zorah or elsewhere. While with the preposition  $\daleth$  material becomes a product (Ex 7,15: “... the staff that turned into a snake”,  $\aleph\aleph\aleph$ ), with  $\aleph$  the product comes from a material, totally or partially: Gn 2,7: “Yahweh God shaped man – (as) soil of the ground”. It is this changing of perspective that marks up our preposition. It looks, so to speak, backwards to the starting point or base from which something originates and is distinguished. However, the perspective backwards cannot be localised on a directional axis exclusively and is even not the only direction  $\aleph$  is pointing to. The comparative sense (e. g. Pr 15,16: “Better to have little ... than immense wealth”,  $\aleph$  ... טוב) has to be explained by a meaning like “X is good (gradually distinguished) from Y”. We may note that the comparative sentence contrasts with the comparison expressed by  $\beth$ : Pr 15,19 “The way of the lazy is like a thorny hedge”,  $\aleph$  reversing the comparison and partial identity for the purpose to emphasize the difference. In Gn 27,1 we would expect  $\daleth$  rather than  $\aleph$ : “his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see”,  $\aleph$ אֵת. In cases like this, the meaning is “without” or the function is negation,<sup>10</sup> difficult to explain as a directional

<sup>8</sup> Cf. E. JENNI 1992, 18. In the terminology of R. W. LANGACKER 2008, 117–118 we may speak on a complex path preposition in contrast to the simplex local prepositions.

<sup>9</sup> L. LEMMER 2014, 63, 74 and 2017, 222 argues for a “proto-scene” of the preposition indicating a double primary sense: the source of a motion and the separation of X from Y. Although the concepts are close to each other we prefer to speak on conceptualisation instead on prototypes, see 1.2.3. Introduction to and critique of the theory of semantic prototypes: D. BUSSE 2009, 50–57; J. PAFEL, I. REICH 2016, 59–63.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. E. JENNI 2007, 432: “eine separative, exkludierende oder eine Unmöglichkeit anzeigende Anwendung”. Jenni sees here, like in Ex 18,18, the transition from *min comparativum* to *min separativum* indicating an indirect comparison.

axis.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, it is preferable to interpret  $\text{מִן}$  as a preposition that marks the distinction between X and the origin or base Y which passes into static or directional meaning (in this latter case we may speak about a starting point).<sup>12</sup>

“Distinction” implies, as showed above, that equalisation, comparison or relation between X and Y are possible as well. So, not their inherent difference is noticed, but the base and origin reference between each other and the distance that results because X detaches or is detached from Y. Especially in non-privative contexts, the relation between both may continue to exist, so in 1 K 1,27: “If this order proceeded from my lord, the king ...”. Without a continued existence of relation between the order and the king Nathan’s speech would be senseless. The point is, however, that the order is represented having left the king (its origin) to achieve some purpose. The fact that  $\text{מִן}$  expresses distinction and distance from a base or starting point raises it, for a subset of its uses, to a different, vertical, level than the basic horizontal prepositions  $\text{ב}$ ,  $\text{כ}$  and  $\text{ל}$  and makes  $\text{מִן}$  a three-dimensional preposition. The coming up of three-dimensional  $\text{מִן}$  in Hebrew transforms  $\text{ב}$ ,  $\text{כ}$  and  $\text{ל}$  into horizontal prepositions, whereas Ugaritic *b* and *l* absorbed a broader, multidimensional spectrum. We may find here the explanation of its neutralisation by *b* and *l*, and of the cases of interchangeability, described above (see 1.2.1).<sup>13</sup>

Because of this double level,  $\text{מִן}$  does not belong to the basic prepositions. “Distinction” and “base/ origin reference” as path is more specific than the basic relations expressed by  $\text{ב}$ ,  $\text{כ}$  and  $\text{ל}$ , we may call it a relation of middle semantic

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<sup>11</sup> E. JENNI 1997a, 100–101 denies (against E. VOGT 1967) a static basic meaning of the preposition  $\text{מִן}$  arguing that, because of the frequent double formula “from ... to”, the basic meaning and function was directional and that a static meaning only rises if the preceding verb or noun contains already a static element. It is, however, difficult to assume this directional basic meaning if a non-directional meaning can be found inside the different categories of the polysemious preposition, even the local one. It seems that there is no static nor directional basic meaning of the preposition, but rather an even more basic meaning of distinction. If, at the next level, the preposition has a static or directional meaning depends on the cognitive concept of the speaker (cf. J. PAFEL, I. REICH 2016, 248 citing R. Jackendoff, and chapter 1.2.2). The controversy of Jenni and Vogt gets invalid.

