

On Emphasis and Exegesis

Pied-Piping, Word Order, and Focus in Ancient Hebrew

John Screnock

ORCID: 0000-0003-2965-9522

Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, UK

john.screnock@wycliffe.ox.ac.uk

Abstract

Pied-piping occurs when a syntactic constituent is moved to the front of a clause for a particular purpose, and other constituents are moved along with it—not because they too are targets of the purpose of movement, but because they are part of the same larger constituent. Pied-piping occurs frequently in ancient Hebrew, including in questions and in focus-fronting. This essay explores the latter, with an aim to showing that pied-piping impacts how we read and interpret the text when focus-fronting is involved. Interpreters must consider which part of a focus-fronted phrase (including, potentially, the entire phrase) is in focus, rather than taking for granted that the entire phrase is in focus.

Keywords

Pied-piping, focus-fronting, emphasis, exegesis, interpretation, Hebrew language

This essay has two modest aims, with both Hebrew linguists and scholars of the Hebrew Bible in mind as my audience. The first aim is to demonstrate that the phenomenon known as “pied-piping” occurs in ancient Hebrew. The second is to show that this phenomenon impacts how we read and interpret the text when focus-fronting is involved.

Pied-piping occurs when a syntactic constituent¹ is moved to the front of a clause for a particular purpose, and *other constituents are moved along with it*—not because they too are targets of the purpose of movement, but because they are part of the same larger constituent that encapsulates them. Pied-piping occurs throughout the world’s languages. Inasmuch as it affects our interpretation of *focus*, pied-piping has an impact on how we read and understand ancient Hebrew texts. Because of pied-piping, interpreters must ask themselves which part of a focus-fronted constituent is in focus, rather than taking the entire constituent as being in focus. This distinction is inchoate in a few places in the scholarly literature,² but to my knowledge has not yet been articulated fully or described in the case of ancient Hebrew.

A principle frequently taught in Hebrew classes, and drawn upon by interpreters of the Hebrew Bible, is that a phrase can be placed at the start of a clause to indicate “emphasis.”³ While this principle offers a useful beginning point, fluency in ancient Hebrew and the interpretation of Hebrew texts requires a more refined understanding of the notion of “emphasis”; from the perspective of linguistics, the concepts of *focus* and *topic* are preferable.⁴ Moreover, when a phrase is found at the beginning of a clause for focus, it is not necessarily the case that the entire phrase is in focus; rather, it is frequently true that just a

¹ For the concept of *constituency*, see Screnock and Holmstedt, *Esther*, 2–3; a constituent is an element of language at some level, whether small or large—roughly equivalent to a “phrase” or “word.”

² For example, van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §47.2.1(2)(a), example *b* reflects the understanding that just part of a fronted phrase can be in focus. Robert Holmstedt refers to “the fronted phrase—or a constituent *within* the phrase” (emphasis original) as being in focus; Holmstedt, “Critical at the Margins,” 126. Elsewhere (idem, *Ruth*), Holmstedt often considers whether one particular part or another of a fronted phrase, rather than the entire phrase, is in focus.

³ E.g., Gesenius and Kautzsch, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, §142a; Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, 93; Smith and Bloch-Smith, *Judges 1*, 84, 152, 322, 475–476, 486, 500, 525, 534, 684. Similarly, Ross, *Introducing Biblical Hebrew*, 417, using the term “prominence” instead of “emphasis.”

⁴ See, e.g., van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §47; and Holmstedt, “Critical at the Margins.”

part of the phrase is in focus, because of pied-piping. In short, when exegetes of the text encounter a fronted phrase and determine that the purpose is to provide focus, they must ask whether the entire phrase or just part of the phrase is in focus.

A trio of phenomena are in view in this essay: word order, focus, and pied-piping. The three are related, but distinct. Languages—including ancient Hebrew—can put focus on constituents without fronting them. Word order variations can occur that have nothing to do with focus. And pied-piping does not necessarily occur when a phrase is fronted—whether for focus or another reason. As such, I begin by treating pied-piping (§1), word order (§2), and focus (also §2) individually. I then concentrate the discussion on the specific phenomenon of focus-fronting induced pied-piping in ancient Hebrew, with considerations of the potential impact on interpretation (§3).

1 Pied-Piping

Pied-piping is a cross-linguistically attested phenomenon. The term refers to cases where constituents undergo movement⁵ and bring a larger constituent, to which they belong, with them to the front of the clause.⁶ In the preceding sentence, for example, I have written “to which they belong” instead of “which they belong to.” Although it is the relative pronoun “which” that requires movement to the front of the relative clause,⁷ the preposition “to”

⁵ It should be noted here that I follow generative (or “Chomskyan”) linguistics as my theoretical framework for understanding and analyzing language; on generative linguistics, see Crystal, *A Dictionary*, 75–76; and Smith and Allott, *Chomsky*, 7–127. The idea of movement is part of the viewpoint that language “generates” through various stages (thus the term *generative*).

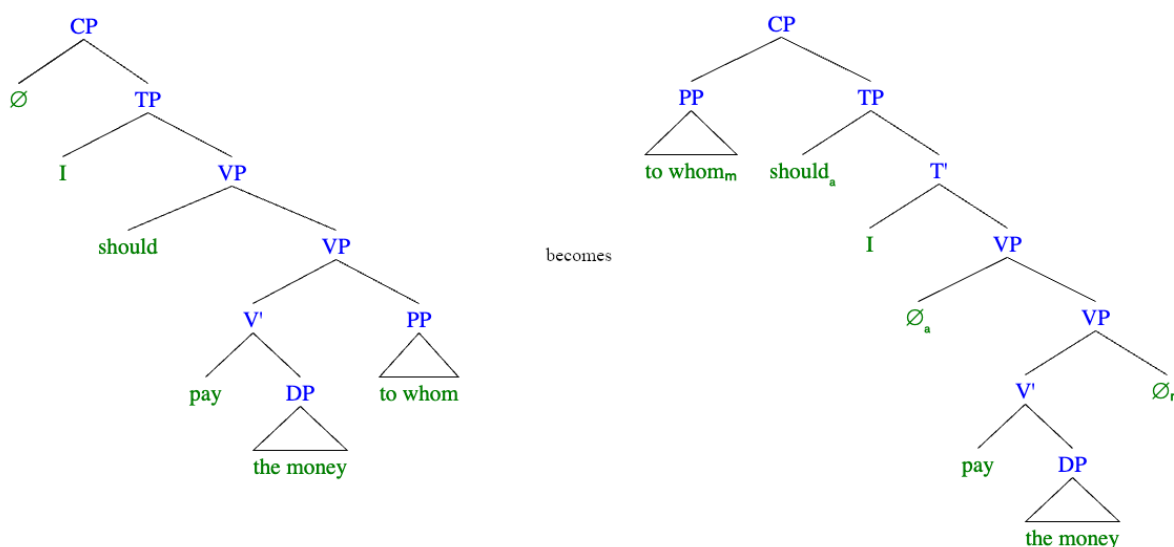
⁶ See Cable, “Pied-Piping,” 816: pied-piping is “a movement operation that usually targets expressions of a particular type (e.g., *wh*- words) instead targets a phrase that *contains* an expression of that type.” See also Crystal, *A Dictionary*, 369.

⁷ Carnie, *Syntax*, 318–326.

moves along with it. In contemporary English, pied-piping can occur in this context, but is optional—the alternative phrase *which they belong to* is grammatical.⁸

English questions provide clear examples of pied-piping:

(1) To whom should I pay the money?



In (1), the question word “whom” is moved from the end of the clause (at a deeper level within the internal VP [Verb Phrase] *pay the money to whom*) to the front of the clause at a much higher position.⁹ English requires a constituent to move to the start of the clause to indicate a question.¹⁰ The preposition *to*, however, moves along with the question word *whom* to the front of the clause. This sense of one element *following* another is what prompted linguists to name the phenomenon “pied-piping,” after the fairytale of the Pied Piper.¹¹ To be clear, some constituents move to the front of the clause without taking the

⁸ By “grammatical” I do not mean from the perspective of *prescriptive* or standardized grammar—as reflected, e.g., in the grammar check feature of a word processor; rather, I mean from the perspective of native language speakers and their grammaticality judgments. Cf. Crystal, *A Dictionary*, 219; Carnie, *Syntax*, 12–13; and Smith and Allott, *Chomsky*, 35–38.

⁹ For the movement of the auxiliary verb *should*, see Carnie, *Syntax*, 320.

