NOUNS: GENITIVE CASE
[see Waltke, § 9.5]

NOTE: In Hebrew, all nouns fall into one of three cases: the nominative, the genitive, and the accusative. A word is considered to be in the nominative case if it is used as the subject of the clause, a vocative, or a predicate nominative. Otherwise, a noun will be a genitive or accusative, and our grammatical analysis need only be concerned with these two.

INTRODUCTION TO THE GENITIVE

Function: To limit, qualify, or modify another noun.

Nouns considered in the genitive:

1) All words after a construct state (i.e., the "absolute" of a construct relationship)
2) Words governed by prepositions (unless the prep. serves to mark the object)
3) All suffixes to nouns and prepositions.
4) Genitival noun clauses
   (i.e., clauses which function as noun-equivalents after a construct noun or a preposition; the whole clause can be classified as a genitive; e.g., Gen 32:25 [Heb]).

CATEGORIES (* = more common usage)

1. Possession (i.e., uses indicating possession)

   a. The Possessor - indicates the possessor of an object or thing.

      1 Kgs 9:10 "the house of the king" (= the king's house)

      Gen
      הַבֵּית הַמְלָכָה ... הֵמַּה
      the-king palace-of and ... Solomon he-built

   b. The Possessed - indicates the object or thing possessed by a possessor (not a quality or attribute, but an object or thing).

      Gen 42:30 "the man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly"

      Gen
      נַוחַלְתִּי יֵשָׁבַע לְכִי הַבֵּית הַמְלָכָה וּלְפָנָיִי הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה הָיָה H
      harshly to-us the-land lords-of the-man he-spoke

   c. Family Relationship - indicates a relationship between family members (can be proper names; this can also involve divine relations, e.g., "Moses the servant of YHWH").

      Gen 28:2 "Bethuel, the father of your mother"

      Gen
      בִּתְיָעל כְּתַיְבַה תֵּאָבָא ... mother-of-you father-of Bethuel

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2. Source (uses indicating the source)

*a. Authorship (or Authorsource) - indicates the subject (1) who is the author of something or (2) who is responsible for something or (3) with whom something originates (but not birth—for this, see “Family Relationship”). Especially after items that may be written, spoken, or revealed.

2 Chr 24:6 "to bring in . . . the tax prescribed by Moses"

Gen

לְהַשֵּׂאָמָה מָשְׁאָמָה
Moses tax-of *** to-bring-in

Jer 1:2 "the Word of Yahweh"

Jon 1:2 "their wickedness" (i.e., the wickedness for which they are responsible)

Jon 2:4 "your waves" (i.e., the waves which have their source with you)

*b. Subjective Genitive  [this presentation differs from that of Waltke]

1) Agency— to indicate the subject which performs or initiates the action denoted by the construct noun. [the "construct" could also be an inf. construct, a participle or adjective used substantively]

Deut 7:8 "but it was because the LORD loved you"

Gen

כי מָרָיחַ יְהוָה because-of-love-of but
for-you Yahweh because-of-love-of but

Note: Lit., because of the love of Yahweh; love is the action that Yahweh carries out.

A similar situation can occur after passive participles:

Ps 22:7 "I am . . . despised by the people" (cf. Isa 53:4)

Gen

לָאֵלָהוֹ בּוֹ הָרֹאִים . . . but-l
people and-being-despised-of . . . but-l

Note: The two examples above are similar, but the first involves a more "normal" construct relationship whereas the second has a passive ptc.

2) Characteristic/Quality— to indicate the subject to which any quality, state, or attribute is imputed or ascribed.

1 Kgs 5:10 "Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of ..."

Gen

רַבִּי הַכְּפָפָה שְׁלַמָּה מְכַפָּה more-than-wisdom-of Solomon wisdom-of and-the-was-great

Note: conveys the state in which he is found; not that Solomon possesses wisdom, but Solomon is wise. [Waltke puts this example under “possessive gen”]
c. **Instrument** - indicates the impersonal agent in any action (especially after passive participles).

Isa 22:2  "Your slain were not slain with the sword"

_d_. **Cause** - indicates the cause of a state or condition.

Lev 22:4  "And if one touches anything made unclean by a corpse . . ." (Lit., unclean of body)

Note: May also indicate the cause of an action: "people of my wrath."

3. **Object** (uses indicating the object)

a. **Dependent Genitive** (obj. of prep.) - follows a preposition and is thereby dependent on it.

Gen 3:2  "And the woman said to the serpent . . ."

Note 1: Quite frequently, a preposition will be used to mark the object of the verb, and in such cases the noun or pronoun following the preposition will be in the **accusative case** (the preposition itself is not translated).

Gen 32:1  "And Laban arose in the morning and kissed his grandchildren."

Other examples: with ἐπι, Lev 19:18 and 1 Sam 23:10; with πρὸς, 2 Sam 14:10 and Gen 32:26 [Eng. 32:25].

Note 2: If we look at the prepositional phrase as a whole, this may function in an adverbial way as an accusative.

