Two Ways of Giving in Hebrew: A Construction Grammar Account of Hebrew Dative Constructions
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Ditransitive constructions in Hebrew can be sub-categorized into two sub-constructions, each with a specific form-meaning correlation, a specific discourse pattern, and a different category organization. Syntactically, the two sub-constructions differ in that the THEME argument can be either a noun phrase, or an infinitival predicate. In particular, the verb natan ‘give’ represents a prototypical construal in each of the sub-constructions. That is, with a NP THEME argument the verb natan ‘give’ has its literal meaning. With an infinitival THEME argument, however, the verb has the meaning of ‘allow, enable.’ The following are two representative examples:

(1) im titnu laem takciv hem yaasu et ze be-
   if give.2PL.FUT DAT.3PL.MS budget they do.FUT ACC
   this in-
   kecev od yoter mahir.
   pace even faster.
   ‘If you’ll give them the budget, they’ll do it even faster.’

(2) tnu lanu beynataym latet lahem darga
   give.2PL.IMP DAT.1PL meanwhile to give DAT.3PL.MS position
   zmanit.
   temporary.
   ‘For now, let us give them a temporary position’ (Lit. give to us to give to them).

Thus, it seems that the same verb construes two different event frames, depending on the specific type of ditransitive sub-construction. Analyzing corpus data, I account for these uses of the verb natan ‘give’ in a Usage Based Construction Grammar perspective (Bybee, 2010). First, I argue that the different functions of the two ditransitive sub-construction are best explained by analyzing them as belonging to a network of Dative constructions. Then, I show that accounting for the Hebrew Dative constructions as a category of different but related constructions allows us to explain special uses of verbs such as natan ‘give’ in different syntactic environments.

References