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Protokolle zur Bibel

Im Auftrag der Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Assistent:innen
an bibelwissenschaftlichen Instituten in Österreich

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Peer reviewed

Vol. 33,1

2024

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ISSN 2412-2467



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FRAMING SPACE

Determining the Meaning of Space-Related Biblical Hebrew Lexemes¹

Zur Semantik raumbezogener bibelhebräischer Lexeme

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Abstract: This paper intends to bridge the gap between spatial approaches to biblical texts and lexical semantics. It introduces frame semantics to the discussion, a cognitive linguistic theory which has already been used to investigate the meaning of biblical Hebrew lexemes. As a test case, verbs of the roots פָּרַד and בָּדַל (“separate”) are examined. The different meanings of these verbs are then assigned to the different “spaces” as defined by Lefebvre and Soja. The paper argues for a combination of established spatial approaches and methods from cognitive linguistics.

Abstract: Dieser Beitrag will die Kluft zwischen raumbezogenen Ansätzen für biblische Texte und lexikalischer Semantik überbrücken. Er führt die Frame-Semantik in die Diskussion ein, eine Theorie der kognitiven Linguistik, die bereits zur Bedeutungsermittlung biblisch-hebräischer Lexeme verwendet wurde. Als Testfall werden Verben mit den Wurzeln פָּרַד und בָּדַל („trennen“) untersucht. Die unterschiedlichen Bedeutungen dieser Verben werden dann den verschiedenen „Räumen“, wie sie von Lefebvre und Soja definiert wurden, zugewiesen. Der Beitrag plädiert für eine Kombination von etablierten raumbezogenen Ansätzen mit Methoden der kognitiven Linguistik.

Keywords: Space; Frame Semantics; Methodology of Spatial Approaches; פָּרַד; בָּדַל

1. A Very Short Introduction: Spatial Turn and Biblical Studies

The “spatial turn” in biblical studies has undoubtedly been stimulated by the postmodern sociological approaches of Henri Lefebvre and, in particular, Edward Soja.² Lefebvre describes “space” in terms of three basic categories:³

¹ I would like to thank my colleague Daniel Jackson for improving my English and for helpful comments on the content of this article.

² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, New York 1991 (french original 1974); Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imaged Places*, Malden 1996.

³ See Patrick Schreiner, *Space, Place and Biblical Studies. A Survey of Recent Research in Light of Developing Trends*, *CBR* 14 (2016) 340–371: 346–347; Gert T. Prinsloo, *Place, Space and*

“perceived space,” the space that can be physically experienced; “conceived space,” referring to the cognitive perception and modeling of space; and, finally, “lived space,” referring to socially constructed and experienced space, which can challenge conceptions that are socially normative. Soja adopts these concepts with slight modifications and refers to them as “Firstspace,” “Secondspace,” and “Thirdspace.” Thirdspaces are, according to Soja, mental constructions that open up new worlds with previously unknown possibilities, being able to provide a space of resistance, particularly for marginalized people.⁴ These three spatial dimensions have been presented by means of the catchwords “experience / the empirical,” “perception / the theoretical,” and “imagination / the creative.”⁵

These (and other) approaches of “critical spatial theory” have been widely influential for interpreting biblical texts, though they have also come under criticism.⁶ As for the question of methodology, Patrick Schreiner demands that these space-related theories and approaches be criticized on the basis of the biblical texts themselves. According to Schreiner, it is not self-evident that our conceptions of “space,” shaped by our Western mindsets, correspond to the conceptions of the first readers of the texts.⁷ Christopher Meredith, on the other hand, criticizes biblical scholars for simplifying Lefebvre’s theories, for applying too readily a trialectic model such as that of “Firstspace,” “Secondspace,” and “Thirdspace,” and for focusing here too much on the latter.⁸ These objections are noteworthy, and they call for a concise methodology for evaluating the notion of space in biblical studies.

In what follows, I bring into play another approach not associated with the “spatial turn” but rather with the “cognitive turn,” namely, frame semantics. This approach can be used to infer the meaning of biblical Hebrew lexemes within the framework of a cognitive-linguistic methodology. After an exposition of frame semantics (section 2), I examine some verbs from the lexical field “space” (section 3), and following this I offer some conclusions (section 4).

Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World. Theory and Practice with Reference to the Book of Jonah, in: id./Christl M. Maier (ed.), *Constructions of Space 5. Place, Space and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (LHBOTS 576), London 2013, 3–25: 7–8.

⁴ Schreiner, *Space* (fn. 3) 347–348; Prinsloo, *Place* (fn. 3) 8.

⁵ Schreiner, *Space* (fn. 3) 351.

⁶ Cf. Schreiner, *Space* (fn. 3) 351–360.

⁷ Schreiner, *Space* (fn. 3) 361.

⁸ Christopher Meredith, *Taking Issue with Thirdspace. Reading Soja, Lefebvre and the Bible*, in: Jorunn Økland/J. Cornelis de Vos/Karen J. Wenell (ed.), *Constructions of Space 3. Biblical Spatiality and the Sacred* (LHBOTS 540), London 2016, 75–103.

2. Frame Semantics

2.1 Basic Concepts

Frame semantics is largely based on the ideas of the linguist Charles Fillmore (1929–2014). In contrast to linguistic structuralism, Fillmore did not view language as a closed system that can be clearly defined by rules. Instead, according to Fillmore, the meaning of linguistic expressions also depends on social aspects.⁹ Therefore, the “context” of a linguistic utterance contains not only information internal to the text (“co-text”), but also extra-linguistic knowledge available to language users. This extra-linguistic knowledge represents real-life prototypical situations. It is stored in “frames” and retrieved in the process of understanding linguistic utterances.¹⁰

Fillmore’s favorite example of these relationships is the frame “Commercial event.” It contains the four elements *Buyer*, *Seller*, *Goods*, and *Price*. It also contains the following information about prototypical commercial events:

- The *Seller* transfers the *Goods* to the *Buyer*.
- The *Seller* receives a monetary value from the *Buyer*, which is determined by the *Price*.
- The *Price* represents the value of the *Goods*.

