Is There a \textit{wāw} \textit{al-ma‘iyyah} in Biblical Hebrew?

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1. \textit{Introduction}

The conjunction \textit{wāw} in Biblical Hebrew is commonly regarded as conveying coordination, but also numerous other meanings. The issue of the multiple meanings of the conjunction \textit{wāw} has attracted the attention of Biblical Hebrew (hereafter: BH) scholars over the years. Their discussions of this issue are presented in dictionaries, grammars, and several studies. In the present article I do not deal with all the meanings attached to the conjunction \textit{wāw} in BH down the ages and their justification, but only one of those meanings, namely the \textit{wāw} of concomitance or accompaniment, commonly named after the Arabic term \textit{wāw al-ma‘iyyah}.

2. \textit{Survey of Literature}

Phrases and clauses coordinated by the conjunctive \textit{wāw} are sometimes regarded as conveying meanings other than sheer coordination, such as contrast, disjunction, explanation, simultaneity, and more, in BH and in other Semitic languages as well. One particular meaning identified by Arabic grammarians regarding the \textit{wāw} in Arabic is concomitance or accompaniment. Arabic terms employed for the \textit{wāw} in this meaning are \textit{wāw al-ma‘iyyah}, \textit{wāw al-muṣāḥabah}, and \textit{wāw al-jam‘ī}. The conjunction interpreted in this fashion joins together two words or phrases, usually subjects and occasionally objects of the same verb, as well as certain types of simultaneous clauses. The meaning of this particle in such cases is basically “with” or “together with.” A second member of such pairs of words or phrases is understood to fulfill the function of an object instead of a second subject when it is grammatically marked by an accusative. The Arabic term for the second member in the accusative is \textit{maʃīl ma‘ahu}. When pronouns come second in such pairs they are usually attached to the otherwise rare accusative particle \textit{‘iyyā}. A simultaneous clause regarded as coordinated by \textit{wāw al-ma‘iyyah} contains a verb in the subjunctive.\textsuperscript{1}


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The idea of ascribing such a meaning to certain occurrences of the \( w\text{w} \) in BH arose already in the Middle Ages among Hebrew grammarians who were influenced by the Arabic and the Arab grammatical thinking of their time. An early example of such an interpretation appears in Saadya Gaon’s translation of the Pentateuch at Exod. 1:5: “All the offspring of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt.”² Four versions of Saadya Gaon’s translation display two distinct renderings of this verse as follows:³

(1) Ms. St. Petersburg: “All the offspring of Jacob were seventy persons with (including) Joseph, while he was in Egypt.”

(2) Derenbourg edition/Hasid edition/London Polyglot: “All the offspring of Jacob were seventy persons with (including) Joseph, who was in Egypt.”

All four versions display a meaning for the \( w\text{w} \) in the translation, though they differ in the way they render the subsequent clause, either by a circumstantial clause introduced by \( w\text{w} \) in Ms. St. Petersburg or by a relative clause introduced by \( w\text{w} \) Alá’r in the Derenbourg edition, the Hasid edition, and the London Polyglot. The interpretation of the \( w\text{w} \) in this verse as “with” is probably due to the need to solve a difficulty in the verse, since the status and meaning of its second clause in the context are problematic. First, the clause \( w\text{w} \text{r} \text{h} \text{h} \text{d} \text{h} \text{m} \text{b} \text{x} \text{t} \text{m} \text{x} \text{r} \) in this verse displays a loose connection to the context. The loose connection probably stems from its being a circumstantial clause with a parenthetical status, as it adds explanatory information to the narrative. Second, its attachment to the preceding clause is odd, because Joseph is supposed to be included in the count of the descendants of Jacob.⁴

for discussion of the term maq’īl ma’ahu among early Arab grammarians. Baalbaki refers to cases of \( w\text{w} \) followed by a subjunctive, which are sometimes also defined by Arab grammarians as representing a type of \( w\text{w} \text{m} \text{a’} \text{iyya} \) (R. Baalbaki, “On the Meaning of the \( w\text{w} \text{m} \text{a’} \text{iyya} Construction,” Al-‘arabiyya 19 [1986], 7–17). This type might be understood as expressing simultaneity (e.g., Wright, Grammar, 32c–33a, §15), while Baalbaki suggests that it might express not simultaneity but consequence and succession.