<sup>12</sup> This means that  $\text{מִן}$  does not lose 500 times its separative meaning to accept a local one if connected with one of 40 words that express an orientation in space, as E. JENNI 2004–2007, 96–97 had argued. The difference between  $\text{מִן}$  and  $\text{תַּחַת}$  is that the latter precedes the correlative Y that, in a given moment, is over a local base, while the base X precedes the prepositional expression (r – Y). The meaning “under” or “instead of” is constitutive for  $\text{תַּחַת}$ .  $\text{מִן}$  precedes a base Y, from which X is distinct in different ways (also temporal and causal); the spatial orientation of “under” is only one of numerous possibilities and is not specific at all to  $\text{מִן}$ .

<sup>13</sup> The system of Ugaritic prepositions does not know *min* and *ʿil*, but it knows *ʿad* and *ʿal*.

specialisation. The converse equivalents<sup>14</sup> are לָא (three-dimensional) and עַד (one-dimensional and temporal, including the goal).<sup>15</sup>

We may here make some comments on the book “The Development of Biblical Hebrew Prepositions” by H. H. Hardy II, published in 2022. The author does not deal with the basic prepositions of one or two radicals. The reason for this is that “they do not provide language-internal evidence of their source” and that because of this “a complete pathway of change cannot be definitively reckoned”.<sup>16</sup> The author does research on the nouns of local orientation (e. g. מִן), called by him “Simple Prepositions”, and the “Multi-Word Prepositions” like מִן־מִן. From this it appears that the fundamental system of Hebrew prepositions is not subject of the study and that the relations between these basic prepositions do not become clear.<sup>17</sup> Instead, Hardy describes the morphosyntax and the usage of the lexemes and tries to conclude in the chapter “Grammaticalization” from the syntactic structure and the functions of the lexemes (such as “noun”, “preposition” or “adverb” of different kind) to the successive historical linguistic development of the use of the words.<sup>18</sup> This method, however, seems highly speculative and in the end short-circuited. The texts cannot produce evidence of this assumed development; the different syntactic and functional uses possibly emerged simultaneously simply because of simultaneously practical needs: language must be able to express a lot of different facts that constitute the own world. Although it must be admitted that the lexemes under discussion initially denoted parts of the body or localisations, it is hardly possible to trace such a detailed development of prepositions and adverbs after the detachment from the local primary meaning as Hardy does.

If we transfer this approach to our topic, this procedure could not explain that the privative category is strongly differentiated and by far the most extensive of all the categories of the preposition מִן throughout all stages of biblical

<sup>14</sup> “Converse” means: “X over Y” = “Y under X”, but “X not over Y” is not necessarily “X under Y”. Similarly, “X before Y” = “Y behind/ after X”, but “X not before Y” is not necessarily “X behind/ after Y”, cf. E. JENNI 1992, 30–31.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the grid in E. JENNI 1992, 18–19.

<sup>16</sup> H. H. HARDY 2022. 37.

<sup>17</sup> The three volumes by E. JENNI 1992–2000 are mentioned on three lines (213) as limited “to synchronic connections without reference to diachronic and typological developments”. HARDY does not realise that JENNI could show that the local-terminative use of ל is not the basic meaning, but a secondary development under aramaic influence (E. JENNI 1992, 21–24). As far as HARDY’s book is concerned, it must be said that to attempt to present the development of Hebrew prepositions in 200 pages is in itself an ambitious undertaking.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. H. H. HARDY 2022, 50–51 for אַחֲרַיִם: “the noun first developed into the locative preposition (BEHIND) which further was used as the ACCORDANTIVE, COMITATIVE and TEMPORAL/ADVERBIALIZER (AFTER). The CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB (THEN) likely developed from the temporal function of the preposition phrase.”