An utterance such as “Yesterday I bought a new car” evokes the “Commercial event” frame. The frame provides all the extra-linguistic information that is needed to understand the utterance. These are, first, a *Buyer* (“I”) and the *Goods* (“a new car”). Since a *Seller* and a *Price* are elements of the frame, these frame elements are also activated when the sentence is uttered, even though they do not occur on the linguistic surface. The frame is thus evoked as a whole, and, accordingly, language users always have the whole picture of a commercial event in mind.¹¹ It goes without saying that frames are highly culture-dependent. The “Commercial event” frame just presented definitely corresponds to a Western culture, whereas in a Near Eastern or African culture, bargaining practices are probably an essential element of a commercial event (cf. Gen 23), and thus must be formalized as part of the frame description.

Independently of Fillmore, the cognitive scientist Marvin Minsky (1927–2016) developed the frame idea from the perspective of artificial intelligence.

⁹ This point was also made by Lefebvre against Noam Chomsky’s “Syntactic Structures;” see Lefebvre, *Production* (fn. 2) 4–5.

¹⁰ Charles J. Fillmore, *Frame Semantics and the Nature of Language*, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 280 (1976) 20–32: 20–24.

¹¹ Charles J. Fillmore, *Frame Semantics*, in: *The Linguistic Society of Korea* (ed.), *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*, Hanshin 1982, 111–137: 116–117, 122.

What Fillmore called “frame elements,” Minsky called “slots.” These slots are filled with concrete data from the linguistic utterance as soon as the frame is activated. Minsky refers to these data as “fillers.”¹² Thus, in Minsky’s terminology, the frame “Commercial event” has four slots, namely for the *Buyer*, the *Seller*, the *Goods*, and the *Price*, respectively. In a later development of frame semantics, the relations between the meaning of the individual slots (e.g., the fact that in the “Commercial event” frame, the price corresponds to the value of the goods) are called “constraints.”¹³

2.2 Application to Biblical Hebrew Semantics

Frame semantics has been applied to biblical studies on a small number of occasions. The first one seems to be Shead’s dissertation about the Hebrew verb *חָקַר* and related lexemes.¹⁴ Stettler has used frame semantics in order to demonstrate that the apostle Paul probably had a complete mental frame of the concept “final judgement.”¹⁵ In three articles, I have investigated the meaning of the Hebrew verbs *אָמַן* (H stem) and *בָּטַח* and of the nouns *חֶסֶד* and *הֵן*.¹⁶

In order to examine the meaning of spatial terms in the Hebrew Bible, I will use the cognitive-linguistic methodology put forward in my previous contributions. It claims to reconstruct frames that, following Fillmore’s assumptions, were active in the minds of the first readers of the biblical texts. The methodology sets out the following main steps:¹⁷

- Look at every biblical text that contains the lexeme in question. Using the syntax and the inner-textual context (“co-text”) of every passage, determine the protagonists involved and the main circumstances at hand.

¹² Marvin Minsky, *A Framework for Representing Knowledge*, in: Patrick H. Winston (ed.), *The Psychology of Computer Vision*, New York 1975, 211–277: 212.

¹³ Lawrence W. Barsalou, *Frames, Concepts, and Conceptual Fields*, in: Adrienne Lehrer/Eva F. Kittay (ed.), *Frames, Fields, and Contrasts. New Essays in Semantic and Lexical Organization*, Hillsdale 1992, 21–74: 37–40.

¹⁴ Stephen L. Shead, *Radical Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew. Exploring Lexical Semantics (BiInS 108)*, Leiden 2011.

¹⁵ Christian Stettler, *Das Endgericht bei Paulus. Framesemantische und exegetische Studien zur paulinischen Eschatologie und Soteriologie (WUNT 371)*, Tübingen 2017.

¹⁶ Carsten Ziegert, *Glauben und Vertrauen im Alten Testament. Eine kognitiv-linguistische Untersuchung*, ZAW 131 (2019) 607–624; Carsten Ziegert, *What is חֶסֶד? A frame-semantic approach*, JSOT 44 (2020) 711–732; Carsten Ziegert, *A Case for Grace? Case-Grammar, Frame-Semantics, and Biblical Hebrew הֵן*, VT 71 (2021) 133–150.

¹⁷ Ziegert, *Glauben* (fn. 16) 613–614; Ziegert, *חֶסֶד* (fn. 16) 719–720; Ziegert, *Grace* (fn. 16) 138–139.

- Prioritize texts that represent real-life prototypical situations, or “scenes.” These are mostly narrative texts with human protagonists. Further, concentrate on texts that provide as much information as possible about the situation being referred to.
- For every passage, assign labels to the protagonists that correspond roughly to the semantic roles of Fillmore’s semantically motivated case grammar.¹⁸ These labels are *Agentive* for the animate instigator of an event, *Instrumental* for the inanimate force bringing it about, *Dative* or *Experiencer* for an affected animate being, *Factitive* for an object resulting from the event, *Locative* for a location or an orientation, and *Objective* as a dummy for “the semantically most neutral case.” In special cases like, e.g., if more than one *Agentive* is involved (like in the case of the roles of a *Buyer* and a *Seller* which are mutually reciprocal), use other labels in order to represent the protagonists.
- Search in the contexts for information describing the scenes in more detail. To represent them, add other labels to the list. All these labels are candidates for the slots of the frame representing the lexeme’s meaning.
- Look for patterns of recurring elements across the texts and finalize the choice of slots. Formulate constraints that describe the relationship between the slots, in terms of their content.
- Once the frame has been reconstructed, try to use it for the interpretation of biblical texts that are considered unclear or highly controversial in the scholarly literature.