¹⁰ Compare *yes-no* questions in English, where the auxiliary verb precedes the subject. E.g., **Do you know that person?**

¹¹ Crystal, *A Dictionary*, 369.

larger constituent(s) to which they belong with them. Much of the current discussion in linguistics around pied-piping focuses on why some constituents require pied-piping and other do not.¹²

As in modern English, ancient Hebrew questions often involve pied-piping.¹³

(2) Num 22:32

עַל־מָה הַכִּיתָ אֶת־אֲתֹנֶךָ

For what [reason] have you struck your donkey?

(3) Gen 24:47

בִּתְּמִי אַתָּה

Whose daughter are you?

(4) 1 Sam 12:3¹⁴

מִי־דָמִי לְקַחְתִּי כֶּפֶר

From whose hand have I taken a bribe?

In (2), the question word *מָה* moves to the front of the clause, taking the preposition *עַל* with it; *מָה* is part of the prepositional phrase (PP) headed by *עַל*,¹⁵ and cannot move to the start of

¹² Cable, “Pied-Piping,” 817–818; and see *ibid.*, 819–829, for summaries of two more recent proposals of the inner-workings of pied-piping.

¹³ In contrast to languages with relative pronouns (like English), pied-piping does *not* occur with relative clauses in ancient Hebrew, which uses uninflected relative particles rather than relative pronouns; Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 155–156. On content questions (WH-questions) in ancient Hebrew generally, cf. van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §42.3, who describe the question word as “introducing” the sentence but do not describe this position in the clause in terms of constituent movement.

¹⁴ And see the four further cases of pied-piping in questions in the rest of this verse.

¹⁵ See also the numerous cases of other prepositions with *מָה* at the start of a question; van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §42.3.7; *BDB*, s. v. *מָה*. While one might argue that such expressions—*לְמָה* in particular—are lexicalized and no longer

the clause without taking the PP that contains it, entailing that *עַל* also move to the front. In (3), the question word *מִי* brings the larger noun phrase (NP) to which it belongs (*בֵּית־מִי*), entailing that *בֵּית* also moves to the front. In (4), *מִי* brings the larger NP to which it belongs (*יָד־מִי*) and the larger PP to which that NP belongs (*מִיָּד מִי*), entailing that both the preposition *מִן* and the noun *יָד* also move to the front. In all these cases, the syntactic structure of the Hebrew is similar to that of English,¹⁶ as in example (5) above.

The words *עַל*, *בֵּית*, *מִן*, and *יָד* do not move to fulfill the requirement for a question-word at the top of the structure of the clause; the reason they move is because they belong to phrases that include *מִי* and *מִיָּד*, which *do* need to move to the front of the clause to fulfill the requirement for a question-word. This is the essence of pied-piping.

2 Word Order and Focus

Scholars are divided on whether basic word order in ancient Hebrew was Verb–Subject (VS) or Subject–Verb (SV).¹⁷ However, most agree that in verbal clauses constituents can be

constitute PPs, there can be no doubt that they derive historically from the use of *מִיָּד* in a PP at the start of the clause. Whether or not these phrases remain PPs or have become individual lexemes, then, we see evidence of pied-piping (i.e., if not synchronically, then historically). In any case, most grammars and lexicons treat phrases like *עַל־מִיָּד* as PPs; see, e.g., Gesenius and Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, §§37e and 102k, l; the opposing view is reflected, e.g., in Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction*, §18.1. For *לְמִיָּד* in particular, *DCH* gives *לְמִיָּד* its own entry, whereas *BDB* and *HALOT* include *לְמִיָּד* alongside other PPs with *מִיָּד* within the entry on *מִיָּד*.

¹⁶ It should be noted that this requirement for a question-word at the start of the clause is by no means unique to English and Hebrew, being attested in languages throughout the world.

¹⁷ For the former view, see, e.g., Ewald, *Syntax*, §306b; Gesenius and Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, §142a; Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 30; Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction*, §8.3b; Rosenbaum, *Word-Order Variation*, 26–61; Moshavi, *Word Order*, 7–17. For the latter view, see, e.g., Joüon, *Grammaire de L'Hebreu Biblique*, §155k; Holmstedt, “Word Order in the Book of Proverbs”; Holmstedt, “Word Order and Information Structure in Ruth and Jonah”; Screnock and Holmstedt, *Esther*, 7–8.

fronted—placed ahead of the verb and the subject—to accomplish something having to do with the meaning of the sentence. Moreover, in the case of copular clauses, including those without explicit verbs (often called “nominal” or “verbless”), scholars agree that Subject–Predicate order is unmarked, and that constituents from the predicate can be fronted for some semantic effect.¹⁸ Take, for example, Deut 5:13–14:

(5) Deut 5:13–14a

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלֹאכֶתְךָ יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

For six days you should work and do all your work, but the seventh day should be a sabbath to YHWH your God.

The noun phrase (NP) שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים appears before the verb תַּעֲבֹד; though this is not ungrammatical, it is marked. Common purposes assigned to constituent fronting include “emphasis” (and related concepts; see below) and the introduction of background information.¹⁹ The plausibility of the latter is not in view here;²⁰ I instead focus on the former.

Among exegetes,²¹ the traditional interpretation of fronting in cases like example (5) is that the fronted constituents are “emphasized”—they are particularly important or salient.

¹⁸ E.g., Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §154f; van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §§46.2, 47.3; Buth, “Word Order,” esp. 87–106; Moshavi, *Word Order*, 17.

¹⁹ Ewald, *Syntax*, §306c, §309a; GKC §142; Davidson, *Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, §105; Gibson, *Davidson’s Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, §133; Muraoka, *Emphatic Words*, 32–33; Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §155nb, p; Longacre, *Joseph*, 62–118.

²⁰ The idea that changes in word order can signal shifts from foreground (or “online”) information and background (or “offline”) information seems implausible to me—there are simply too many obvious exceptions to the manner in which it supposedly works. Instead, I view shifts from foreground to background to be largely contextually signaled and perceived, involving many elements of language in tandem. Contemporary English makes use of foreground and background, for example, without syntactical signaling for shifts between the two.

²¹ See footnote 3.

In context within Deut 5, this entails that the days of the week on which one may work or not work are front and center in the audience’s attention, with a contrast implied: *yes* to work on days one through six, *no* to work on day seven.

From the perspective of generative linguistics, the placement of fronted phrases at the start of the clause involves movement—similar to the English and Hebrew questions analyzed in §1. Fronted phrases initially belong in a lower (and later) position in the clause, but have moved to a higher (and earlier) position.²²

The idea of “emphasis” is serviceable, and results in an adequate description of how the text of example (5) above utilizes word order. However, scholarship on *information structure* from the field of linguistics can bring more precision to our understanding. Drawing on the work of Louise McNally, Enric Vallduví and Maria Vilkkuna, and Jeanette Gundel, Robert Holmstedt identifies *focus* and *topic* as the two pragmatic-semantic functions of fronting in ancient Hebrew.²³ Topic flags for the audience that a new *theme*—the “known, active entity within the discourse” about which something is said—is in view.²⁴ Focus picks out an expression and sets that expression in the context of a larger set that contains the expression *and* other alternatives.²⁵ In other words, focus says to the audience, “*this*, as opposed to the

²² For a description of the syntax of fronting in ancient Hebrew, from a generative perspective, see Holmstedt, “Critical at the Margins,” 113, within the larger context of ancient Hebrew clausal structure described in idem, *Relative Clause*, 51–54.

²³ Holmstedt, “Critical at the Margins,” 114; in addition to fronting, Holmstedt addresses dislocation and extraposition (which engage top and focus), but these do not concern us here. On fronting, see also van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §47.2.1; and see Gundel, “On Different Kinds of Focus”; McNally, “On the Linguistic Encoding”; Vallduví and Vilkkuna, “On Rheme and Kontrast.” Cf. also Moshavi, *Word Order*, 35–36. On my use of the term “pragmatic-semantic,” cf. van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §47.1 and p. 541. Information structure—and focus, in particular—involves both pragmatics and semantics—as evidenced by the copious literature on information structure within both subfields.

²⁴ Holmstedt, “Critical at the Margins,” 114.

²⁵ Holmstedt, “Critical at the Margins,” 114. Note, also, that clauses can have more than one point of focus; Holmstedt, *ibid.*, 113; Jones, “Word Order,” 72.

alternatives that might be possible.” Clauses can have multiple expressions in focus (and multiple expressions topicalized).²⁶

In this essay, I concentrate my discussion on focus, rather than topic/topicalization. To be clear, focus is not *dependent* on word order in ancient Hebrew or any other language, and it can occur without shifts in word order. Fronting is one way in which languages like ancient Hebrew can indicate focus, but not the only way. As such, my description of focus in the remainder of this section (§2) is not restricted to focus-fronting. The point in this section is to describe what focus is and show its importance in interpreting language.