Hebrew. As deontic application dealing with a separation which should or must happen, the privative use should be the last step of successive semantic development of our preposition, whereas the local category should be at the beginning of the use of the preposition and should tend to be more strongly represented in the early layers than the deontic variant. The local nouns functioning as adverbial terms of orientation (2.19) should show a similar tendency compared to the “normal” use of  $\eta$  in the context of belonging or designing the starting point of movements, what is not the case. Furthermore, Hardy seems to be unaware of back developments, which do exist. In Hebrew Sira, the combinations of prepositions that are so characteristic of Biblical Hebrew are very rare, due to Aramaic influence. It is very probable that the use of words does not function this way, the transfers and different uses of polysemious words, and *a fortiori* prepositions, was developed long before language was written. Furthermore, syntactic developments (in the broad sense), if they can be proven, do not prove semantic or pragmatic ones, the pragmatic diversity of the use of words may come up much earlier than the corresponding developing of different forms at the grammatical level.

## 1.2 *The preposition $\eta$*

### 1.2.1 Notes on the linguistic history, etymology and morphology of the preposition $\eta$

It seems very likely that in the Ugaritic language the preposition *mn* never existed. If, as J. Tropper suggests, the Ugaritic locative also functioned as an “ablative” this locative was able to express the relationship of separation. Furthermore, the Ugaritic prepositions *b* and *l* which were not fixed at any directional sense could function as prepositions of separation.<sup>19</sup> Several studies dealt with the question. In 1976, D. G. Pardee in his doctoral thesis “The Preposition in Ugaritic”, resumed that “The preposition *b* basically indicates position ‘within the confines of’; in translation it appears most frequently as ‘in’, ‘on’, ‘from’, and ‘into’, depending on the nature of the verb and the author’s perspective.” The position ‘from which’ appears also as partitive *b*, that’s to say with the meaning ‘one/ some of’.<sup>20</sup> The Ugaritic preposition *l* may be combined with “Entfernungsverben”, transitive or intransitive ones; in this case it means “from”.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> J. TROPPER 2012, 762–763 (§ 82.22.).

<sup>20</sup> D. G. PARDEE 1976, 312. About *mn*, attested once only, see 315–316.

<sup>21</sup> K. AARTUN 1978, 40–41.

As for Biblical Hebrew, G. Schmuttermayr as one of the first authors<sup>22</sup> proved the changing of מ and מן, respectively ל and מן in several texts, so with regard to parallel text traditions as to verbs using both prepositions. According to him, there may be a choice of ambivalence or difference of aspect (Aspekt-differenz) that leads to the phenomenon that מ and ל can mean ‘in’ respectively ‘to’ and ‘from’.<sup>23</sup> The opposite, suggested by him, that in 2 S 5,13a; 13,34; Pr 20,4; 2 Ch 15,8bR מן should be מ meaning “in”, can be disproved. The polysemious character of the preposition מן is not taken sufficiently into consideration (cf. the analysis of every instance).

While the Ugaritic language does not provide the preposition *mn*, texts from Ebla seem to contain it in the form of *mi-nu/ me-nu*. Against the interpretation as a preposition, the derivation from the Akkadian *mīnu* “what” or “why” was proposed, as an alternative explanation the parallelisation with the allquantifying expression *mīnummê* “all”, “whatsoever” was mentioned either. But there seems to be evidence that Eblaite *mi-nu* in fact functions as a preposition with separative sense meaning “from”.<sup>24</sup> In this case, the linguistic history shows itself not being consistent: northwest-semitic *mi-nu* which didn’t exist in Akkadian, was not transferred from Ebla to Ugarit, but reappeared in Hebrew and Aramaic, having been completely integrated in the system of northwest-semitic languages only after the language of Ugarit.<sup>25</sup>

As to the etymology of *mn*, therefore the evidence is not very rich. As far as the archaic south-arabic language of Sabaic is concerned, “only in texts with Hiram as known or probable provenance” a preposition *mn* shows up.<sup>26</sup> The usual wording is *bn* bearing the meaning “‘from, away from’, locally and temporally”,<sup>27</sup> whereas Sabaic *b* functions as its Hebrew equivalent does.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Twelve years earlier than Schmuttermayr, N. M. SARNA 1959 described the same phenomenon in a short article.