Using this methodology, I will now investigate the meaning of some biblical Hebrew verbs belonging to the lexical field of “space.” In doing so, I will intentionally refrain from providing glosses (i.e., translation equivalents) for the lexemes under scrutiny. The reason for this is that glosses are potentially ambiguous, and frame semantics, since it is based on prototypical scenes, provides a useful tool for imagining these scenes and thus grasping the meaning of the lexemes under consideration.

3. Spatial Turn and Spatial Terms: פָּרַד and בָּדַל (“separate”)

Before using frame semantics, some general remarks about the words in question are in order. The verbal roots פָּרַד and בָּדַל are attested in several stems. From a linguistic point of view, these verbal stems or *Binyanim* of a root each define their own lexemes, since their formation is not on the morphological level of

¹⁸ See Charles J. Fillmore, *The Case for Case*, in: Emmon Bach/Robert T. Harms (ed.), *Universals in Linguistic Theory*, New York 1968, 1–88: 19–25; Ziegert, Grace (fn. 16) 136–137.

inflection, but on the level of derivation.¹⁹ Therefore, it is advisable not to study the verbal root as a whole but rather the individual verbs as defined by their stem.²⁰ For פָּרַד, I will examine the verbs in the H, N, and Dt stems (7, 12, and 4 attestations, respectively) and ignore the verbs in the G and D stems (1 and 2 attestations, respectively).²¹ The root בָּדַל occurs only in the H and N stems (31 and 10 attestations, respectively). The *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* gives the meanings of the verbs in question as follows:²²

פָּרַד H: separate, segregate; cause a separation

פָּרַד N: be separated; separate (oneself); diverge (river, Gen 2:10)

פָּרַד Dt: be separated (from one another): be scattered; become dislocated (bones, Ps 22:15)

בָּדַל H: separate, make a separation, distinguish; separate, set apart; sever (bird offered, Lev 1:17)

בָּדַל N: be separated, separate oneself, withdraw; defect (1Chr 12:9)

As can be seen, there is a great deal of agreement in meaning among them. Apart from some special meanings marked by indication of biblical passages, the denotation of both פָּרַד and בָּדַל for the H-stem can roughly be given as “separate.” The N and Dt stems represent the passive and the middle voice.²³ Consequently, in the meanings of the corresponding verbs we find “be separate” (פָּרַד N and Dt, בָּדַל N) and “separate oneself” (פָּרַד N, בָּדַל N).

How do biblical texts construct space by means of these verbs? Is there a difference in denotation? Or are these verbs rather more or less synonyms? The *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* states that בָּדַל belongs to the priestly sphere, while its “synonym” פָּרַד is used to describe a separation in “profane” settings.²⁴ Whether this characterization is adequate will be shown in the course of the following analysis.

¹⁹ Holger Gzella, *Ancient Hebrew*, in: id. (ed.), *Languages from the World of the Bible*, Boston 2012, 76–110: 105.

²⁰ This is in line with James Barr’s warnings against what he called the “root fallacy;” see James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, Oxford 1961, 100–103.

²¹ Figures according to Jutta Hausmann, פָּרַד *pārad*, TDOT 12 (2003) 76–79: 77 and Benedikt Otzen, בָּדַל *bādāl*, TDOT 2 (1977) 1–3: 1.

²² DCH, s.v. פָּרַד; s.v. בָּדַל (here for biblical texts only).

²³ Gzella, *Ancient Hebrew* (fn. 19) 106.

²⁴ Otzen, בָּדַל (fn. 21) 1–2.

3.1 Framing Space as Described by פָּרַד

3.1.1 פָּרַד H

Using the terminology of frame semantics, the meaning of the verb פָּרַד (H stem) can be described as follows. An *Agentive*²⁵ creates physical space between different instances of an *Experiencer*. On a syntactic level, the *Agentive* is expressed as the subject of the clause, and the *Experiencer* is expressed by means of a prepositional phrase with בֵּין (or as a direct object). The following examples illustrate this:

2 Kgs 2:11²⁶

והנה רכב אֵשׁ וסוסי אֵשׁ ויפרדו בין שניהם

... a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them ...

The chariot of fire with its horses (*Agentive*) creates physical space between Elijah (*Experiencer*) and Elisha (*Experiencer*).

Ruth 1:17

כי המות יפריד ביני ובינך

... if even death parts me from you!

Ruth, unwilling to leave her mother-in-law but clinging to her (קִבַּק, v. 14), describes her intention by stating that only death (*Agentive*) can separate them (*Experiencer*). This would be the only way to prevent Ruth from following Naomi to her land. Ruth does not want to allow any physical space between herself and Naomi, so she emphasizes that only death could create such a (hypothetical) physical space.

Deut 32:8

בהנחל עליון גוים בהפרידו בני אדם

When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he divided humankind, ...

This parallelism describes how the Most High God gave each nation its inheritance (נַחַל). He did this by separating (פָּרַד) them from one another, i.e., by creating physical space between them.

A schematic diagram of the frame is shown in figure 1.

²⁵ All slot names are indicated by italics and capital initials.

²⁶ In all example texts, the filler of the *Experiencer* slot is underlined, and the filler of the *Agentive* slot is double underlined. English translations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

<p>פרד event</p> <p><i>Slots:</i></p> <p>A Agentive</p> <p>E Experiencer</p> <p><i>Constraints:</i></p> <p>E consists of different entities</p> <p>A creates physical space between the entities of E</p> <p>E entities experience the creation of physical space between them</p>
--

Figure 1: Frame for the meaning of פרד (#1)

3.1.2 פרד Dt

For פרד in the Dt stem, no other frame needs to be specified as can be easily seen.

Job 4:11

לִישׁ אֲבָד מִבְּלֵי טָרֶף וּבְנֵי לְבִיא יִתְפָּרְדּוּ

The strong lion perishes for lack of prey, and the whelps of the lioness are scattered.