Consider the following set of statements,²⁷ which demonstrate how focus impacts the overall meaning and implications of an utterance. In each case, the focused constituent controls the thrust of the statement, and moreover implies the existence of some further information that is not stated in the sentence—a range of possible referents that could be in contrast with the focused constituent, and a state of affairs that allows that contrast to exist.

(6)

I didn't kill your dog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus within a set of possibilities: someone else other than me took the action of killing. • Implied information: your dog was killed by someone else.
I didn't <i>kill</i> your dog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus within a set of possibilities: killing is not the action I took. • Implied information: I did something else that is bad to your dog.
I didn't kill <i>your</i> dog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus within a set of possibilities: your dog is not the dog I killed. • Implied information: I killed a dog belonging to somebody else, and that your dog was killed by somebody else.

²⁶ Holmstedt, “Critical at the Margins,” 113; Jones, “Word Order,” 72.

²⁷ I thank Helena Screnock for suggesting these examples.

I didn't kill your <i>dog</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus within a set of possibilities: something of yours other than your dog—another pet perhaps—was killed. • Implied information: I killed something of yours.
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In each statement, I have italicized a word receiving intonational stress—such stress is used to indicate focus. Note that the sentence, as written in a typical text, would be written identically (“I didn’t kill your dog.”) regardless of which four senses it took based on focus. Yet in each case, the meaning is different, and there are various constellations of people, actions, and pets involved in various ways. The location of focus within the negated clause entails that the focused element is what causes the state of affairs to be negated (the focused element is the part that did not obtain), and thus the other elements of the sentence *are* assumed to have occurred. I think it is likely that ancient Hebrew, like English, used intonational stress—sometimes but not always in conjunction with word order—to indicate focus.²⁸

In the case of the example (5), repeated here for convenience, the phrase at the beginning of the clause carries focus.²⁹

(5) Deut 5:13–14a

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלֹאכֶתֶךָ וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

For six days you should work and do all your work, but the seventh day should be a sabbath to YHWH your God.

In the first clause, there is a set of possibilities about a duration of time measured in days. One might work for one day, two days, three days, etc., up to seven days, all beginning at the first day of the week. From that set of possibilities, the focus-fronting picks out *six days* as the duration.³⁰ The final clause Esth 6:11 provides another example:

²⁸ See Crystal, *A Dictionary*, 454–455.

²⁹ Robson, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 191.

³⁰ See van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §47.2.1(2)(b)*h*, though as will become clear (in §3 below) I slightly differ in my interpretation, taking the focus to fall specifically on שֵׁשֶׁת, “six.”

(7) Esth 6:11

וַיִּקַּח הַמֶּן אֶת־הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת־הַסּוּס וַיִּלְבַּשׁ אֶת־מֶרְדֳּכָי וַיַּרְכִּיבֵהוּ בְּרֶחֱבֵי הָעִיר וַיִּקְרָא
לְפָנָיו כִּכָּה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הִמְלִיךְ חֶפְזָ בִּיקְרוֹ

And Haman took the clothing and the horse and clothed Mordecai and caused him to ride within the square of the city and called out before him,

“*Thus* will it be done for the person in whose honor the king delights.”

Out of all the ways that the king’s preferred person might be treated, *this* one is isolated.³¹

Content questions—whether in English, Hebrew, or another language—involve focus.³² Questions ask for information; this information, what the question wants to know, is in focus. Similarly, the response to a question will put focus on the information that provides the answer to the question.

(8) [Q] *Where* did you go with Chris last night?

[A] I went *to the Storyhill concert* with Chris last night.

In the question, “where” is focused; in the answer, “to the Storyhill concert” is focused. Even where questions are not involved, it can be helpful to reconstruct a question that the statement might answer, in order to determine focus. Consider, for example, how the intonation of “I went to the Storyhill concert with Chris last night” would change if it were the answer to another question.

³¹ The phrase כִּכָּה, “thus” or “according to this,” simply points to the actions that Haman has taken in the preceding clauses. See, similarly, Lachish no. 4, lines 2–3: ועת ככל אשר שלח אדני: “And now, according to all that my lord sent—*thus* has your servant done.”

³² Rooth, “A Theory of Focus Interpretation,” 84–85. On focus and questions in ancient Hebrew, cf. van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §47.2.1(2)(a). Though focus can induce fronting, it should be noted that the movement and resulting [fronted] position of question words (in English and in Hebrew) is a distinct process; question words move to their position in order to fulfill the requirements of question clauses, not because of focus.

- (9) Question: “*When* did you go to the concert with Chris?”
 Answer: “I went the Storyhill concert with Chris *last night*.”

Question: “*Who* did you go to the concert with last night?”
 Answer: “I went to the Storyhill concert with *Chris* last night.”

Before moving on, it is important to recognize the methodological and conceptual diversity in analyzing focus and related concepts. The concept of *focus* is difficult to articulate precisely, and linguists have offered a variety of accounts.³³ It has been defined as identifying information that is new to the discourse, or unassumed by the audience, or unexpected; or it may change the audience’s focus of attention, or create contrast.³⁴ For his part, Holmstedt recognizes many “sub-types” of focus, including “identificational focus, exhaustiveness focus, contrastive focus, interrogative focus, [and] thematic focus.”³⁵ It must also be noted that some Hebrew linguists use altogether different definitions for terms like *focus* and *topic*, but their definitions should not be assumed here. For example, what Geoffrey Khan and Christo van der Merwe mean by the term *topic* is what Holmstedt means by the term *theme*, while Holmstedt’s *topic* overlaps with their *topicalization*.³⁶ In this essay, the term *focus* is about selecting one option from a set of possible options to provide semantic focus on that option.

Adopting any of the existing linguistic models for information structure (i.e., for topic, focus, theme, rheme, and related concepts) will help us to think more accurately about and describe the interpretational significance of word order in ancient Hebrew. Holmstedt’s description, as summarized at the start of this section, is the model I prefer. It can help us think more clearly about focus-fronting and is therefore preferable to the vague notion of “emphasis.”

³³ So, too, in the case of topic; Jones, “Word Order,” 70–71.

³⁴ See Jones, “Word Order,” 71.

³⁵ Holmstedt, “Critical at the Margins,” 114.

³⁶ See, e.g., Khan and van der Merwe, “Towards a Comprehensive Model,” 352; cf. Moshavi, *Word Order*, 32, who treats *theme* and *topic* as synonymous.

3 Interpreting Word Order, Focus, and Pied-Piping in Ancient Hebrew

One reason why a phrase might be positioned at the start of a clause in ancient Hebrew is to communicate focus. The reality of pied-piping complicates the analysis of such cases. There are many instances in ancient Hebrew where (A) a constituent is fronted, (B) focus seems to be in play because of context, and (C) the most sensible interpretation of this focus is that it falls on only *part* of the fronted constituent. In other words, there are many cases where pied-piping arguably has occurred, because a constituent with focus has brought larger constituents to which it belongs with it to the front of the clause.

Consider Boaz's statement to Ruth in Ruth 2:21:

(10) Ruth 2:21

עַם הַנְּעָרִים אֲשֶׁר לִי תִדְבְּקִין עַד אִם כָּלוּ אֶת כָּל־הַקְצִיר אֲשֶׁר לִי

You should keep close to the youths that belong to *me*, until they finish all the harvest that belongs to me.