2. English translations are according to the RSV with modifications when certain issues require it.


4. On the parenthetical status of this clause, on its problematic status, and on the translations by Saadya Gaon and others of this verse, see T. Zewi, Parenthesis in Biblical Hebrew (Leiden, 2007), 78–79, §2.3.3. This clause and its interpretation by Saadya Gaon according to the Derenbourg edition are also cited in R. C. Steiner, “Does the Biblical Hebrew Conjunction \( w\text{w} \) Have Many Meanings, One Meaning, or No Meaning at All?” JBL 119 (2000), 253, in reference to the multiple meanings ascribed in this period to the \( w\text{w} \). Ratzaby mentions two more verses in which Saadya Gaon translates the \( w\text{w} \) by ma’u’a: Deut. 22:9 and Job 21:1 (Y. Ratzaby, “The Hebrew \( w\text{w} \text{r} \text{h} \text{h} \text{d} \text{h} \text{m} \text{b} \text{x} \text{t} \text{m} \text{x} \text{r} \) in the Pentateuch,” in Y. Ben-Shem et al., eds., Sefer Yosef Braslavski [Braslavski] (Jerusalem, 1970), 457 [Heb.]), See also R. C. Steiner, “Saadia vs. Rashi: on the Shift from Meaning-Maximalism to Meaning-Minimalism in Medieval Biblical Hebrew Lexicography,” JQR 88 (1998), 222–23, §5.
An early grammatical reference to this issue appears already in the grammatical work of Jonah Ibn Janah (990–1050), not long after Saadya Gaon’s time (882–942). Ibn Janah mentions Exod. 1:5, discussed above, and adds to it 1 Sam. 14:18: ‘And Saul said to Ahijah, ‘Bring hither the ark of God’. For the ark of God went at that time with the people of Israel.’ The second verse probably includes the most obvious example of what may be regarded as wāw al-ma‘īyyah in BH. Accordingly, Steiner, in his discussion of the wāw in BH, is probably right in suggesting that the tendency to interpret the wāw by multiple meanings is the result of grammatical approaches in the early Middle Ages. Steiner also convincingly shows that this tendency was reduced among later medieval grammarians and recurred only in post-medieval Christian grammars, which were the source and inspiration of the multiple explanations found in various western grammars and dictionaries up to the present.

Indeed, Modern BH dictionaries and grammars usually agree on the existence of wāw al-ma‘īyyah in BH. For example, four important BH dictionaries give in their entries on the conjunction wāw the meaning “with,” albeit not necessarily so in the same detail. BDB, for example, indicates this meaning not in reference to subsequent words and phrases but only to certain circumstantial clauses, as follows:

In circumstantial clauses † introduces a statement of the concomitant conditions under which the action denoted by the principal verb takes place: in such cases, the relation expressed by † must often in Engl. be stated explicitly by a conj., as when, since, seeing, though, etc., as occasion may require. BDB cites in this connection only Gen. 11:4: יְאָרֹן חֵבֶן עָלָיוֹת עֲרָפֵי יְהוָה שָׁאֵל—”Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens’.” Likewise the circumstantial clause יִרְאֶה בַּכָּפַן is translated by the RSV by the preposition “with.” Such an English translation is typical of some circumstantial clauses. All this notwithstanding, it remains to be seen whether the wāw in this verse and similar cases could be considered to display a special independent meaning “with,” distinct from the regular meaning of coordination, which is usually ascribed to the wāw introducing a circumstantial clause.

6. However, note that the LXX reads in this verse בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל “before Israel” instead of בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי לֵאמְרָה לֹא "with the people of Israel.”
7. Steiner, “Does the Biblical Hebrew Conjunction.” 254. On a general shift from meaning-maximalism to meaning-minimalism in medieval BH lexicography and on Saadya’s preference for contextual meaning versus Rashi’s preference for basic meaning, see Steiner, “Saadya vs. Rashi,” 213–58.
8. BDB, 253a–b, 1k.
Another dictionary, HALOT, is more decisive in its presentation of the meaning “with,” or rather “together with,” for certain examples of the waw. The examples displayed in its entry for waw include only joint words and phrases. Thus Isa. 42:5: מְחַסֵּר הַמֵּשֶׁר הָאֲרִי וְלֹא לֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂa

Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth together with what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it,” cited in this entry, refers to two joint noun-phrases; Exod. 12:8 and Exod. 21:4, cited above. The dictionary also contrasts 2 Sa 8:18: מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מָשָׂא דְּרַע יְהוָה Waw

when there came a lion, with a bear, and took a lamb from the flock’.” 12 In the last example, however, the meaning “with” can be ascribed to the particle ב and not to the conjunction וה. This can also be observed, for instance, in the RSV, which renders the וה in this verse not as “with” but as “or.” Again, this example is not necessarily connected to the question of the existence of the וה of concomitance in BH.