The parallelism states that the lions die for lack of prey, and that their cubs (*Experiencer*) scatter (or, are scattered), apparently for the same reason. Whether one interprets the Dt stem here as representing passive or middle voice does not matter. Either way, it is clear that physical space is created between the cubs. Although no *Agentive* is mentioned on the surface level, the context indicates that God has caused the trouble for the animals (cf. v. 9).²⁷ Hence, on the semantic level, there really is an *Agentive*.

Exactly the same observations can be made regarding פרד Dt in Ps 92:10 (God creates physical space between the evildoers). The case is similar for Job 41:9 (nobody can create physical space between the shields on Leviathan's back) and Ps 22:15 (physical space is created between the psalmist's bones).

²⁷ The remarks about the lions having become powerless (vv. 10–11) most likely serve as a picture of God's actions against the unrighteous; see David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC 17), Dallas 1989, 127–128.

3.1.3 פָּרַד N

The frame that was reconstructed so far applies also to some instances of פָּרַד in the N stem:

Neh 4:13

וְאֵנַחְנּוּ נִפְרָדִים עַל הַחוֹמָה רְחוּקִים אִישׁ מֵאֲחֵיו

... and we are separated far from one another on the wall.

Nehemia, including himself, states that there is a considerable physical space between the individual workers. An *Agentive* is not explicitly mentioned on the linguistic surface. However, it goes without saying that somebody has created the physical space between the workers, probably Nehemia himself in his capacity as the organizer of the building project.

Similarly, David, in his mourning song for Jonathan and Saul, states that the two of them could not be separated (פָּרַד N), even in death (2 Sam 1:23). They are now in the same place; there is no physical space between them.

Other passages describe the separation of different people groups from each other, mostly in the context of a lineage tree (Gen 10:5, 32; 25:23; cf. also Gen 2:10). In these passages, too, there is no explicit mention of an *Agentive*.

But there are other texts containing פָּרַד (N) that require a new frame (#2):

Gen 13:9, 11 (cf. v. 14)

הֲלֹא כָל הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵיךָ הִפְרָד נָא מֵעָלַי

Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me ...

וַיִּפְרְדּוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל אֲחֵיו

... thus they separated from each other.

Because of the frequent quarrels between Abraham's and Lot's shepherds, Abraham encourages his nephew (*Agentive*) to leave him (*Experiencer*), i.e., to create physical space between himself and Abraham (v. 11). Lot agrees, and the two of them (both *Agentive* and *Experiencer*) separate from each other (v. 14).

Judg 4:11

וְחֵבֶר הַקֵּינִי נִפְרָד מִקֵּינִי

Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites ...

This circumstantial clause mentions that Heber the Kenite (*Agentive*) had separated from his fellow Kenites (*Experiencer*), which can only mean that he created physical space between himself and the other Kenites.

Unlike the first פָּרַד frame, this new frame (see figure 2) does not describe the creation of space between multiple *Experiencer* entities by a separate *Agentive*; instead, it describes the *Experiencer* as a unit from which the *Agentive* physically withdraws. On a syntactic level, the *Experiencer* is marked by the preposition בָּן.

פָּרַד event
<i>Slots:</i>
A Agentive
E Experiencer
<i>Constraints:</i>
A creates physical space between himself and E
E experiences the creation of physical space between himself and A

Figure 2: Frame for the meaning of פָּרַד (#2)

3.1.4 Summary and Further Implications

So far, we have reconstructed two frames for three verbs, namely, פָּרַד in the H, Dt, and N stems (see table 1). It could be argued that an additional frame is needed in order to complement frame #1, since there are passages that do not contain an *Agentive*. As I have argued earlier with Fillmore's frame for commercial events, if the frame really does contain a certain slot, then that slot can be assumed to be present in the minds of language users, even if no filler for it appears on the linguistic surface. However, it could be argued that in the case of some passages containing פָּרַד in the Dt or N stem, the existence of an implicit *Agentive* seems doubtful. This problem cannot be solved here, since there are only quite a few occurrences of the given verbs in the Hebrew Bible. A kind of workaround would be to mark the *Agentive* slot in frame #1 as optional and thus refrain from formulating an additional frame definition.

	H	N	Dt	
frame #1	×	×	×	Firstspace
frame #2		×		Firstspace

Table 1: Verbal stems and frames for פָּרַד

More importantly, the semantic difference between פָּרַד frames #1 and #2 should not go unnoticed. In frame #1, the *Agentive* separates several *Experiencer* entities

from each other, so it is assumed that he himself is not part of the set of *Experiencers*. In frame #2, on the other hand, the *Agentive* is in fact part of a given set of entities, separating himself from the others.

Both frames agree in that they describe physical space, or “perceived space,” according to Lefebvre, and “Firstspace,” according to Soja. This observation can shed some light on other passages that contain פָּרַד (H and N stems). It suggests that some texts in the book of Proverbs which are often quite condensed, are about Firstspace, although this is not explicitly mentioned apart from the use of פָּרַד.

Prov 16:28

אִישׁ תְּהַפְכוֹת יִשְׁלַח מְדוֹן וְנִרְגַּן מִפְּרִיד אֱלוֹף

A perverse person spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.

The two parallel halves of this proverb say that a dishonest person causes conflict, and that a slanderer (נִרְגַּן) separates close friends (אֱלוֹף) from each other.²⁸ This could easily be understood as an emotional separation. According to the פָּרַד frame #1, however, physical separation is what the verb designates. Bruce Waltke also opts (without giving reasons) for a “spatial separation” (while at the same time conceding that there is a connotation of “social alienation,” since people are involved).²⁹ It is quite conceivable that the former friends actually avoid being in the same place at the same time because of the slanderer’s actions.