<sup>23</sup> G. SCHMUTTERMAYR 1971, 40–51. “Aspekt-differenz” means that the point of view may be different in the case of speaker (writer) and the viewer. The first sees the point of departure of a movement, the latter the direction from where the movement comes to him.

<sup>24</sup> Examples are given by J. KRECHER 1984, M. BALDACC 1985a and 1985b. Baldacci claims a second meaning for *mi-nu* referring to “spettanza” or “property, dues”, thus bringing to mind the Akkadian word *manû*, Ugaritic *MNY* or Hebrew מנה. M. BALDACC 1985b, 107–108 also claims a temporal-causal meaning of *mi-nu* “in occasione di, per”.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. E. JENNI 1992, 11, fn. 5.

<sup>26</sup> A. F. L. BEESTON et al. 1982, 86.

<sup>27</sup> A. F. L. BEESTON 1984, 55–56 (§ 34:4).

<sup>28</sup> A. F. L. BEESTON et al. 1982, 24.



If *b* and *mn* etymologically originate from hamitosemitic *\*mb*, a specific preposition *mn* would be a secondary differentiation to compensate the neutralisation.<sup>29</sup> We may mention in passing that prepositions constitute a grammatical category on their own, realising the same function as case-inflections do in other languages.<sup>30</sup> As case-inflections are not nouns and because of the etymological reasons we mentioned above it is today untenable to explain מן as a noun or verbal noun. It is not the biliteral root of מן either meaning “separation” or something similar.<sup>31</sup>

On the assumption that the preposition is *mn*, Hebrew מן, the assimilation of the *n* to the following consonant by gemination is easy to explain, with a guttural virtual gemination takes place or, as it occurs normally, compensatory lengthening (Ersatzdehnung): the *i*-vocalisation becomes *ē*. This is the case in more than 95% of the occurrences in the Hebrew biblical texts. It is noteworthy that these phenomena almost do not exist in Aramaic.<sup>32</sup> It can, however, not be claimed that unassimilated constructions generally indicate a late stage of Hebrew language: late books use the assimilated forms, the Hebrew portions of Ezra exclusively, Esther only knows the assimilation.<sup>33</sup> Rather, Aramaic influence may be claimed, not directly connected with the question of late Hebrew. Further evidence comes from mixed cases containing a kind of contamination: Lv 1,14; 14,30a; Jos 11,21; Jg 7,23; 10,11 These occurrences contain the regular cases of unassimilated constructions before the article and unassimilated forms without article where one would expect assimilation. It is probable that the regular unassimilated forms influenced the “irregular” ones, and that we can assume Aramaisms, eventually bilingual scribes.<sup>34</sup>

Gemination and compensatory lengthening also occur with the heavy plural-suffixes: מְקַמִּים, מְקַמִּים.<sup>35</sup> An open question is the extension with the light singular-

<sup>29</sup> Cf. J. TROPPER 2012, 763 (§ 82.22.) who refers himself to A. FABER 1980, 107–110. There is, however, no proof of a mono-consonantal preposition *m* in Hebrew, as E. HABER 2009, 29 suggests. It seems that the *n*-extension belongs to the preposition from its very beginning on.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. J. LYONS 1971, 302.

<sup>31</sup> This theory was proposed by N. ZERWECK 1893, 3–6.

<sup>32</sup> The nine exceptions are: Jr 10,11; Dn 2,45; 4,22d.30d; 5,21e; 6,5; Ezr 5,11; 6,8c.14 (the unassimilated form occurs 82 times), occurrences listed in V. OLIVERO 2022, 94.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. R. REZETKO 2003, 230–231 (with further proofs, especially for Chronicles who contain 272 assimilated and 54 unassimilated constructions, mostly if preceding בּי, so that phonological issues may be important) and I. YOUNG 2003, 289.

<sup>34</sup> The occurrences are listed and analysed by V. OLIVERO 2022, 99–101 who rightly claims Aramaic influence.