BH grammars generally convey a similar picture. Davidson, in a short note in his BH grammar, recalls the similarity between the Arabic “waw of concomitance” and certain BH examples: Est. 4:16, cited above, and Neh. 5:14: 

when מֵי אָזְר אֵלֵה אֶת הַכֹּהֵן, וַיַּעֲבֹר מִמֶּנֶנֶא אֶת שֵׁלֵשִׁים שָׁנָה שָׁנִים לְאַרְתַּחְשַׁסְתְּא מַעְלָה—“Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, I with my brethren did not eat the food allowance of the governor.” 13 In these two examples the subjects do not agree in number with the predicate verb.

Gesenius also treats this issue only in a short note, suggesting that there are several undoubted examples of וה concomitanteae in BH, namely, Exod. 10:10: הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עַל הַפֶּחָה אָשֶׁר—“And he said to them, ‘The LORD be with you, if ever I let you with your little ones go! Look, you have some evil purpose in mind’”; Lev. 1:12: יִנְתֶּהוּ נְתָהוֹ נְתָהוֹ נְתָהו—“And he shall cut it into pieces, with its head and its fat, and the priest shall lay them in order upon the wood that is on the fire upon the altar”; Job 41:12: מַטְּחֹרֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר אֶת תַּפָּאָם—“Out of his nostrils comes forth smoke, as from a boiling pot with burning rushes”; as well as Exod. 12:8 and Isa. 42:5 cited above. 14 All these examples display joint noun-phrases, and not in all of them—as demonstrated, for example, in the RSV translation—should the וה necessarily be interpreted as “with.”

Joüon and Muraoka’s grammar presents the meaning “together with” for וה only in examples that convey lack of agreement in number between two subjects and a following predicate, either a verb or an adjective. The term which they use for this function is וה of accompaniment. This role is demonstrated in this grammar by the previously mentioned examples of Exod. 21:4, Est. 4:16, and Neh. 5:14, in which the subjects and a predicate verb do not agree. One additional example, where a subject and an adjective do not agree, is also mentioned: 2 Sam. 14:9: שְׁמַרְלָא וְסְמַרְלָא וְנַפְעַֽל חֲמוֹר—“Let the king together with his throne be guiltless (sing.).” 15

Another grammar that ascribes the meaning “with” to certain appearances of the conjunction וה is Williams’ Hebrew Syntax. Williams illustrates this meaning in 1 Sam. 6:11: וְנִשְׁתָּמְמָא אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְhוֹת הַמִּשְׁמָשָא אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְhוֹת הַמִּשְׁמָשָא אֵלְה הָאֱלֹהִים אֵלְhוֹת הַמִּשְׁמָשָא אֵלְhוֹת הַמִּשְׁמָשָא אֵלְhוֹת הַמִּשְׁמָשָא אֵl—“And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart, with the box and the golden mice and the images of their tumors”; 1 Sam. 25:42: וַיַּעֲבֹר מִמֶּנֶא אֶת שֵׁלֵשִׁים שָׁנָה שָׁנִים לְאַרְתַּחְשַׁסְתְּא מַעְלָה—“Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, I with my brethren did not eat the food allowance of the governor.”