Prov 18:18

מְדִינִים יִשְׁבִּית הַגּוֹרֵל וּבֵין עֲצוּמִים יִפְרִיד

Casting the lot puts an end to disputes and decides between powerful contenders.

This proverb claims that the use of the lot (גּוֹרֵל) can end quarrels. Because of the context (v. 17), Waltke interprets these quarrels as legal disputes.³⁰ If no verdict can be reached between strong opponents (עֲצוּמִים), then, according to Waltke, the lot can be used to make a decision. The verb פָּרַד here “connotes making a desirable *division* in contrast to an undesirable *alienation*.”³¹ What the lot helps to decide, then, is where to place a physical boundary (e.g., between the putative properties of the opponents). Both examples from the book of Proverbs

²⁸ Most translations and commentaries assume that אֱלוֹף is used here as a collective noun, see, e.g., Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 18B), New Haven 2009, 621. Otherwise, the sense would be that the slanderer separates a friend from himself.

²⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs. Chapters 15–31* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 2005, 33.

³⁰ Waltke, *Proverbs 15–31* (fn. 29) 83–84.

³¹ Waltke, *Proverbs 15–31* (fn. 29) 83 (emphasis mine).

focus on physical space (referred to by פָּרָד) which fits well with the frequent references to everyday life found throughout the book.

So far, the application of frame semantics has shown that it is possible to identify texts that focus on physical space as opposed to mental or social space. In the next section, we will see that verbs of the root בָּדַל denote something that is, in terms of space, fundamentally different from פָּרָד.

3.2 Framing Space as Described by בָּדַל

3.2.1 בָּדַל H

A frame semantic analysis of the verb בָּדַל in the H stem will show that this verb has two different meanings. The frame for the first meaning contains slots for an *Agentive*, an *Experiencer*, a *Totality*, and a *Purpose*.

Num 8:14; 16:9

והבדלת את הלוים מתוך בני ישראל והיו לי הלוים

Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the other Israelites, and the Levites shall be mine.

המעט מכם כי הבדיל אלהי ישראל אתכם מעדת ישראל להקריב אתכם אליו

Is it too little for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to allow you to approach him ...

The common theme of both texts is that the Levites (*Experiencer*) are set apart. In Num 8:14, God commands Moses (*Agentive*) to do this, while in Num 16:9, Moses states that the “God of Israel” (*Agentive*) has done it. The *Totality* from which the Levites are set apart, is given as the “children of Israel” in 8:14 and as the “congregation of Israel” in 16:9. At the syntactic level, the *Totality* is marked by the preposition מִן.³² In both texts, a *Purpose* is given for which the Levites are set apart: they are to belong to God (*wegatal* clause in 8:14) and be near him (infinitive clause in 16:9).

Deut 4:41–42

אז יבדיל משה שלש ערים בעבר הירדן מזרחה שמש לנס שמה רוצה

Then Moses set apart on the east side of the Jordan three cities to which a homicide could flee ...

The text states that Moses (*Agentive*) set apart three cities of refuge (*Experiencer*) east of the Jordan. The *Purpose* is given by means of an infinitive clause (“so

³² In Num 8:14, the complex preposition מִתּוֹךְ (< מִן תּוֹךְ, “from the midst of”) is used which probably intensifies the semantic aspect of a separation from a totality.

that a manslayer might flee there”). Although a *Totality* is not visible on the linguistic surface, it is assumed that a *Totality* actually exists, namely, all the cities in the land east of the Jordan.

A diagram of the frame is shown in figure 3. Unlike the meaning(s) of פָּרַד as represented by the respective frames (cf. figures 1 and 2), the meaning of בָּדַל is not so much about physical space. Even though the Levites live in a different place in the camp than the other Israelites (see Num 1:52–53), the focus in the texts cited above is undoubtedly on mental separation. The case is even clearer for the cities of refuge, which are already located in different geographical places than the other cities and are now defined as entities on their own with a special purpose.

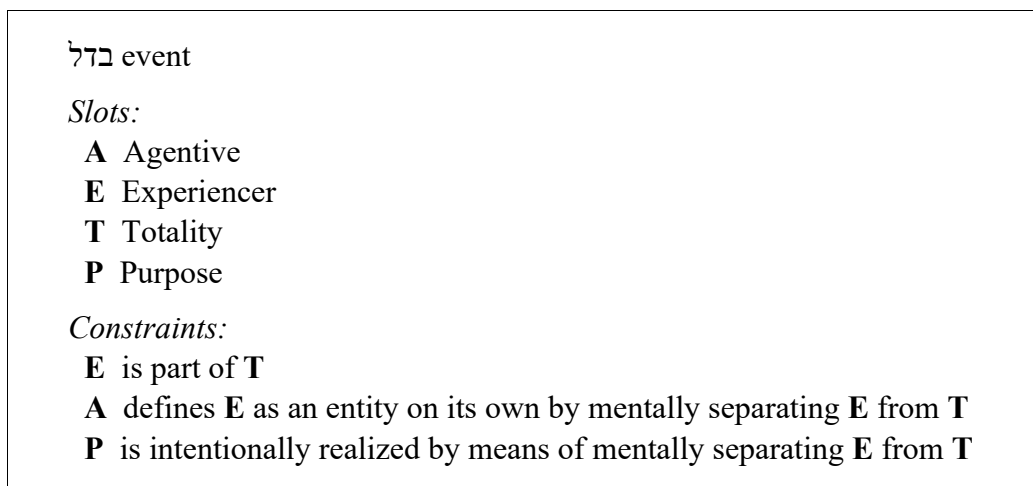


Figure 3: Frame for the meaning of בָּדַל (#1)

Other texts that contain בָּדַל in the H stem call for a different frame (#2). This new frame does not describe the fact that one element of a totality is considered as a separate entity but rather that two entities are considered distinct. It should be noted that, unlike in the example texts for בָּדַל frame #1, the *Experiencer* is here marked by the preposition בֵּין.

