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 BH prepositions as key terms

"Key terms are often seen as a special set of biblical words with such rich and complex meanings that even the best terms in the vernacular will only allow a small part of those meanings to come through in the translation" (Harmelink 2012:25). Bryan Harmelink wrote that in an article in 2012 which suggests that the idea of key terms should be expanded into key concepts. Building on that notion of key concepts, I want to suggest two things from a semantic-pragmatic point of view: 1) that the word classes currently included in resources for key concepts should be expanded beyond nouns and verbs, and 2) that we use our cross-linguistic body of knowledge to help inform translation decisions of key concepts as we make Bibles. In this paper, I want to highlight some usages of the preposition **אֶחָד** which I think warrant attention within the key concepts framework. And I don't have time to show modern examples of cross-linguistic typologies (I'm sure many of you are walking around with them in your head), but I bring it up as relevant to expanding one's view of key concepts because of the example we will look at: **אֶחָד**. As a symbol of embodiment, **אֶחָד** is part of typological word class across languages which can describe space and time by a body-part term. This kind of semantic description is common in many languages, and Bible translators have a lot of data about the world's languages.

The New Testament key terms database is made for the purpose of being an explanatory aid to important theological concepts and for items and/or practices from the ancient world of which modern people are ignorant for the most part (Barnwell et al 2008). The concepts which this resource seeks to describe are realized in Greek mostly by nouns and some verbs. While these no doubt deserve attention, I would like to suggest that the exclusion of other word classes is possibly an implicit bias that has narrowed the focus to nouns and some verbs. I think this bias comes from varieties of structuralist linguistic schools which assume that some words are lexical words

while other words are grammatical words. Some biblical language grammars (like Holmstedt-Cook 2009) teach new students that some words carry meaning while other words only perform grammatical functions. If this line of thinking has been assumed in the key biblical terms research, then the reason why only nouns and verbs have been considered thus far is clear: prepositions and other so-called "grammatical" words are less valuable because they do not mean anything, they just do syntactic jobs.

However in cognitive linguistics, following Langacker (1987, 2008) and de Blois (2001), the idea that some words are meaningful while others purely functional—thus creating two semantic categories of words (the semantic and the non-semantic)—must be rejected. Words are symbols and all symbols symbolize something. In this way, Langacker describes meaning and grammar not as separate modules of language but rather as poles on a continuum. Some symbols on this continuum are closer to the lexical pole and some are closer to the grammatical pole, but they are all symbolic and thus all meaningful.

From a historical linguistic perspective, grammaticalization theory (Bybee et al 1994) holds that grammatical items tend to develop over time from lexical items. The past tense English suffix *-d* or *-ed* and its evolution from the past tense verb *did* is a common example. *Did* in older English only meant to do an action in the past and that meaning became associated with the phoneme *-d* over frequent usage resulting in the suffix we now use. The verb *did* then was freed from a strictly past tense semantic usage and is now used in more diverse contexts, for example as an assertion of fact/truth. Thus this grammatical suffix is historically rooted in a full lexical item.

So there are both synchronic and diachronic reasons to reconsider the contents of key biblical terms lists and perhaps add some prepositions, adverbs, and conjunctions for they are symbols like nouns and verbs are symbols. If there are such words which qualify as important theological-

ly and/or important culturally, then these should be considered for future key terms lists, or as Harmelink (2012) suggests, key concepts.