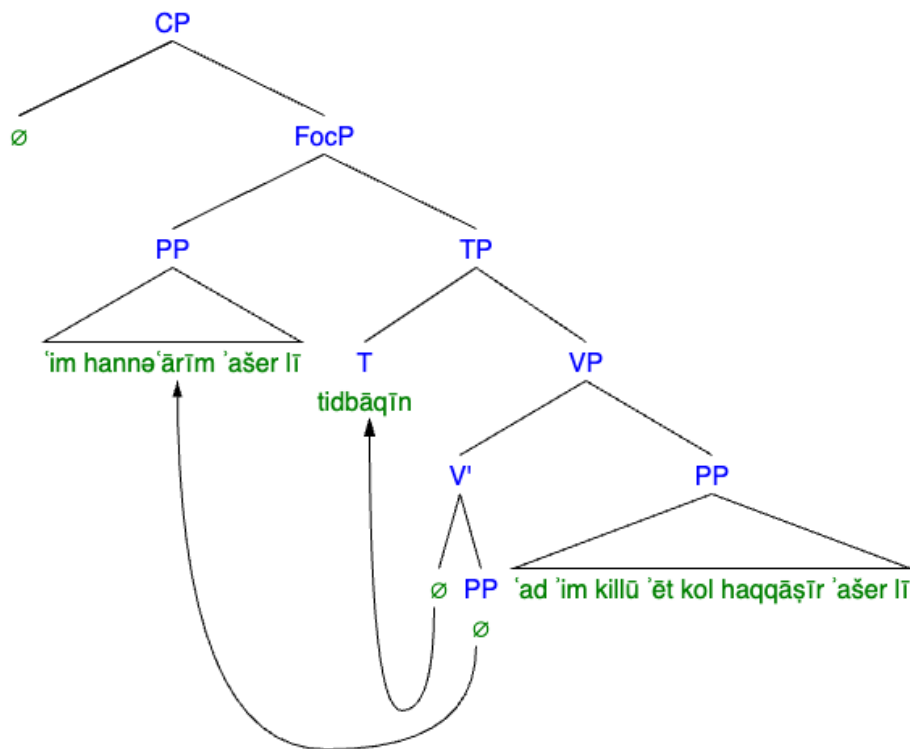
In this verse, Ruth reports that Boaz instructed her to stay close to his workers; in the context of Ruth 2:8–9, the purpose is arguably to ensure her safety. The PP עַם־הַנְּעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־לִי (“to the youths that belong to me”) is fronted to communicate focus. The point, however, is not that Ruth should be near *youths* (נְעָרִים) in general, nor that these youths are said to *belong* (לִ) to someone, nor even that she should keep close *to* (עַם)³⁷ someone. Instead, the statement implies that Ruth will indeed stay close to someone, and the focus-fronting signals focus specifically on the first person pronoun in לִי: the quality of these youths as belonging to *Boaz*, as opposed to any other land-owner employing workers, is what will keep Ruth safe.³⁸ The

³⁷ Though see the interpretative option discussed in footnote 38.

³⁸ Compare Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 15 and 144, who agrees that the phrase is fronted for focus, but that this focus has to do with “[highlighting] the unusual gleaning privileges accorded to Ruth” (144). Ruth is allowed, in other words, to glean *alongside* (עַם) Boaz's male servants (הַנְּעָרִים), rather than gleaning in isolation or with others in her position. Though it is not the interpretation I prefer, this reading fits the context of the narrative, and it entails focus on the entire PP—she gets to work alongside Boaz's servants rather than in some other position with

set of implied alternative possibilities that do not obtain, in other words, includes Ruth staying close to the youths that belong to person X, Ruth staying close to the youths that belong to person Y, Ruth staying close to the youths that belong to person Z, and so on. The statement is *not* implying that Ruth should stay close to young men as opposed to young women, or that she should stay close rather than take some other action (e.g., hiding or fleeing back to Moab).

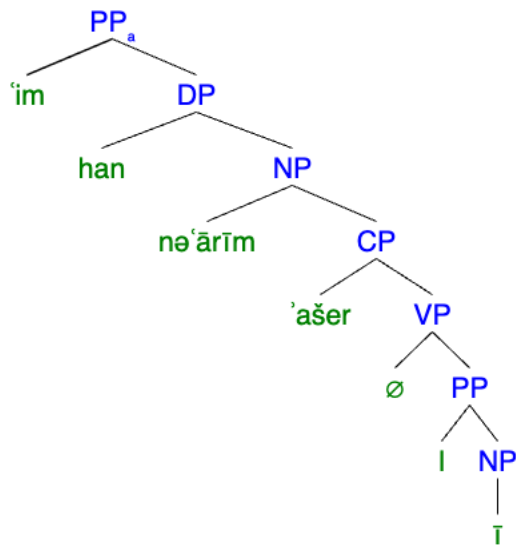
The word order of this clause involves movement of the PP fronted for focus, as well as the main verb—the latter of which is unimportant to the present discussion.³⁹



Within the PP complement to the verb, it is the first person pronoun that receives focus and instigates movement to the much higher position at the head of FocP. The internal structure of the PP—left out in the tree above for the sake of space—is itself several layers deep:

some other people. I, however, take the fronted phrase to contrast Ruth's gleaning in Boaz's field and near his people with her gleaning in fields and with people belonging to someone else, because of Boaz's words in Ruth 2:8–9 that imply a contrast in the safety of his workplace versus the workplaces of other land owners.

³⁹ For this structure, see Holmstedt, "Critical at the Margins," 112–113; cf. idem, *Relative Clause*, 51–53.



The *focus* feature that causes movement only applies to the suffixed pronoun $-\bar{i}$, at the very bottom of the PP's structure. However, the entire PP—which itself contains other constituents including a subordinate clause and a smaller PP—moves to the front of the clause (pied-piping). It is *not* the case that the entire fronted PP takes focus. Instead, the constituent whose focusing triggered the movement remains the only constituent with focus.

In what follows, I survey some cases of focus-fronting induced pied-piping, with an eye throughout on the ways this phenomenon can impact the interpretation of texts. I restrict my discussion of pied-piping to cases of focus-fronting, excluding topic-fronting and extraposition (whether for topic or focus) for the sake of space. It should also be noted that I include clauses with explicit finite verbs *and* clauses without (so-called “verbless” clauses), because the same phenomena of focus-fronting and pied-piping occur, in the same way, in both.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Cf. §2 above on focus-fronting in “verbless” clauses.

It is not difficult to find cases of pied-piping induced by focus-fronting in ancient Hebrew. In a small corpus consisting of Deut 5–6, Pss 90–100, Jonah, and Ruth, for example, I would identify the following as probable⁴¹ cases of pied-piping (figure 1).⁴²

Figure 1: Pied-piping with focus-fronting in Deut 5–6, Pss 90–100, Jonah, and Ruth

Passage	Fronted phrase	Focus within the phrase
Deut 5:3	אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ	with <i>our fathers</i> ⁴³
Deut 5:13 ⁴⁴	שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים	<i>six days</i>
Deut 5:33	בְּכָל־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲתָכֶם	in <i>every path</i> which YHWH your God commanded you ⁴⁵
Deut 6:13	בְּשֵׁמוֹ	in <i>his name</i> ⁴⁶

⁴¹ I have not included some cases that could involve pied-piping but are, in my view, more ambiguous. Nevertheless, one could certainly argue for different interpretations in several of the cases I include.

⁴² To be clear, I only include cases here where focus-fronting has caused pied-piping, not cases where an entire fronted constituent is in focus (though I discuss some such cases below, where they provide a contrast with one of my examples). In the table, I do not give the entire clause in which fronting occurs, for the sake of space. I also use English translation with italics as a clear, economical, and space conserving means of indicating *where* in the fronted phrase the focus resides. Note that some of the English translations (e.g., Ps 91:14 “with me”) are not contextually appropriate because of the argument structure of the verb (בִּי הֵשֵׁק, “he loves me”), but they reflect the distinct parts of the fronted phrase (i.e., the translation “me” would not be able to indicate that part of a larger phrase is in focus).

⁴³ So Moshavi, *Word Order*, 139; and identified as focus-fronting in Robson, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 180–181.

⁴⁴ Cf. Exod 16:26; 20:9, 11; 23:12; 31:15; 34:21; 35:2; Lev 23:3. As Nahum Sarna (*Exodus*, 90) writes, “the law of the Sabbath is frequently styles this way,” with שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים fronted.

⁴⁵ Identified as focus-fronting in Robson, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 209.

⁴⁶ See Robson, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 222, whose translation “in Yhwh’s [and no other] name” implies focus on the pronoun in the PP בְּשֵׁמוֹ.

Deut 6:15	אֵל קָנָא	<i>a jealous god</i>
Ps 91:7	אֵלַיְךָ	<i>to you</i>
Ps 91:8	בְּעֵינֶיךָ	<i>with your eyes</i>
Ps 91:14	בִּי	<i>with me</i>
Ps 92:7	אִישׁ בֵּעֵר	<i>a foolish person</i>
Ps 95:3	אֵל גָּדוֹל	<i>a great god</i>
Ps 95:4	בְּיָדוֹ	<i>in his hand</i>
Ps 95:5	לוֹ	<i>to him</i>
Ps 95:10	עַם תְּעִי לָבָב	<i>a people wandering in heart</i>
Jonah 1:10	מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה	<i>from the presence of YHWH⁴⁷</i>
Jonah 1:12	בְּשָׁלִי	<i>because of me</i>
Jonah 1:14	כַּאֲשֶׁר חָפַצְתָּ	<i>according to what you wanted</i>
Ruth 1:10	אִתְּךָ	<i>with you⁴⁸</i>
Ruth 1:16	אֶל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי	<i>to the place where you go⁴⁹</i>
Ruth 1:16	בְּאֲשֶׁר תִּלְיִנִי	<i>in the place where you lodge</i>
Ruth 2:6	נַעֲרָה מוֹאֲבִיָּה	<i>a Moabite girl⁵⁰</i>
Ruth 2:20	קְרוֹב לָנוּ	<i>near to us</i>
Ruth 2:20	מִגְאֻלָּנוּ	<i>among our redeemers⁵¹</i>
Ruth 2:21	עִם הַנְּעָרִים אֲשֶׁר לִי	<i>with the youths that belong to me</i>
Ruth 3:5	כָּל אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאמְרֵי אֵלַי	<i>everything that you tell me⁵²</i>
Ruth 3:11	אִשָּׁת חֵיל	<i>a woman of strength</i>

⁴⁷ Identified as focus-fronting in Tucker, *Jonah*, 110.