Gen 1:14

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֲרָתָם בְּרִקְיעַ שְׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה

And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night ...”

God creates lights in the “dome” (רִקִיעַ) of heaven which are to “separate” (בָּדַל H) day from night. In v. 16, the two “great lights” are identified as the sun and the moon. Their function is to “rule” (מָשַׁל) the day and the night, respectively. Thus, “separating” in v. 14 means that day and night are clearly defined by which of the two lights is visible. This agrees with the usual interpretation of the verb בָּדַל (H) in Gen 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18. According to Georg Fischer, “God’s ordering

intervention assigns each element its own sphere and ensures that there is no conflict or abandonment of *their respective identities and characteristics*.³³

Lev 20:25

והבדלתם בין הבהמה הטהרה לטמאה ובין העוף הטמא לטהר

You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean ...

The Israelites are told to distinguish between pure and impure animals and between impure and pure birds.³⁴ They are to consider each animal (and bird, respectively) as belonging to one of two distinct classes.³⁵

Exod 26:33

והבדילה הפרכת לכם בין הקדש ובין קדש הקדשים

... and the curtain shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy.

In this text, the curtain in the tabernacle is said to “separate” the “Most Holy Place” from the “Holy Place.” This “separation,” like the בדל events in the previous examples, does not primarily relate to physical space, but to mental space. Christoph Dohmen notes that for the tabernacle as a whole, the word משפט in v. 30 indicates a focus on “order” and not on the details of physical construction.³⁶ Annette Schellenberg likewise observes that the priestly texts in general give little attention to physical borders within the cultic system.³⁷ These observations fit well with the hypothesis that the function of the curtain is to define mental space rather than physical space.

³³ Georg Fischer, Genesis 1–11 (HThKAT), Freiburg 2018, 130 (translation and emphasis mine).

³⁴ The expression ל ... בין instead of the more common ובין ... בין has been interpreted as indicating a later chronolect of biblical Hebrew. On a semantic level, however, it could indicate a distinction between entities of the same class. Cf. Dong-Hyuk Kim, Early Biblical Hebrew, Late Biblical Hebrew, and Linguistic Variability. A Sociolinguistic Evaluation of the Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts (VT.S 156), Leiden 2013, 122–128; Bruce K. Waltke/Michael P. O’Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax, Winona Lake 1990, §11.2.6. In Lev 20:25, it may well be motivated by the fact that two different distinctions are combined, hence, the fourfold sequence ובין ... ובין ... ובין ... בין would be misleading.

³⁵ It has to be noted that, while בדל frame #2 applies to Lev 20:25a, בדל frame #1 applies to Lev 20:24, 25b, 26. These verses will be discussed in section 3.2.3.

³⁶ Christoph Dohmen, Exodus 19–40 (HThKAT), Freiburg 2004, 258–260.

³⁷ Annette Schellenberg, “And God Separated the Light from the Darkness” (Gen 1:4). On the Role of Borders in the Priestly Texts of the Pentateuch, in: Annette Weissenrieder (ed.), Borders. Terminologies, Ideologies, and Performances (WUNT 366), Tübingen 2016, 23–41: 29–31.

The frame for this meaning of **בדל** in the H stem is depicted in figure 4. Both meanings of this verb, as modeled by the frames #1 and #2, are related to mental space.

<p>בדל event</p> <p><i>Slots:</i></p> <p>A Agentive</p> <p>E Experiencer</p> <p><i>Constraints:</i></p> <p>E consists of two entities</p> <p>A defines the entities of E as being different</p>

Figure 4: Frame for the meaning of **בדל** (#2)

3.2.2 **בדל** N

The verb **בדל** in the N stem, attested only in Num (1), 1–2 Chr (2), and Ezr–Neh (7), has two meanings, hence, two frames are needed. One of them has already been reconstructed, namely frame #1 for **בדל** H, which also applies to two texts with **בדל** N.

1 Chr 23:13

בני עמרם אהרן ומשה ויבדל אהרן להקדישו קדש קדשים

The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart to consecrate the most holy things ...

Aaron (*Experiencer*) has been set apart, probably by God (*Agentive*), from the other sons of Amram (*Totality*) in order to dedicate the most holy things (*Purpose*).

Ezr 10:8

והוא יבדל מקהל הגולה

... and they themselves should be banned from the congregation of the exiles.

The text of vv. 7–8 reports that the leaders of the returned exiles summon everybody to Jerusalem in order to renew the covenant with God (v. 3). Anyone who would not come (*Experiencer*) would be excluded (**בדל** N) from the *golah* community (*Totality*). An *Agentive* is not explicitly given, but we can safely assume that the community leaders would perform the act of exclusion. Although a *Purpose* is not explicitly stated, we find one in the broader context. The problem to be addressed by the assembly is the common practice of intermarriage with women from the “peoples of the lands” (Ezra 9:1). Since Ezra’s prayer of repent-

ance (9:6–15) focuses on the community as a whole (cf. use of first-person plural), it seems obvious that the problem can only be solved collectively.³⁸ Therefore, when people refuse to come and discuss the matter, their excommunication serves the purpose of bringing the community's problem to a successful conclusion.

As becomes clear from the reconstruction of בדל frame #1 in section 3.2.1 and from the discussion of these texts with בדל N, the meaning represented by this frame is on the level of mental space or, according to Soja's terminology, Secondspace. There are, however, other passages containing בדל N which call for another frame (a third one for בדל).

Ezra 6:21

ויאכלו בני ישראל השבים מהגולה וכל הנבדל מטמאת גוי הארץ אלהם לדרש ליהוה אלהי ישראל

It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by all who had joined them and separated themselves from the pollutions of the nations of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel.