In my research I consider BH body-part nouns which have come to be used as prepositions, adverbs, and conjunctions (and even sometimes verbs) like **אֶחָד** and **בֵּינָה**. Body-part terms are a good place to start in expanding one's view of key terms because they can include multiple word classes, from noun to conjunction. And secondly, addressing a second problem of key terms as they exist now, body-part terms can provide a place to begin cultural conversations or comparisons between a translation team's culture and that of BH writers. Many modern languages use body-part terms in polysemous ways. In spatial cognition research, body-part terms are a rich domain of cross-linguistic typological research (Levinson and the Max Planck Institute). Many languages construe different kinds of spatial (and also temporal) experiences with body-part terms. BH is no different. So, languages which use body-part terms to construe embodied spatial experience, called egocentric language, may compare their embodied experience of space-time with such language of the Hebrew Bible (and GNT as well). Where these constructions are theologically or culturally significant (or at least instructive for ignorant modern people on ancient cultural issues), then they are in the key-terms domain and may rightly be described alongside other key-terms. This may also give modern egocentric spatial languages a way to creatively think about engaging the ancient text in a universal domain, the domain of spatial experience. While all people of all cultures do indeed experience space, it should be noted that some do not construe spatial experience with egocentrisms. Some languages, like the Australian aboriginal language Guugu Yimithirr, are not egocentric, but rather allocentric and utilize fixed spatial objects or positions for all spatial language. Speakers of Guugu Yimithirr describe space relations by cardinal directions, using the sun as their allocentric basis for personal space. Thus, a Guugu Yimithirr speaker would never say, "There is a snake in front of me" but rather always something like,

"There's a snake northwest of me" (Levinson 2003). Even so, there are more languages which use egocentric language than those that are exclusively allocentric, so for most of our translation projects, there can be direct benefit for translators in considering egocentric language in BH and in the target language.

I want to show you some metaphors made with **אָחֵר**. As you know, **אָחֵר** is a noun for the body-part *back*. Its not the only noun for *back*. BH also uses **נִיחָה** which we will see. But **אָחֵר** is used in many different ways. All first year BH students learn about **אָחֵר** as preposition and adverb and also the adjective **אַחֵר**. Most often, we are taught, **אָחֵר** symbolizes a posterior spatial relationship glossed as *behind*. In spatial relationships, this looks like Gen 19:6. In temporal relationships, this most often looks like Gen 5:4.

Gen 19:6 Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, (NRSV) וַיֵּצֵא אֲלֵהֶם לוֹט הַפֶּתַח וַהֲדִילַת סָנֵר אַחֲרָיו

Gen 5:4 The days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years; and he had other sons and daughters. (NRSV) וַיְהִי יְמֵי אָדָם אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־שֵׁת שְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיֹּלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת

Nothing special there. These do the spatial and temporal semantic jobs any first-year Hebrew student would expect. However, these prototypical usages come to be used in more diverse contexts making them candidates as key terms I think. The following examples are usages of **אָחֵר** where in context they symbolize a specific action or metaphor not instantiated by another morpheme in context. From the historical linguistic perspective of grammaticalization theory, this is likely due to frequent usage of motion verbs with **אָחֵר** or **אַחֲרֵי** in abstract contexts. After such frequent usage, the semantic frame they symbolize might have become linguistically entrenched over generations in a community and absorbed by **אָחֵר** alone as the verb+modifier construction eroded to modifier only with the motion implied. The devotion metaphor which I will introduce stands out in this regard.

Following sense

- Gen 32:19** then you shall say, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob; they are a present sent to my lord Esau; and moreover he is behind us.’” (NRSV)
- וְאָמַרְתָּ לְעֶבְדְּךָ לְיַעֲקֹב מִנְחָה הוּא שְׁלוּחָה לְאֲדֹנִי
לַעֲשׂוֹ וְהִנֵּה גַם־הוּא אַחֲרֵינוּ

אחר in Gen 32:19 demonstrates that the form may be used in verbless clauses and still symbolize implicit motion. (See also Gen 32:21; 2 Sam 2:19a; 20:2b; 23:9; Ezk 33:31; Psa 45:15; 94:15; Neh 5:15.) In this cases, **אחר** construes implied motion as posterior to a particular landmark.