⁴⁸ Identified as focus-fronting in Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 77.

⁴⁹ On this case and the next (also in Ruth 1:16), see Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 89–90, who asks whether the *place* or the *subject* of the verb might be in focus, but does not consider the possibility that the verb within the relative might carry focus.

⁵⁰ Identified as having this particular focus in Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 115.

⁵¹ Identified as having this particular focus in Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 142.

⁵² Identified as having this particular focus in Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 156.

Ruth 4:3	חֶלֶקֶת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר לְאֶחֱינוּ לְאֵלִימֶלֶךְ	a parcel of land that belongs to <i>our relation</i> , to Elimelech ⁵³
Ruth 4:15	כַּלְתֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֶּתְךָ	your <i>daughter-in-law</i> who loves you ⁵⁴

I have not included cases of focus-fronting where no pied-piping occurs, whether because only one constituent is fronted,⁵⁵ or because a larger constituent (consisting of smaller constituents) is in focus as a whole.⁵⁶ In the first clause in Deut 6:13, for example—אֵת יְהוָה אֲלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא, “you should fear *YHWH your god*.” This god, and not any other, is the god that should be feared; pied-piping has not occurred, because the entire constituent is in focus.⁵⁷

⁵³ Holmstedt (*Ruth*, 185) notes two other possible interpretations of focus, both of which involve focus on the entire fronted NP. First, Boaz could be selecting the particular case of Elimelech’s property out of a larger set of potential “property issues that might have been active between Boaz and the nearer redeemer.” Second, the narrator—through the words of Boaz—could be contrasting the sale of Naomi’s land with the marriage of Ruth (“When will Boaz address Ruth’s status?”; and cf. the fronted NP in Ruth 4:10, ostensibly focused for the same reason).

⁵⁴ For this analysis, see Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 208–209.

⁵⁵ E.g., Ps 96:4 כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה, “for YHWH is *great*.”

⁵⁶ I hope in further research to explore the parameters inducing pied-piping in Hebrew—as has been done for many other languages. Though the rules might strike Hebraists as obvious—e.g., one would not expect focus-fronting to break up a genitive phrase or a prepositional phrase—there are cases involving other less obvious factors. Moreover, even if Hebraists know exactly what to expect in the fronting of phrases in ancient Hebrew, there is value in an account of *why* certain constituency structures do not require pied-piping while others do. For example, Hebrew does not divorce a preposition from the constituent that completes it—its *complement*—yet it can and does sometimes divorce a verb from its complement(s); complementation, then, is not the (sole) factor determining pied-piping.

⁵⁷ One might interpret the second person pronoun in אֲלֹהֶיךָ as having *in situ* focus without its containing NP having focus (i.e., “*your god*,” as opposed to somebody else’s god), with the

The following set of examples (figure 2) from various ancient Hebrew texts helps to fill out and represent the range of what is possible in pied-piping within ancient Hebrew.

Figure 2: Further examples of pied-piping with focus-fronting

Passage	Fronted phrase	Focus within the phrase
Lachish no. 4, lines 10–11	אל משאת לכש	to the fire-signals of <i>Lachish</i>
Gen 12:19	אשתך	your <i>wife</i> ⁵⁸
Gen 17:17	לְבֶן מֵאָה שָׁנָה	to a son of <i>100 years</i> ⁵⁹
Gen 20:12 ⁶⁰	אֶחְתִּי בַת אָבִי	my <i>sister</i> , the daughter of my father ⁶¹

constituent one level higher—the appositive head—also taking focus which induces movement (and entailing pied piping of אֱלֹהֶיךָ): “You should fear *YHWH*, *your god*.”

⁵⁸ The word אֶשְׁתְּךָ is often taken as the last word of a clause (הִנֵּה אֶשְׁתְּךָ, “here is your wife”) that concludes before the imperative קח, “take”—rather than being the complement of the verb in the clause קח אֶשְׁתְּךָ הִנֵּה עַתָּה (“now, behold: take your *wife*”), as I understand it (and cf. Holmstedt, “Critical at the Margins,” 116, 125).

⁵⁹ See Holmstedt “Critical at the Margins,” 125, who notes that this is a “contrast between reasonable expectations [of when one might beget children] ... and Abraham’s [actual] age”—though without identifying the duration of time in particular (i.e., “100 years”) as taking focus within the larger fronted PP. We might interpret the focus even more narrowly as falling only on מֵאָה, “100,” since we would expect that the duration of someone’s lifetime would be measured in years (i.e., there is no contrast between years and a measure like months or days). The fronted phrase occurs within a yes/no question (not a content/WH-question), with interrogative ה at the start of the clause fulfilling the requirement for an initial question word. The movement of לְבֶן מֵאָה שָׁנָה, in other words, is a result of focus.

⁶⁰ Cf. Gen 12:13, 19; 20:2, 5^{bis}.

⁶¹ See the analysis in van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §47.3.2(1)*b*, which describes the focus in these cases as picking out the “identity” of Sarah; they include the possessive pronoun “my” as part of the focus, but in context it is already known and clear

Gen 47:4	לָגוּר בְּאֶרֶץ	to <i>sojourn</i> in the land
Lev 7:30	יָדָיו	<i>his hands</i> ⁶²
Lev 7:30	אֶת הַחֵלֶב עַל הַחֵזָה	the fat <i>upon the breast</i>
Lev 13:23	תַּחֲתֶיהָ	<i>beneath it</i> ⁶³
Lev 21:14	בְּתוּלָה מֵעַמּוּיוֹ	a <i>virgin</i> from among his people ⁶⁴
Judg 8:3	בְּיַדְכֶם	into <i>your hand</i> ⁶⁵
Ps 45:7	שֵׁבֶט מִיֶּשֶׁר	a scepter of <i>uprightness</i>
Esth 2:9	אֶת־תְּמָרוּקֶיהָ וְאֶת־מְנוֹתֶיהָ	her <i>cosmetics</i> and her <i>portions</i>

that Sarah has some relationship to Abraham—the question is what, exactly, that relationship is.

⁶² For contextual reasons, Jacob Milgrom (*Leviticus 1–16*, 430) understands a similar emphasis: “it is the offerer’s hands and no one else’s that must present this gift to the sanctuary.”

⁶³ ואִם־תַּחֲתֶיהָ תַעֲמַד הַבְּהֵרֶת לֹא פָשְׁתָהּ צָרְבֶת הַשְּׁחִין הוּא, “And if the spot stays *beneath* itself, it has not spread. It is the scar of the boil.” Here the idiom “to stand beneath itself” means to stay “in one’s place”; *DCH*, s. v. תַּחַת I 2a; *BDB*, s. v. תַּחַת II 2.a; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 789. The point of contrast is between spreading (פָּשָׁה—both here in v. 23 and in preceding context) and staying in one location, the latter indicating that a spot on the skin (left after a boil) is not unclean. Because it is somewhat idiomatic, we might want to take the entire PP, including the reflexive suffixed pronoun, as being in focus. Even in that case, however, we would have here good evidence that the semantics of prepositions are not inconsequential for cases of focus (i.e., it is not simply the case that focus never falls on prepositions). Despite the idiomatic nature of the phrase, in my view the preposition תַּחַת specifically, without the suffixed pronoun, is in focus.

⁶⁴ Cf. van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §47.2.1(2)(b)*p*, who note the contrast between “a virgin” (בְּתוּלָה) and other women noted earlier in the verse (אֵלְמָנָה (וְגִירוּשָׁה וְחֻלְלָה זָנָה) who are not considered to have virgin status.

⁶⁵ Smith and Bloch-Smith (*Judges 1*, 534) describe the PP as fronted with the purpose of “emphasizing the Ephraimites’ achievement.”