In the context of the returnees' Passover celebration, it is stated that they were joined by some other people who had "separated themselves" (בדל N participle) from the "impurity of the peoples of the land." Although the Peshitta and 3 Esdras testify to the form כל instead of וכל, thereby identifying the Israelites and those who "separate themselves," it is likely that the Masoretic text provides the older reading.³⁹ Hence, there were people who did not return from exile—most likely Israelites who did not experience deportation.⁴⁰ They are described as dissociating themselves from (מן) their own socio-religious identity and associating with the *golah* community (אלהם). In terms of frame semantics, we have an *Agentive*, namely, the people just mentioned; a *Totality*, namely, people with the same background; and a *Destination*, namely, the community of the returnees. What is happening here is not just a definition on a cognitive level as represented by בדל frames #1 and #2 (Secondspace), but rather a self-definition of these people in terms of social identity, in other words, the creation of Thirdspace.

1 Chr 12:9

ומן הגדי נבדלו אל דויד למצד מדברה גברי החיל

From the Gadites there went over to David at the stronghold in the wilderness mighty and experienced warriors ...

³⁸ Cf. Hugh G. M. Williamson, *Ezra/Nehemia* (WBC 16), Dallas 1985, 134.

³⁹ Cf. Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, *Ezra* (KAT), Gütersloh 1985, 115. Notably, BHQ no longer presents the reading without ך at all while BHS had it marked with "falso."

⁴⁰ Bob Becking, *Ezra – Nehemiah* (HCOT 10), Leuven 2018, 95.

In the context of a list of warriors who fought with David, the text mentions some of the Gadites (*Agentive*). They had dissociated themselves from (גד) their fellow-Gadites (*Totality*) and associated with (לד) David (*Destination*). Since they had to leave their tribal territory in the east and cross the Jordan in order to reach David (cf. v. 16), Firstspace is necessarily involved. It is noteworthy, however, that this event took place while Saul was still king over all of Israel (v. 1). Hence, these Gadites dissociated themselves not only from their tribe but also from the Israelite monarchy under Saul. They thereby construct not only a new identity as followers of David but also the vision of a new Israel under Davidic rule, i.e., Thirdspace.

Figure 5 shows a schematic diagram of this frame, which is related to social space, or Thirdspace.

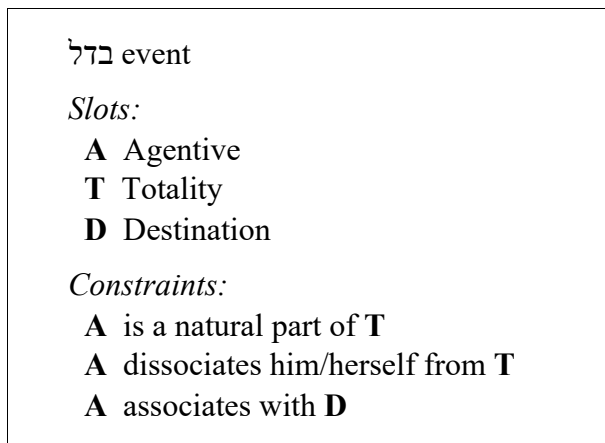


Figure 5: Frame for the meaning of גד (#3)

3.2.3 Summary and Further Implications

For גד in the H and N stems, three frames have been reconstructed (see table 2). According to frame #1, גד (H and N stems, respectively) denotes a situation as follows. An *Agentive* mentally “separates” an *Experiencer* belonging to a *Totality* from the said *Totality* in order to achieve a certain *Purpose* (cf. figure 3). According to frame #2, גד (H stem) describes the fact that an *Agentive* defines the two entities of which a given *Experiencer* consists as distinct (cf. figure 4). In both cases, the event referred to operates on a mental level, thus creating Secondspace. Frame #3, finally, denotes a meaning of גד (N stem) that is on an entirely different level: An *Agentive* who is naturally part of a *Totality* dissociates him/herself from that *Totality* and associates with a *Destination* which may be a social group or a mental concept (cf. figure 5). In this case, גד (N stem) describes the creation of Thirdspace.

	H	N	
frame #1	×	×	Secondspace
frame #2	×		Secondspace
frame #3		×	Thirdspace

Table 2: Verbal stems and frames for בָּדַל

The reconstruction of these three frames can shed some light on other passages that contain בָּדַל (H and N stems). I will give two examples.

The first example concerns frame #3. Similar to Ezra 6:21 discussed above (see section 3.2.2), Neh 10:29 mentions Jews of various social classes (priests, Levites, etc.) who dissociate themselves (בָּדַל N) from the peoples of the lands (מַעַמֵי הָאָרְצוֹת, *Totality*). Unlike the passages discussed so far, the *Agentive* here associates with a non-personal *Destination*, namely the Torah (אֵל תּוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים). Although the Torah, particularly its legislative texts, can be seen as constructing an ideal model and thus Secondspace, a personal and communal association with the Torah within a non-Israelite environment actually creates Thirdspace. Other passages from Ezra–Nehemiah (Ezra 9:1; 10:11; Neh 9:2) confirm this picture, albeit without explicitly mentioning the Torah as *Destination*. However, since frame #3, as reconstructed in section 3.2.2, does in fact contain a *Destination* slot, we can conclude that the post-exilic concept of “separation” as expressed by בָּדַל (N stem) includes not only an old allegiance, according to some Secondspace that is being abandoned (*Totality*), but also a new allegiance to which one turns, against the rules of that Secondspace, thus creating Thirdspace.