<sup>35</sup> P. JOÛON, T. MURAOKA 2008, 314 (§ 103 h).

suffixes, so מִמִּי and מִמֶּנִּי. Grammarians explain the phenomenon by reduplication (*minmin* > *mimmin*)<sup>36</sup> or by *mim-man*<sup>37</sup> without giving the reason for it. A possible explanation may be that an old extension *-man*<sup>38</sup> was used to avoid an identical expression מִי which is a poetic form of the simple preposition, but could be taken as מן with the suffix of the first person singular. The same extension, then, was applied to the second and third person. It might be possible that the preposition (not noun) possesses a longer alloform like מִמֶּנִּי which appears by reduplication.<sup>39</sup>

## 1.2.2 A draft of the uses of the preposition מן – polysemy and the deontic dimension

In 1.1.2, the basic meaning of מן was identified as that of distinction in the sense of a reference to an origin, a base or starting point between X and Y, i. e. one is the base of the other, from which it is distinguished or detaches and that defines their difference. The approach we will follow is that of polysemy: a polysemic lexical item has both a central or primary functional sense and a network of distinct, though related, meanings. A single meaning is not assumed, the distinct meanings should be derived from the primary functional sense in a motivated way that is not to be mistaken for a comprehensible successive historical development.<sup>40</sup> The different meanings of polysemic מן will be presented below. The representation of the distinct meanings is organised by transfers of growing abstraction from the basic local meaning. The growing degree of abstraction then leads to the division of the non-deontic and deontic character of the transfers (1.2.2.1).

It is noteworthy that we focus on the semantics of sentences defined by the presence of one predicate, not of verses or complete texts. The reason for this is quite obvious: prepositions are particles that are repeated very often,<sup>41</sup> they may even appear more than once in one and the same sentence. As they express the

<sup>36</sup> P. JOÜON, T. MURAOKA 2008, 314 (§ 103 h).

<sup>37</sup> R. MEYER 1992, 298 (§ 87.3).

<sup>38</sup> K. AARTUN 1978, 26: “hervorhebende Partikel” in Ugaritic *k + w* and *k + m*, *k + m + t*. Cf. also E. JENNI 1994, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. E. JENNI 2013, 208–209; Jenni gives another example of this phenomenon: מִיָּמֵי (with me).

<sup>40</sup> A good overview is given by L. LEMMER 2014, 45–52. The dissertation by N. ZERWECK 1893 knows only the categories of local, temporal and partitive meanings. The privative function is part of the local category that he splits up in that of belonging, origin and realisation (“von ... her”) and in that of privative use (“von ... weg”), the latter even containing the comparative function of the preposition. It is obvious that the progresses in linguistics and semantics of the last 130 years demand another approach to the issue.

<sup>41</sup> E. JENNI 1997b, 175: The Hebrew prepositions are “eine kleine, sympathische Gruppe von Relationswörtern, die 60000mal im Alten Testament ihren Dienst tun, ...”

relation X – r – Y which might be followed in the next clause by another relation of the same structure, or be preceded by such a relation the focus on sentences is advisable. For this reason, frame semantics which deals with more or less large concepts embedding a concrete term are too wide-ranging.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, conceptualisations are inevitably involved as it appears from the transfer scheme below. For our purpose, we will apply a simplified and modified version of so called Cognitive Semantics as outlined mainly by Ronald W. Langacker from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century on.<sup>43</sup> The basic assumption is that “meaning” is not limited to the propositional content of a sentence, but always has to do with our general knowledge of the world that forms the context of our language and communication, which means that both speakers and hearers with their respective knowledge are involved. The human cognition forms out concepts, so that “meaning is identified with *conceptualisation*, broadly defined as encompassing any kind of mental experience”.<sup>44</sup>

Among the conceptualisations, image schemes are of special relevance, “described as schematised patterns of activity abstracted from everyday bodily experience, especially pertaining to vision, space, motion, and force”.<sup>45</sup> One important notion of image schemes are “highly schematic configurational concepts, e. g. contrast, boundary, change, continuity, contact, inclusion, separation, proximity, multiplicity, group, and point vs. extension.”<sup>46</sup> It is obvious that prepositions are an important element of the verbal expression of these configurational concepts. The most concrete embodiment and realisation of a concept is the spatial one.<sup>47</sup> We can refer to Langacker’s terminology using the terms trajectory (X in our scheme) and landmark (Y).<sup>48</sup> Thus, the spatial and most concrete image scheme of our preposition is that of local separation with reference to the origin; the functional complexity of any preposition, however, generates a higher level of its conceptual organisation that goes beyond the local separation

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<sup>42</sup> For an introduction to frame semantics cf. S. LÖBNER 2015, 368–375. His example is the frame of passports embedding attributes as “name”, “place of birth” etc. For our purpose it is not relevant if a sentence like “born at X” is part of a passport frame or a mythological frame talking about the birth of a goddess. What is decisive here is the local meaning of the preposition and the nature of the place (a city, heavens etc).