Devotion

- 1 Sam 12:14** If you will fear the Lord and serve him and heed his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well; (NRSV)
- אִם־תִּירָאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה וְעַבַּדְתֶּם אֹתוֹ וּשְׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקוֹלִי
וְלֹא תִמְרוּ אֶת־פִּי יְהוָה וְהִיתֶם גַּם־אַתֶּם וְגַם־הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲשֶׁר מִלְּךָ עָלֵיכֶם אַחֲרֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
- 2 Sam 17:9** Even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits, or in some other place. And when some of our troops fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.’ (NRSV)
- הִנֵּה עַתָּה הוּא־נִחְבֵּא בְּאַחַת הַפְּחָתִים אוֹ בְּאַחַד
הַמְּקוֹמֹת וְהָיָה כַּנִּפְל בָּהֶם בַּתְּחִלָּה וְשָׁמַע הַשָּׂמַע
וְאָמַר הִיתָה מִגִּפָּה בָּעַם אֲשֶׁר אַחֲרֵי אֲבִשָׁלֹם
- 2 Sam 20:11** And one of Joab’s men took his stand by Amasa, and said, “Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab.” (NRSV)
- וְאִישׁ עָמַד עָלָיו מִבְּנֵי יוֹאָב וַיֹּאמֶר מִי אֲשֶׁר חָפֵץ
בְּיוֹאָב וּמִי אֲשֶׁר־לְדָוִד אַחֲרֵי יוֹאָב
- 1 Chr 5:25** But they transgressed against the God of their ancestors, and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. (NRSV)
- וַיִּמְעְלוּ בְּאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם וַיַּזְנוּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהֵי
עַמֵּי־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־הִשְׁמִיד אֱלֹהִים מִפְּנֵיהֶם

אחר as devotion often happens with verbs like **הלך** and **היה** and **מלא** in the piel stem. In these cases, the posterior spatial relationship symbolizes a commitment to a god or military leader. In 1 Chr 5:25, it is used with the verb **זנה** to construe as devotion *after* a god other than Yahweh as marital infidelity. However in 1 Sam 12:14; 2 Sam 17:9; and 2 Sam 20:11, **אחר** symbolizes this relationship of devotion on its own, without a verb. In 1 Sam 12:14, and in other places, devotion to the Lord is to be **אחרי** behind him.

Sequence/Rank

- 2 Sam 23:9, 11** Next to him among the three warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle....
 Next to him was Shammah son of Agee, the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the army fled from the Philistines. (NRSV)
- Ruth 4:4** So I thought I would tell you of it, and say: Buy it in the presence of those sitting here, and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not, tell me, so that I may know; for there is no one prior to you to redeem it, and I come after you." So he said, "I will redeem it." (NRSV)

ואַחֲרָיו [וְ]אַחֲרָיו אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־דָּדָי [וְ]בֶן־אֲחֹחִי
 בְּשִׁלְשָׁה גִבּוֹרִים [הָ]גִבּוֹרִים עִם־דָּוִד בְּחָרָם
 בְּפִלְשְׁתִּים נֹאסְפו־שָׁם לְמִלְחָמָה...
 וְאַחֲרָיו שָׁמָּה בֶן־אֵגֶי הַרָרִי וַיֹּאסְפוּ פִלְשְׁתִּים לַחֲיָה
 וַתְּהִי־שָׁם חֲלֻקַּת הַשָּׂדֶה מְלֵאָה עֲדָשִׁים וְהָעָם נָס
 מִפְּנֵי פִלְשְׁתִּים

וְאֲנִי אֹמְרִית אֵלֶיךָ אֲנִי לֵאמֹר קִנְיָה נָגֵד הַיֹּשְׁבִּים
 וְנָגֵד וְקִנְי עָמִי אֶם־תִּנְאַל נֹאֵל וְאֶם־לֹא יִנְאַל הַגִּידָה
 לִי וְאֵדַע [וְ]אֵדַע כִּי אֵין זִוְלָתְךָ לְנֹאֵל וְאֲנִכִּי
 אֲחִירִיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִכִּי אֲנִי־לִי