The second example is Lev 20:24–26, a passage that contains בָּדַל (H) four times (cf. table 3). Three times (vv. 24, 25b, 26), the use of בָּדַל corresponds to frame #1 (Secondspace, cf. figure 3), and once (v. 25a) it corresponds to frame #2 (also Secondspace; cf. figure 4). In v. 24b, YHWH (*Agentive*) declares that he has “mentally set apart” (בָּדַל) the Israelites (*Experiencer*) from (מִן) the nations (*Totality*). Thus, YHWH creates Secondspace by defining Israel as a separate entity in contrast to the other nations. In v. 25a, YHWH commands the Israelites (*Agentive*) to “distinguish” (בָּדַל) between pure and impure animals (*Experiencer*), i.e., to consider them as being different (frame #2, cf. the discussion of this verse in section 3.2.1). In v. 25b YHWH mentions that he (*Agentive*) has “set apart” (בָּדַל) certain animals (*Experiencer*) for the Israelites (לְכַם), in order to define them as impure (*Purpose*). These animals are, of course, part of the *Totality* of all animals. Finally, in v. 26, YHWH commands the Israelites to be holy (קָדְשׁ) because he is holy. This command is motivated by the fact that YHWH (*Agentive*) has “set apart” the Israelites (*Experiencer*) from (מִן) the nations (*Totality*), so that they may belong to him (*Purpose*).

		<i>Agentive</i>	<i>Experiencer</i>	<i>Totality</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
v. 24	frame #1	YHWH	Israelites	all nations	(implicit)
v. 25a	frame #2	Israelites	pure / impure	—	—
v.25b	frame #1	YHWH	certain animals	all animals	definition of impurity
v. 26	frame #1	YHWH	Israelites	all nations	belonging to YHWH

Table 3: בָּדַל in Lev 20:24–26

A huge amount of literature has been devoted to examining Israel’s dietary laws and the biblical concept of holiness, and a detailed engagement with such discussions cannot be taken up here. From the perspective of our frame semantic analysis, we can nevertheless safely draw the following conclusions. First, since both frame #1 and frame #2 are concerned with Secondspace, a physical separation from the nations is not necessarily intended. This is also confirmed by the legislation for the גֵר and the תושב who are assumed to live among the Israelites (see, e.g., Lev 19:33–34, 25:6). Second, since frame #1 contains a *Purpose* slot, the verb here does not refer to a “separation” for the sake of separation, but for the sake of belonging to YHWH.⁴¹ Third, YHWH’s separation of certain animals is a kind of definition in which the choice of the animals being declared pure or impure seems arbitrary (Secondspace).⁴² V. 26 mirrors v. 25b, so YHWH’s choice of Israel also seems arbitrary (cf. Deut 7:6–8). When Israel “distinguishes” between pure and impure animals (v. 25a), they are imitating YHWH (*imitatio dei*),⁴³ thereby recalling their own election. Fourth, Israel’s holiness is not realized by a physical “Firstspace separation” performed by the Israelites, but by a mental “Secondspace separation” performed by God. Although the old hypothesis that the verb קָדַשׁ is etymologically related to a biliteral root *QD* meaning “to cut” has been abandoned,⁴⁴ we can still assume that the meaning of קָדַשׁ is related to a “separation,” however, it is a separation in terms of Secondspace.

⁴¹ Cf., similarly, Jackie A. Naudé, קָדַשׁ, NIDOTTE 3 (1997) 877–887: 885 (“Consecration is a separation to God rather than a separation from the world”).

⁴² Cf. Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus* (JPSTC), Philadelphia 1989, 243–248.

⁴³ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1979, 280.

⁴⁴ Naudé, קָדַשׁ (fn. 41) 885.

3.3 פרד and בדל Compared

Far from being “synonyms,”⁴⁵ the verbs belonging to the roots פרד and בדל operate on entirely different levels. While the former is limited to Firstspace, the latter is used to describe the construction of Secondspace and of Thirdspace (see table 4).

	Firstspace	Secondspace	Thirdspace
פרד frame #1	×		
פרד frame #2	×		
בדל frame #1		×	
בדל frame #2		×	
בדל frame #3			×

Table 4: The frames and their respective kinds of space

In different biblical books, the notion of space is framed differently, as we have seen. The book of Proverbs is more interested in the concrete consequences of human behavior. These consequences are mainly described in terms of Firstspace, using פרד. On the other hand, the Holiness legislation and other texts usually referred to as “priestly texts” focus on Secondspace. Ezra–Nehemiah is very much concerned with issues of identity in a foreign environment, so Thirdspace plays a role here. These results may not come as much of a surprise. However, it must be kept in mind that they were obtained by a minute semantic analysis of various lexemes, using a transparent method.

4. Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction to the present paper, the application of space-related theories to biblical texts calls for a sound methodology that takes the worldview of the first readers of these texts into account.⁴⁶ As a step in this direction, Gert Prinsloo’s integrative approach includes, in addition to notions of social space according to Lefebvre and Soja, also aspects of narrative theory as well as reflections on spatial orientation in the Ancient Near East.⁴⁷ The latter aspect is part of the worldview and thus of the encyclopedic system of the first readers.

⁴⁵ Cf. Otzen, פִּדְל (fn. 21) 1–2.

⁴⁶ Schreiner, Space (fn. 3) 361.

⁴⁷ Prinsloo, Place (fn. 3) 5–12.

Frame semantics also focuses on the encyclopedic knowledge of language users. It can be applied to the study of biblical Hebrew lexemes, refining (and sometimes even correcting) the usual glosses provided by dictionaries. In the present paper, I have studied the denotation of space-related lexemes, namely, verbs of the roots פָּרַד and בָּדַל. The semantic descriptions as modeled by the frames for the verbs under investigation were successfully brought in line with spatial terminology, with each frame uniquely assigned to one of the domains Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace, respectively. Hence, these spatial notions were observed also at the lexical level of the biblical texts.

Furthermore, the study has shown that spatial terminology can help to investigate the denotation of biblical Hebrew lexemes. Attempting to assign a reconstructed frame (and thus, the meaning of a lexeme) to one of the domains Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace can help researchers think more clearly about what the lexeme under investigation denotes. Therefore, a combination of established spatial approaches and a methodology from cognitive linguistics such as frame semantics can open up further avenues of research.