<sup>43</sup> For an introduction cf. R. W. LANGACKER 2003, 182–184 and J. PAFEL, I. REICH 2016, 245–250.

<sup>44</sup> R. W. LANGACKER 2007, 431 (emphasis by the author).

<sup>45</sup> R. W. LANGACKER 2008, 32.

<sup>46</sup> R. W. LANGACKER 2008, 33.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. also J. PAFEL, I. REICH 2016, 181, 248–250 and the authors they are referring to (E. LANG, R. JACKENDOFF). In the case of prepositions, they establish with E. LANG the “two-level-approach” which contains the logical-semantic structure and the cognitive level of linguistic phenomena, the last denoting our cognitive imagery of spaces and spatial objects.

<sup>48</sup> R. W. LANGACKER 2003, 190 and R. W. LANGACKER 2008, 71–73, adopted by L. LEMMER.

and includes other areas. These areas represent abstractions of the local/ material scheme, e. g. the temporal or comparative function of ׀ or its meaning “without”. An overstepping of even these abstractions are “social semantics” which, among other things, express what is not yet the fact, but should come into being, thus communicating specific interests. The method of the analysis presented in this investigation is that of Cognitive Semantics as described above and specified in the following paragraphs. The center of interest is the exact meaning and function of the preposition ׀ in a given construction. In order to make this possible, the X- or Y-side must be taken into account as a constitutive semantic element, depending on the category within the polysemous system.<sup>49</sup>

Bearing this in mind we can here already add as aside the observation that Cognitive semantics have an impact even on the valence of verbs. The verb ׀ (to flee) should be defined neither as a verb with two valences (a person *p* flees either from or to the place *l*) nor as a verb of three valences (a person *p* flees from place *l*<sub>1</sub> to place *l*<sub>2</sub>) assuming deletion if one valence is missing. Probably, the verb does not know such a hard and fast rule of its valences. Rather, they form a flexible system depending on which concrete image scheme is meant: the starting point or the destination of a flight or both together.<sup>50</sup> In this case, however, the concrete sentence has to be exceeded and the broader context becomes decisive.

#### 1.2.2.1 *The deontic dimension*

The classification of a prepositional clause with ׀ as privative is based, as shown later on, on the question if an object should belong to an entity or not; the pure removal from such an entity may be local indicating merely a motion that is natural. When language is used and analysed, not only the semantic conditions of objective knowledge are implied, but also fundamental epistemic elements and structures which mould our understanding, influence it and have a deontic effect. By this deontic effect, not only what already is and exists, but also what should happen and be done is expressed.<sup>51</sup> This conceptualisation, then, oversteps the understanding of our preposition as a local pattern with growing degrees of abstraction inside a purely spatial concept and ties together semantic and deontic categories of social communication.

It is, however, not possible to analyse every prepositional construction found in our texts along this criterion. The chapters (basic function, parallelisation and the transfers) may only be briefly characterised here: first of all, the strongest expression of separation, the privative transfer, expresses the deontic

<sup>49</sup> The local, temporal, and realisation categories consider mainly the Y-side; the comparative, partitive and privative categories the X-side, cf. 9.2.

<sup>50</sup> Because this statement contradicts the usual theories it needs further examination and deserves a monograph on its own. The problem can only be signalled, but it shows a certain analogy with the local and directional double function of ׀.

<sup>51</sup> For a general introduction to the problem cf. D. BUSSE 2009, 125–126, 130.

dimension, as explained above. On the other hand, the local, temporal and partitive use and that of realisation of the preposition  $\eta$  clearly show a more objective, non-deontic tendency, though deontic expressions are possible as well; cf. for realisation Ne 5,12: “We shall claim nothing more from them” (with the verb  $\psi$   $\eta$  D as negated cohortative). The comparative constructions, however, are on the border between deontic and non-deontic, depending on the comparator: their graduation of qualities and use by wisdom literature (“better X than Y”) make them partial deontic in a structural way; expressions of differences in size and quantity rather state facts and are non-deontic.