In these verses, אַחֲרִי functions as a social sequencer, in a military context in 2 Sam 23 and in a levirate legal context in Ruth 4. These are ancient institutions. The levirate laws in particular are foreign to many modern people. This is a cultural domain of ancient Israel that has long needed explaining for modern readers (and many of you have made wonderful footnotes). אַחֲרִי functions as a sequencer of events in time (Gen 18:5) and people in a procession (Psa 68:26). So it simply does so in these military and legal contexts as well (I'm not claiming that אַחֲרִי symbolizes a special military ranking or legal order meaning). So, when we come to these difficult cultural contexts in our translation projects, we can consider the use of embodied spatial language in the text and in our target languages to help explain the ancient concepts. For example, Boaz' statement that he is אַחֲרִי *after* Mr. What's His Face implies something about levirate law for those who might be unfamiliar with it, namely that family clans have more than one go'el, but that they are ordered.

- Gen 18:5** Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said."
- Psa 68:26** the singers in front, the musicians last, between them girls playing tambourines:

וְאֶקְחָה פַת־לֶחֶם וְסַעֲדוּ לְבָבְכֶם אַחֲרֵי תִעְבְּרוּ
 כִּי־עַל־כֵּן עֲבַרְתֶּם עַל־עַבְדְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֵּן תַעֲשֶׂה
 כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ

קָדְמוּ שָׂרִים אַחֲרֵי נְגִינִים בְּתוֹךְ עֹלְמוֹת תוֹפְפוֹת

Labor

Ex 11:5	Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the livestock. (NRSV)	ומת כל־בכור בארץ מצרים מבכור פרעה הישב על־בסאו עד בכור השפחה אשר אחר תרחים וכל בכור בהמה
2 Sam 7:8	Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; (NRSV)	ועתה כה־תאמר לעבדי לדוד כה אמר יהוה צבאות אני לקחתיו מן־הנגה מאחר הצאן להיות נגיד על־עמי על־ישראל
Psa 78:71	from tending the nursing ewes he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel, his inheritance. (NRSV)	מאחר עלות הביאו לרעות בעקב עמו ובישראל נחלתו
Job 39:10	Can you tie it (an ox) in the furrow with ropes, or will it harrow the valleys after you? (NRSV)	התקשר־רים בתלם עבתו אם־ישודד עמקים אחריך
Amos 7:15	and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' (NRSV)	ויקחני יהוה מאחרי הצאן ויאמר אלי יהוה לך הנבא אל־עמי ישראל
1 Chr 17:7	Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people Israel; (NRSV)	ועתה כה־תאמר לעבדי לדוד כה אמר יהוה צבאות אני לקחתיו מן־הנגה מן־אחרי הצאן להיות נגיד על עמי ישראל

Being behind animals is often used in the Hebrew Bible to symbolize labor. Once it is used with a hand-mill by a female laborer (Ex 11:5). In these cases, phrases like *אחרי הצאן* *behind the flock* and *אחרי עלות* *behind the ewes*, symbolize labor with animals, namely the tasks of shepherding. However in Job 39:10, the labor with animals metaphor is made into a joke where the rhetorical question is asked if an animal can get behind a human as a man would get behind an ox to work.

Ignorance

1 Kgs 14:9	but you have done evil above all those who were before you and have gone and made for yourself other gods, and cast images, provoking me to anger, and have thrust me behind your back; (NRSV)	ותרע לעשות מכל אשר־היו לפניך ותלך ותעשה־לך אלהים אחרים ומסכות להכעיסני ואחרי השלכת אחרי גנך ס
2 Kgs 19:21	This is the word that the Lord has spoken concerning him: She despises you, she scorns you— virgin daughter Zion; she tosses her head— behind your back, daughter Jerusalem. (NRSV)	זה הדבר אשר־דבר יהוה עליו בזה לך לענה לך בתולת בת־ציון אחריך ראש הניעה בת ירושלם