Gen 3:14  "You will crawl on your belly."

[restrictive acc.?]
**b. Objective Genitive** - indicates the object of the action denoted by the construct noun (frequent use after active participles).

Obad 10  
"Because of violence to your brother Jacob"

The Objective Genitive can also specify the topic of an utterance or discourse. [Waltke, §9.5.3e, opts to call this a “topical genitive”]

Gen 37:2  "Joseph brought a bad report about them . . . ."

**c. Indirect Object** - to indicate the indirect object since there is no dative per se in Hebrew (most examples are combined with a construct noun which is the object of the verb).

Gen 39:21  "But the LORD was with Joseph . . . and granted him favor . . . ."

Sometimes the stress is on how the object will be affected, as in cases “d”, “e” and “f”:

d. **Purpose** - indicates the purpose or design of an object
[Waltke calls this “abstract subjective genitive”]

Ps 44:23  "we are considered as sheep for slaughter"

**e. Action** - the word in the genitive indicates the action that someone/something will be affected by.

Isa 10:6  “against the people of my wrath” (i.e., who will be the object of God’s wrath)

**f. Result** - indicates the result or consequence of an action  (Cf. Isa 53:5)

Prov 1:3  "to acquire discipline for prudent behavior"

Note: NIV has "for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life"
NASB has "To receive instruction in wise behavior"
4. Qualification (uses indicating a qualification)

*a. Attribute* - indicates an attribute or quality of a person or thing. Often will describe or qualify a noun in construct, thereby acting like an adjective.

Ps 2:6 "I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain"

Note: Lit. "mountain of my holiness"

Cf. Lev 19:36 - "balances of justice" = just balances

How does the Genitive of Attribute differ from the Subjective Genitive?

**Subj Gen** - The attribute is implied by the construct in the construct relationship.

the wisdom of Solomon = 

**Attrib Gen** - The attribute is implied by the absolute.

the mountain of my holiness = 

Very closely related to the Genitive of Attribute are idiomatic expressions involving terms like man (בָּנָי), master (בְּנוֹי) or son (בָּנָי) in construct with a noun that represents the nature, quality, character, or condition of a person(s).

2 Sam 16:7 "Get out, get out, you man of bloods" (i.e., bloodthirsty man)

* Specification - indicates the restriction, limitation, or specification of something after an adjective or rarely a passive ptc. (this is the opposite of "attribute"). With an attributive gen., the modifier is in the absolute; with specification, the modifier is in the construct. [Waltke, § 9.5.3.c, calls these "epexegetical genitive"]

Ex 32:9 "they are a stiff-necked people" (lit., a people stiff of neck; i.e., the stiffness is specified to be in regard to one's neck)

**c. Proper Name** - indicates the proper name of a person or thing (sometimes called "genitive of apposition"). Cf. Ex 7:19.

Amos 5:2 "She has fallen... the virgin Israel" (i.e., the virgin which is called Israel)

Note: Waltke (§9.5.3h) calls this a “genitive of association.”
d. Personal Worth - indicates a person as "deserving of" or "worthy of" an action or attribute.

Ps 29:2 "Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name" (lit., "the glory of His name," i.e., the glory that His name is deserving of)

2 Sam 16:8 "you are taken in your own calamity, for you are a man of bloodshed" (i.e., the calamity which you deserve)

*e. Location - indicates the location of something (also called "locative genitive").

Gen 22:17 "like the stars in the heavens" (lit., "of heaven")

f. Goal - indicates the goal or destination of a stated or implied motion

Isa 38:18 "those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness"

Material - indicates the material of which a thing is made.

Ex 20:24 "You shall make an altar of earth for Me"

h. Measurement - involves measurement or numbering.

1) With a focus on that which is measured.

Jud 6:19 "And Gideon . . . prepared . . . an ephah of flour"

2) With a focus on the measure itself (or, the extent of measure).

Ezk 47:4 "He . . . led me through water that was up to the waist."

Note: The measurement is expressed by the absolute.
3) With numerals, showing that which is enumerated (also with general quantifiers like "all").

Jos 10:16 "Now these five kings fled and hid"

5. Quantitative Degree (uses indicating a quantitative degree)

*a. Partitive Genitive - indicates the whole of which the construct is a part or member (the genitive, i.e., the absolute expresses the whole).

Jud 5:29 "The wisest of her ladies answer her"

b. Superlative - indicates a superior element within a group (usually the construct is singular and the absolute is plural, i.e., the genitive represents the group).

Deut 10:17 "For the LORD your God is the God of gods"

c. Class or Genus - indicates the class or genus to which the construct noun belongs (similar to "partitive" but with more implicit relationship involved).

Prov 15:20 "but a foolish man despises his mother"

Note: fool is a sub-class of men in general (cf. Gen 16:12).

d. Subspecies - indicates a sub-class of a larger class or genus (inverse of "c" above).

Jer 24:2 "One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs" (lit., figs of the first ripe ones)