1QM VII, 12	ביד הששה	in the hand of the <i>six</i>
1QM XI, 1 ⁶⁶	בכוח ידכה	by the strength of <i>your</i> hand

The variety of possible syntactic constructions involved in pied-piping should be clear from the examples in these two tables. Various constituents can receive focus and induce movement, including different parts of speech (nouns, pronouns, prepositions, adjectives, verbs), single words and larger phrases, at various depths of embeddedness within the syntactical structure (from the head of the phrase that is fronted—i.e., at the very top—to a case where a focused pronoun is embedded six levels down). Moreover, we see variety in the containing constituents that are moved (pied-piped) *with* the focused constituents inside of them; these can be NPs, PPs, VPs, relative clauses, appositive phrases, and infinitive verb phrases.

The recognition of pied-piping as a phenomenon involved in focus-fronting can be beneficial for interpretation. In Ps 91:8, for example, the process of identifying focus *within* the fronted phrase brings clarity to the thrust and tone of the poem.

(11) Ps 91:8

רק בעיניך תביט ושלמת רשעים תראָה

You will only look on with your eyes, and see the recompense of the wicked.

The first line of the poem refers to the addressee “looking” at something. Does the fronted PP בעיניך tell us that this looking is done *with* an instrument (as opposed to some other manner), or that the instrument specifically belongs to the addressee (*their* eyes, and not somebody else’s), or that it is the eyes (as opposed to other body parts) that will do the looking—or some combination of these three? In the context of vv. 3–7, the thing the addressee sees should be understood as people who have “fallen” (v. 7 יפל) as a result of the terrors described in vv. 3–6 (whether these be due to plague, sickness, war, or a combination of the three⁶⁷). The restrictive adverb רק either signals that (A) the entire predication limits

⁶⁶ Cf. also 1QM VII, 14.

⁶⁷ Mays, *Psalms*, 297; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 455.

the extent of a stated or implied state of affairs (many will die, but your experience of this will be limited to observation), or that (B) the following PP בְּעֵינֶיךָ restricts the action of the main verb (your perceiving of this widespread devastation will be limited to “your eyes,” rather than perceiving through the direct contact of touch—i.e., being harmed bodily).⁶⁸ The fronting of the PP בְּעֵינֶיךָ works in tandem with רָק, whether one takes the first or the second interpretive option for רָק; the purpose is to provide a contrast that limits the addressee’s experience of harm. In this context, it becomes clear that focus falls not on the preposition (looking *with* as opposed to *on* or *by*, etc.), nor on the pronoun (*your* eyes as opposed to another’s eyes), nor on the PP בְּעֵינֶיךָ as a whole (looking *with your eyes* as opposed to *with intent* or *in trepidation* or *by God’s help*, etc.). Rather, the focus falls on the *eyes*, as opposed to other parts of the addressee’s body. The point of רָק is that the addressee will *look* at this danger rather than *come into direct contact*,⁶⁹ and the point of fronted בְּעֵינֶיךָ—reinforcing the first point—is that the *eyes* are the only part of the addressee’s body that will come into contact with this danger.

In the fronting of בְּעֵינֶיךָ in Ps 91:8 in (11), a PP is moved when the complement of the preposition within it (a NP) is in focus; moreover, a genitive phrase that modifies the focused constituent is also moved. Similar cases include Jonah 1:12—בְּשָׁלִי הַסַּעַר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה עָלֵיכֶם—“this great storm is upon you because of *me*,” with a focused constituent bringing the PP that contains it⁷⁰—and Gen 12:19—אֲחֹתִי הִוא—“she is my *sister*,” with a focused NP bringing an internal genitive that modifies it.⁷¹

Whereas Ps 91:8 involves the focus on the *head* of a genitive phrase inducing pied-piping, when interpreting focus-fronted phrases we must keep open the possibility that the *annex* of a genitive phrase has received focus that causes pied-piping. In an example from the Lachish ostraca, a PP is moved to the front of the clause:

⁶⁸ Cf. *BDB*, s. v. רָק.

⁶⁹ Cf. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 456.

⁷⁰ And see Deut 5:3; Jonah 1:10, 12; Pss 91:7, 14; 95:5; Ruth 1:10.

⁷¹ And see Gen 12:13, 19; 20:2, 5^{bis}; Deut 5:13; Ruth 4:15.

(12) Lachish Ostrakon no. 4, lines 10–11

אל משאת לכש נחנו שמרם

We are watching for the fire signals of *Lachish*.

Evidently, the sender of the letter (Hoshayahu) and his colleagues were expected to monitor the fire signals of neighboring fortifications, such as Lachish. Is the PP אל משאת לכש fronted to indicate focus, and if so, what is the salient information in context? The point *could* be that Hoshayahu, who seems to have been tasked with managing a number of people and activities (see lines 3–9), is stressing that he and his men were doing their duty in the case of fire-signal monitoring in particular. In lines 12–13, however, Hoshayahu points out that they are unable to see Azeqah (כי לא נראה את עזקה), implying that they are unable to its fire signals.⁷² As such, it seems that they were meant to watch for fire signals either from a number of locations—or they were meant to watch Azeqah only, but they had lost the ability to do so. The statement in lines 10–11, then, stresses that the men were focusing their attention on the signals from Lachish instead—i.e., they were watching for *Lachish's* fire signals rather than signals at other locations. The focus, then, falls on לכש, a genitive modifying משאת that has brought the larger NP משאת לכש and the larger PP אל משאת לכש along with it to the front of the clause. Similar cases include Ps 45:7—שֶׁבֶט מִיֶּשֶׁר שֶׁבֶט מִלְכוּתְךָ—, “the scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of *uprightness*,” with the focused genitive constituent bringing the NP that contains it to the front of the clause—and 1QM XI, 1—בכוח ידכה רוטשו פגריהם—, “their corpses were dashed in pieces by the strength of *your* hand,” with the focused pronoun constituent bringing two levels of containing NPs and a containing PP to the front of the clause.⁷³

A pair of examples from Deut 6:15 and Ps 95:3 illustrate how an adjective can carry focus within a fronted NP.

⁷² Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 76.

⁷³ And see Ruth 3:11; Ps 95:4; 1QM VII, 12, 14; and compare the similar structure in the fronting of question words in Gen 24:47; 1 Sam 12:3; 17:15, 56, 58.

(13) Deut 6:15

כִּי אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה יִקְנָא בְּקִרְבְּךָ

For YHWH your God is a *jealous* god in your midst.

(14) Ps 95:3

כִּי אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה וּמֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים

For YHWH is a *great* god, and a great *king* over all gods.

In Deut 6:15 and the first clause in Ps 95:3, the NP that serves as complement to the null copula—אֱלֹהִים יִקְנָא and אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה, respectively—is fronted for focus.⁷⁴ In each case, the point is not to say that YHWH is a *god* (אֱלֹהִים), as opposed to another kind of being. Nor is the entire NP in focus: “a jealous god” and “a great god” do not contrast with the possibility that he is a *mortal man*, or a *good listener*, or a *stubborn goat*, etc. Rather, in Ps 95:3 it is taken for granted that YHWH is a god, and he is being contrasted with other gods in a particular quality: he is great, as opposed to being feeble, humdrum, impotent, “manageable,”⁷⁵ or some other possibility along these lines.⁷⁶ In Deut 6:15, a specific contrast is being drawn to make a point about

⁷⁴ On Deut 6:15, cf. Robson, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 223, who identifies this as a case of focus-fronting.

⁷⁵ Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150*, 92.

⁷⁶ The focus of the second clause in Ps 95:3 is also worth considering. Because the subject (יְהוָה) is gapped from the preceding clause—and as such the only part of the clause that is overt is the predicate complement עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל—it is not possible to distinguish focus-with-fronting from *in situ* focus. However, because of the clear parallel to אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה it seems likely that part of the phrase is in focus. In my interpretation, the text is stressing YHWH’s role as *king* of the gods, in keeping with the thrust of Ps 95 (and indeed, the larger set of Pss 93–100); cf. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, xxvii. Though he is again described as great (גָּדוֹל), there is no longer a need to pick this out from other possibilities, as it was focused in the preceding clause. One could, however, argue that the adjective גָּדוֹל is in focus (isolating what kind of king-of-gods YHWH is), perhaps with the entirety of the NP (picking out his role among the gods and its quality as being a *great king*, rather than some other role with another quality). To my mind, this case is not as clear—illustrating the interpretive significance and

YHWH's character: he is the kind of god who is jealous, as opposed to not caring whether his people show him loyalty. In each case, the adjective, not the entire NP, carries focus, though the larger NP is fronted.