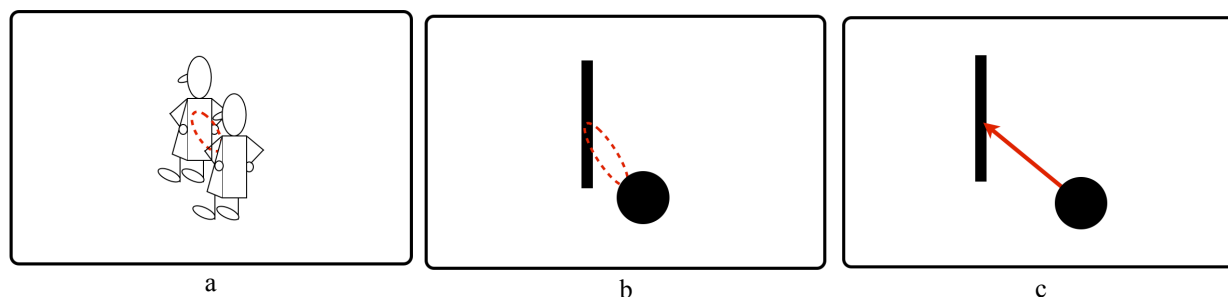
Isa 37:22 this is the word that the Lord has spoken concerning him: She despises you, she scorns you— virgin daughter Zion; she tosses her head— behind your back, daughter Jerusalem. (NRSV) זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר יְהוָה עָלַי בְּזֹה לֵךְ לַעֲנֶה לְךָ בְּתוּלַת בֶּת-צִיּוֹן אַחֲרֶיךָ רֹאשׁ הַנִּיעָה בֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם

Isa 38:17 Surely it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but you have held back my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back. (NRSV) הִנֵּה לְשָׁלוֹם בֵּרֶךְ-לִי מָר וְאַתָּה חֲשַׁקְתָּ נַפְשִׁי מִשַּׁחַת בְּלִי כִּי הִשְׁלַכְתָּ אַחֲרַי גִּיד כָּל-חַטָּאִי

In these cases, actions occur behind someone's back which is a physical metaphor for a person's ignorance. In some cases this is intentional ignorance, as in 1 Kgs 14:9 and Isa 38:17, and in other cases, the person is truly unaware of what happens behind their back, as in 2 Kgs 19:21 and Isa 37:22 which are quotations of each other. In 2 Kgs 19:21 and Isa 37:22, **אחרי** is used to symbolize the location of mockery in relation to the one being mocked. They are being made fun of *behind their back* and do not know it, like a "Kick Me" sign. This is a relationship of ignorance because the action is **אחרי** and not **לפני** where it can be seen. In 1 Kgs 14:9 and Isa 38:17, we see examples of intentional ignorance, used with the verb **שלה**. In 1 Kgs 14:9, Yahweh says the people have **שלה**'ed him **אחרי** their **גוה**. This implies that Yahweh had been **לפני** the people and now they want to move him to a place where he can be ignored, which is out of sight behind one's back. In a similar though upside-down and theologically significant way, Isaiah says in 38:17 that Yahweh has **שלה**'ed all his sins (**כל-חטאי**) behind his back (**אחרי גוה**), and thus making himself intentionally ignorant of the speaker's sin like the people had made themselves intentionally ignorant of Yahweh in 1 Kgs 14:9. While this is not a frequent description of God's forgiveness of sin, it is one, nevertheless, and should be considered along other forgiveness terms and phrases.

Should more folks than me consider prepositions and other relational words as key terms, there already exists cognitive semantic tools to help describe the meaning of prepositions in context. Lakoff, Johnson, and Langacker have started a tradition of trajector-landmark frame-semantic analysis of spatial scenes (and Levinson and the Max Planck Institute have organized typological

data into grammars of space for some modern languages). These frame semantic diagrams have developed over the years of cognitive linguists applying them to real world data. Tyler and Evans (2003) principled polysemy made good use of this method and it has been followed by in BH by Mena (2012), Rodriguez (2011), Lyle (2012), and Lemmer (2014). So we might consider describing אֵתֶּר in many of these cases with frame semantic diagrams, which are already being applied to BH, rather than only using target language glosses and definitions.



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