The described structure then explains the astonishing observation that the privative category is the most extensive and elaborated of all. Not only the separation plays an important part (which may be merely local), but also the deontic notion that, according to the actor’s intention, a “wrong” localisation or belonging is corrected in some way. The spatial conceptualisation of prepositional constructions is used by language to express deontic contents as well, and it shows up that use is made largely of this figurative function. However, this fact contradicts the assumption of a successive historical development, which is also supposed to be verifiable. As already seen, the verbs bear the distinctive meaning and signalize the deontic function.

The social impact is obvious: communication beyond mere facts is established to influence the addressees and to guide their acting.<sup>52</sup> This conceptualisation, however, organises the chapters of the semantic analysis only in a very general way and is not the principle of internal classification inside the chapters. The reason for this is that the semantic categorisation as basic structure provides the most precise and detailed informations about the meaning of the prepositional clauses under examination and serves the best to text interpretation. The introductions to the chapters and the evaluation at the end of the book will precise the implications which result from the combination of semantics and the deontic or non-deontic nature of the clauses.

#### 1.2.2.2 *The spatial level and the semantic-functional pattern*

The non-deontic cluster as set out in 1.2.2 contains the local meaning, that of parallelisation (the temporal sense) to the basic local function, and two transfers

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<sup>52</sup> This system is clearly distinguished from L. LEMMER 2014, 62-68, 114-115 and 2017. She assumes two elements of the proto-scene: source and separation. For each one she establishes a cluster of distinct meanings. The objection is that certainly the local or spatial sense is the basic one, but that the primary sense is broader (distinction), so that it is able to include the other meanings (the parallelisation and the transfers). Secondly, any source includes the idea of separation from it. If not, the source by definition is not a source. Thirdly, the different meanings inside the two clusters are not organised among each other but stay unrelated. This goes back to the fact that in Lemmer’s monograph  $\eta$  is not related to the basic prepositions. The system of growing degrees has the advantage of an internal logic which strengthens the reconstructed primary sense of the preposition.

derived from the local function; the transfers follow the logic of a growing degree of distinction of X from Y inside a spatial conceptualisation which is expressed by the preposition. The growing degrees describe the motivated way by which the distinct meanings derive from the primary sense constituting an extension.

We can now present the pattern of the uses of the preposition.

The fact that מִן partly oversteps the three basic prepositions in the three-dimensional sense causes a bright array of uses. The function between the correlatives X and Y is that of distinction (origin, starting point, base), the basic function, as in the case of almost all prepositions, is an orientational one. That is to say that, first, localisation in a broad sense should be considered: “from Zorah”, “from the soil”, “from my lord, the king”. On the basis of these examples, we can see different degrees of the local function of our preposition. A city, a space, a person is the origin of a subject or object. Although these origins are not equal they can be all localised. In the spatial system, the local function is paralleled by a temporal one, Is 46,3b: מִן־בֶּטֶן, “since the womb = from the womb on”.<sup>53</sup> The draft of the non-deontic spatial uses of our preposition works on the basis of two transfers with an increasing degree of abstraction from the actual local meaning.<sup>54</sup> . Transfers 3 and 4 mark the transition into the deontic dimension. Though the spatial nature of the preposition מִן is maintained it is, at the same time, modified to a degree that it goes beyond of spatial conceptualisation and its abstractions. To speak about four transfers only makes sense if the transition from the non-deontic to the deontic dimension is not ignored.

The overall pattern is as follows:

#### A. Non-deontic dimension

Basic function: local (category 2) → → parallelisation: temporal (category 3)



Transfer 1 (low degree of distinction): realisation (category 4)

- a) materials, tools, instrumental expressions
- b) causality, origin, subjects of passive clauses.

Transfer 2 (high degree of distinction): partitive (category 5)  
formation of subsets from a total quantity.

<sup>53</sup> J. LYONS 1971, 298-299; E. JENNI 1992, 17.

<sup>54</sup> For transfers or extensions as an effect of polysemy see also H. H. HOCK, B. D. JOSEPH 2019, 191-193.