The analysis of focus-fronting and pied-piping becomes slightly more complicated when subordinate clauses are involved. In Gen 47:4, the infinitive clause *לְגוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ*, “to sojourn in the land,” is fronted in a larger matrix clause that is spoken by Joseph's brothers.

(15) Gen 47:4

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל פַּרְעֹה לְגוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ בְּאֵנוּ

And they said to Pharaoh, “We have come to *sojourn* in the land.”

Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze identify this as a case of focus-fronting, and describe the focus as “restricting [the clause] to a particular ... purpose.”⁷⁷ They indicate through the use of italics in the English translation that the entire phrase *לְגוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ* is in focus. In other words, the brothers could have conceivably come to Egypt for a variety of purposes—to make war, for example, or to seek safety, or to purchase grain—but they highlight that the actual purpose was *to sojourn in the land*. However, it seems more likely to me that the focus falls on the verb, rather than on the entirety of the fronted constituent. In context, the point is that they are asking to reside in Egypt long term (cf. Gen 47:4–6). The audience knows they are “in the land” (*בְּאֶרֶץ*) already, and their purpose of coming to Egypt would not have been to sojourn in some *other* land (i.e., they were not saying, “we have come to sojourn in *this* land,” as opposed to another land).⁷⁸ Rather, the focus is on the action of *sojourning* (*גור*). The

potential of a more detailed analysis of focus *within* focus-fronted phrases (or, in this case, a phrase parallel to a focus-fronted phrase).

⁷⁷ Van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §47.2.1(2)(b); and cf. Moshavi, *Word Order*, 125–126, who describes this as a case of fronting for focus; and Baker, *Genesis 37–50*, 369, who describes the phrase as “emphasized through fronting.”

⁷⁸ Alternatively, we might understand a double focus: in addition to a focus on sojourning, they may be saying that they want to do so in *the land that they have come to*, rather than some other land. In other words, they may be highlighting that they like Egypt as a place to settle, which is why they are there. Note, however, that such a focus structure is not focus on

verb גור might indicate entry into long term residence as an alien, or it might indicate temporary residence. In either case, the point in context is to focus on the fact that the brothers want to take up permanent residence. Whether they say, “We came to *sojourn short term*, but will you let us dwell here permanently (ישב)?,” or they say, “We came to *enter into permanent alien residence*; will you let us dwell here permanently (ישב)?,” pied-piping has induced the entire purpose infinitive to move to the front of the clause to put focus on the infinitive verb.

A contrasting example of focus-fronting can be found in one of the Lachish letters.

(16) Lachish Ostrakon no. 3, lines 16–18

ואת הודויהו בן אחיהו ואנשו שלח לקחת מזה

And he [=Konyahu] sent to take *Hoduyahu, son of Ahiyahu, and his men*, from there.

The NP את הודויהו בן אחיהו ואנשו, “*Hoduyahu, son of Ahiyahu, and his men*,” belongs to the infinitive phrase headed by קחת (“to take”). Altogether, before movement, the infinitive clause would have been formed as לקחת את הודויהו בן אחיהו ואנשו מזה, “to take *Hoduyahu, son of Ahiyahu, and his men, from there*.” Within that phrase, the NP את הודויהו בן אחיהו ואנשו takes focus and has been moved to the front of the clause, *without* the rest of the constituent that contains it. Out of the possible individuals that the letter could refer to as being retrieved by Konyahu, *Hoduyahu son of Ahiyahu and his men* are identified. In this case, pied-piping has *not* occurred.

These contrasting examples might suggest that pied-piping is optional in cases of movement from within an infinitive clause. However, I find it more likely⁷⁹ that movement of the *head* of the VP within an infinitive clause requires pied-piping while movement of other constituents in the infinitive VP (whether the complement to the verb—as in Lachish no. 3,

the entire fronted phrase, but rather double focus on two internal constituents: the infinitive verb and the NP complement to the ב preposition (“to *sojourn in the [=this] land*”).

⁷⁹ I have not yet undertaken a comprehensive analysis, but hope to revisit this particular question in a future publication; cf. footnote 56.

lines 16–18—or the subject, or a phrase that is adjunct to the verb) do not require movement of the entire clause.⁸⁰

Figure 3: Movement in Gen 47:4

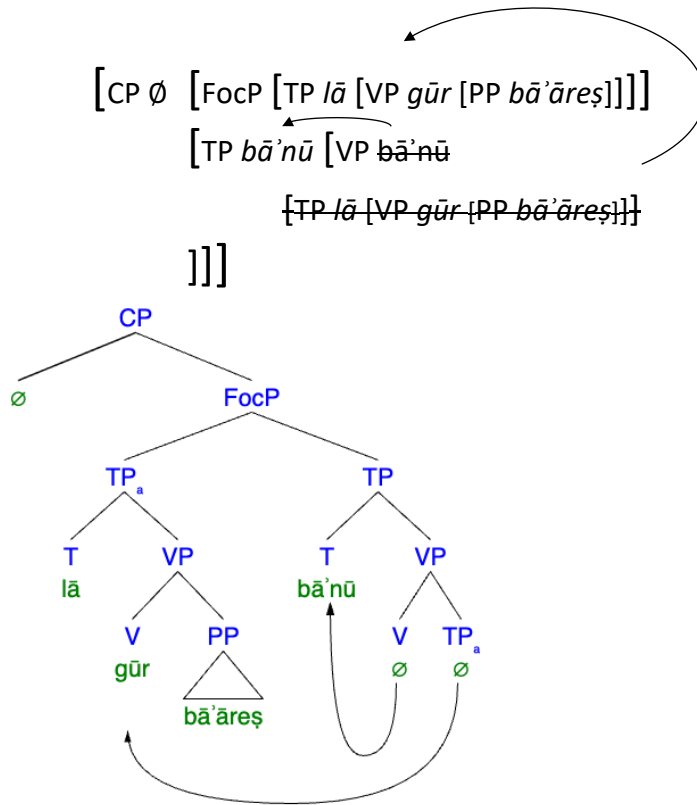
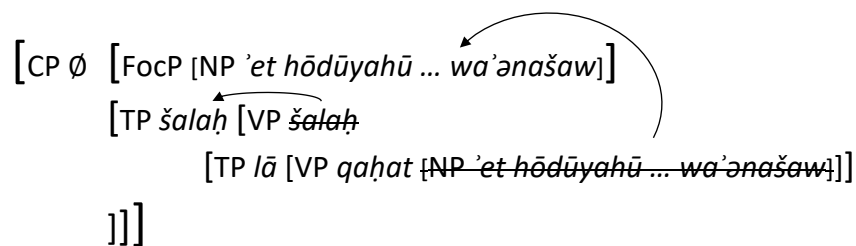
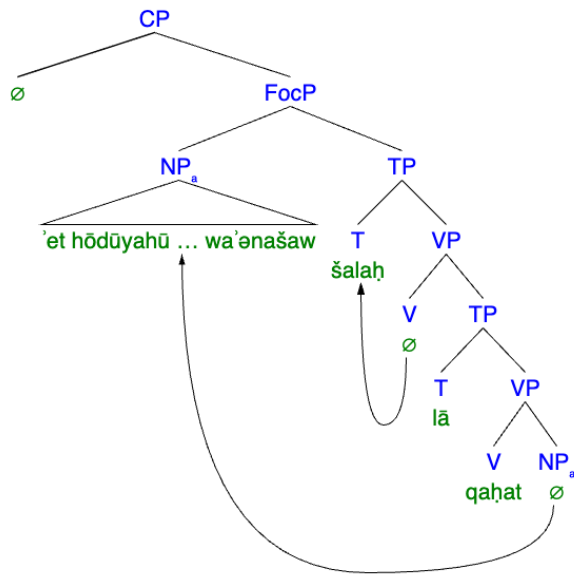


Figure 4: Movement in Lachish no. 3, lines 16–18



⁸⁰ Note that in the following sentence diagrams, I represent the infinitive clause as a Tense Phrase [TP] headed by *lā*, containing an infinitive VP headed by the infinitive verb itself.



Constituents within the infinitive VP—other than the head of the VP—can move out of the infinitive VP to the front of the matrix clause without taking the rest of the infinitive clause along with them. However, if a particular element of one of these constituents is in focus—an adjective within a NP complement to the verb, for example—then the larger constituent must move to the front of the matrix clause (pied-piping, though selecting a constituent lower than the infinitive VP).

Another interesting contrast can be seen in Esth 2:9, where constituents from within the infinitive VP are fronted to the start of the infinitive clause but not the start of the matrix clause.

(17) Esth 2:9

וַיְבַהֵל אֶת תַּמְרוּקֶיהָ וְאֶת מְנוֹתֶיהָ לְתֵת לָהּ וְאֵת שִׁבְעַת הַנְּעוּרוֹת הָרְאיוֹת לְתֵת לָהּ מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ

And he hastened to give her *cosmetics* and her *portions* to her, and to give *seven excellent maids* to her from the household of the king.

The complement of the main verb וַיְבַהֵל is a compound clause consisting of two infinitive clauses. In the first, לְתֵת לָהּ אֶת תַּמְרוּקֶיהָ וְאֶת מְנוֹתֶיהָ (the word order before fronting) “to give her cosmetics and her portions to her,” focus falls in two places within the compound NP complement to the verb, אֶת תַּמְרוּקֶיהָ וְאֶת מְנוֹתֶיהָ. The focus, in my view, falls on the individual nouns תַּמְרוּקִים (“cosmetics”) and מְנוֹת (“portions”), and does not include the fact that these

are “hers” (Esther’s). The entire compound NP is fronted (pied-piping), but not to the beginning of the matrix clause as in Gen 47:4 or Lachish no. 3, lines 16–18; rather, the NP is moved to the start of the infinitive clause. In the second infinitive clause, another infinitive VP internal constituent (את שבע הנערות הראיות) is fronted to the start of the infinitive clause. In that case, I think it is more likely that the entire NP is in focus, and as such no pied-piping has occurred. But again, as in the preceding infinitive clause, the focus-fronting is limited to the infinitive clause rather than the constituent moving to the front of the matrix clause.⁸¹

Whereas the preceding examples (15)–(17) involve infinitive clauses, the statement made by the sailors in Jonah 1:14 involves another type of subordinate clause—the relative clause.

(18) Jonah 1:14

ואל תתן עלינו דם נקיא כי אתה יהוה באשר חפצת עשית

And do not set innocent blood on us, for you, O YHWH, have acted according to what you have *wanted*.

The sailors front the PP באשר חפצת—this is the complement of the verb עשית, describing the manner in which YHWH behaved or acted. In cases where באשר is used, the underlying syntax involves a null complement to the preposition כ (“according to [the thing/act/outcome] which you wanted”).⁸² When we consider why the PP (with relative clause) באשר חפצת is fronted, therefore, we need to consider at least three possibilities:

1. The null constituent is in focus—“according to *that thing* which you wanted.” The particular way in which YHWH has acted up to this point in the story (including sending the great storm that the sailors found themselves in, and perhaps causing the lot to fall on Jonah⁸³) is contrasted with other possible ways he might have acted and other states of affairs he might have brought about; it is *this* state of affairs, and not others, that has

⁸¹ This could perhaps be due to Aramaic influence; cf. the discussion in Srenock and Holmstedt, *Esther*, 87–88.

⁸² Srenock and Holmstedt, *Esther*, 11–12; Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 113–128.

⁸³ Cf. Tucker, *Jonah*, 42.

been the manner in which YHWH has acted (עָשִׂיתָ). This interpretation of focus is problematic, however, because a focused element is unlikely to be null/covert.⁸⁴

2. The verb is in focus—“according to what you *wanted*.” The action of wanting or willing or desiring is contrasted with other reasons why YHWH might act (עָשִׂיתָ) in a certain way. He has “done what he wanted to do”—whether this manner of acting is specific to the situation or characteristic of YHWH generally.⁸⁵
3. The entire complement to the PP is in focus—“according to *that thing* which you *wanted*.” Both the way in which YHWH has acted *and* the fact that he desired to act that way are contrasted with other manners of acting and other reasons for acting.

Although all three options could work in context, the second seems most appropriate to me. The grounds for the sailors’ innocence is that YHWH himself willed the situation they find themselves in.⁸⁶ In the sailors’ view, their actions are a necessary response to what YHWH has brought about; but their point of contrast in the statement itself is not with *what* has happened, but that this is what YHWH *wanted*—he desired this state of affairs, including (it is implied) the action the sailors are about to take.

Though the verb alone is in focus, the relative clause to which it belongs (אֲשֶׁר הִפְצֵתָ) and the PP to which the relative clause belongs (בְּאֲשֶׁר הִפְצֵתָ) move along with the verb (pied-piping). It should be noted that the fronting does not extend beyond the subordinate (causal) כִּי clause.⁸⁷ Jonah 1:14 could also be contrasted with cases of fronting that stay *within* the relative clause, as in Ps 95:4 and 5.

(19) Ps 95:4a, 5a

אֲשֶׁר בִּידוֹ מִחֲקָרֵי אֶרֶץ ... אֲשֶׁר-לֹוּ הָיִם וְהוּא עָשָׂהוּ

⁸⁴ Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 89–90, argues this point in his discussion of two cases in Ruth 1:16 that are similar to Jonah 1:14.

⁸⁵ See the discussion of the phrase in Niditch, *Jonah*, 49–50.

⁸⁶ Cf. Sasson, *Jonah*, 135–136.

⁸⁷ To do so—to put part of the basis clause at the start of the main clause—would result in a statement with a different semantic structure. This would be difficult to process and/or would take on a different meaning (essentially, “According to what you wanted, do not set innocent blood on us, for you, O YHWH, have acted”).

in *whose* hand are the limits of the earth ... to *whom* belongs the sea—he made it!

In (19), both relatives modify יהוה from v. 3. Translation into English obscures what is occurring, insofar as the English relative pronouns “whose” and “whom” do not require resumption within the relative clause, while the Hebrew relative particle אשר does use resumption.⁸⁸ Though somewhat stilted, the following represents the use of focus: “[YHWH...] who the limits of the earth are in *his* hand ... who the sea is [=belongs] to *him*.” As my italics indicate, the focus does not fall in the first relative on the prepositional phrase (PP) בְּיָדוֹ (“in his hand”), nor the NP יָדוֹ (“his hand”), nor does it fall in the second relative on the PP לּוֹ (“to him”). Rather, in each case the focus falls on the pronoun “his/him.” The limits of the earth and the sea are under *YHWH’s* authority (not some other god’s) and belong to *YHWH* (not some other god).

Unlike Jonah 1:14, in Ps 95:4–5 the relative clauses are not moved to the front of their matrix clause (begun in v. 3) to indicate focus on the resumptive pronouns within the relative clauses. The difference may be a result of various factors: perhaps the entire כּ-PP plus relative is fronted in Jonah 1:14 because the relative clause itself consists only of one word (הַפְּצֵתָּ)—moving this word to the front of the relative would not result in any difference (either way the result is אֲשֶׁר הַפְּצֵתָּ). Perhaps the fronting in Ps 95:4–5 does not move beyond the relative because the word being modified by the relative is null—יהוה gapped from 95:3a (אֵל גָּדוֹל (יהוה)) into 95:3b (אֵל גָּדוֹל עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים) [שׁ] מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל עַל כָּל אֱלֹהִים)—and/or because of the poetic nature of the language there. It should be noted, however, that even the complexities of poetry and poetic word order do not override the way in which language is perceived and processed, and it is unlikely that poetic word order would result in something entirely *ungrammatical*. A final possible reason for the difference between Jonah 1:14 and Ps 95:4–5 is that focus can be indicated in different ways and at different levels. Just as extraposition focus and *in situ* focus occur, phrase internal fronting—fronting that does not extend to the highest possible level in the clause—can be used to indicate focus;⁸⁹ this is what has occurred in Ps 95:4–5.

⁸⁸ See Holmstedt, *Relative Clause*, 267–268; and idem, “Relative Clause,” 351.

⁸⁹ Cf. Screnock, “Assessing the Character,” 80–82.

4 Conclusion

Pied-piping, a phenomenon observable in many of the world’s languages, occurs in ancient Hebrew. This is readily observable in Hebrew questions and in cases where a constituent has been fronted to indicate focus. As the range of examples above demonstrates, pied-piping induced by focus-fronting occurs frequently and is not restricted to specific circumstances. Such pied-piping involves focus falling on *part*, not the whole, of the fronted constituent; to show that focus falls on part—but not all—of the fronted constituent is to demonstrate that pied-piping has occurred. There are implications here for the interpreter of texts: when a constituent has been fronted for the purpose of indicating focus, the interpreter must ask which part of the fronted constituent is in focus. Though it is one of several possibilities, one cannot simply take for granted that the entire fronted phrase is in focus (or “emphasized”).⁹⁰ As the range of possible meanings of example (6) (“I didn’t kill your dog”) shows, this endeavor is significant for the task of exegesis.

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⁹⁰ Compare many of the analyses of specific cases in van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, §§47.2.1, 47.3, which typically (though not in every case) indicate the entire fronted constituent as being in focus.

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