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12. Loc. cit.
In addition, Williams’ grammar is the only work that interprets the wāw introducing certain circumstantial clauses as a conjunction of accompaniment. In our survey thus far such an interpretation was offered only by one dictionary, BDB. Williams illustrates this function with regular circumstantial clauses in Deut. 5:23: “...in the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes, and your elders.” “While” is found in the translation of this verse both in the RSV and in Williams’ grammar; 1 Sam. 17:41: “And the Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him”; 1 Kgs. 18:2: “...Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria,” which is translated by Williams as: “...while the famine was severe in Samaria”; 2 Kgs. 8:7: “...while Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick”; and Gen. 11:4, cited above.18

Williams also includes under this category the following asyndetic circumstantial clauses: Exod. 12:11: “In this manner you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord’s Passover,” “Since it is Yhwh’s Passover,” according to Williams; Exod. 22:9: “...If a man delivers to his neighbor an ass or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away, without any one seeing it.”19 But note that in such cases the circumstantial clause is in any case not connected to the main clause by wāw.

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16. R. J. Williams, Williams’ Hebrew Syntax, 3rd ed. rev. by J. C. Beckman (Toronto, 2007), 154, §436. Note that 1 Chr. 20:2, the parallel verse of 2 Sam. 12:30, has a different version: קָרָה לֶאִשָּׁה מֵעַל פֶּסַח הוּא אָבֶן וַתִּשְּׁקַל כַּר מַלְאֲכֵי יְקָרָה זָהָב וַתְּהִיעַל—“And Abigail made haste and rose and rode upon an ass, with her five maidens who attended her; she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife”; and 2 Sam. 12:30: קָרָה לֶאִשָּׁה מֵעַל פֶּסַח הוּא אָבֶן וַתִּשְּׁקַל כַּר מַלְאֲכֵי יְקָרָה זָהָב וַתְּהִיעַל—“And he took the crown of their king from his head; the weight of it was a talent of gold, with a precious stone; and it was placed on David’s head.”

17. Ibid., 176, §494.


19. Loc. cit. On this matter see also J. C. L. Gibson, “Coordination by Vav in Biblical Hebrew,” in J. Davies et al., eds., Words Remembered, Texts Renewed: Essays in Honor of John F. A. Sawyer (Sheffield, 1995), 275, who classifies such examples, translated by “while,” “when,” and “with,” with nominal phrases, as no more than circumstantial.
In conclusion of this survey of important BH grammars that deal with the wāw of concomitance/accompanyment, it should be added that not all grammars accept its existence or pay any attention to it. For example, the list of numerous functions of the conjunction wāw in the index of topics in the detailed BH syntax of Waltke and O’Connor does not refer to this function at all.20

Studies dealing with this function of the wāw are few, and those that treat of it usually do so within a discussion of other functions of the wāw. Steiner’s article has already been mentioned. As to the question of multiple meanings, Steiner tends to suggest that the number of meanings attached to the wāw should be significantly reduced.21 He examines the adversative (“but”) and circumstantial (“while”) meanings of the wāw and asserts that the special status of these clauses derives from their distinctive word order and should not be attributed to the conjunction.22 He also examines the disjunctive meaning of the wāw (“or”) and avers that this meaning is logically implicit in the structure and arrangement of the sentence constituents and should not be attributed to the conjunction.23 Next Steiner questions the consequential (“then”) and the explanatory (“that is”) meanings of the wāw and relates them to the syntactic structure and not to an autonomous lexical meaning.24 Finally, Steiner discusses the use of the wāw as a coordinator and draws the conclusion that this conjunction can sometimes be meaningless, but when it is meaningful it functions only as a coordinator, while all the other meanings attached to it should be eliminated.25

Another study, by Hans-Peter Müller, is dedicated to the non-conjunctive uses of the wāw, among which he discusses the wāw concomitantiae / wāw al-maʿīyyah.26 Müller generally accepts its existence, and demonstrates it by Lev. 1:12, 1 Sam. 14:18, and Est. 4:16, cited above.27 More recently, Augustine R. Müller proposes reducing the number of meanings ascribed to the wāw, and he especially denies the existence of the concomitant wāw and the wāw adaequationis (comparative). He indicates that explaining the role of the wāw is usually meant to solve difficulties in the Hebrew text where subjects and their predicate do not agree, and suggests that such examples are better explained by comparison to Arabic rules of agreement than by the concomitant wāw.28 Contrariwise, Azevedo discusses not the conjunction wāw but compound subject agreement, and observes that the wāw that coordinates two subjects when the verb is in the singular can be considered wāw of accompaniment.29

22. Ibid., 257–61.
23. Ibid., 261–63.
27. Ibid., 156.
3. Discussion

All the examples cited above in the discussion of the various BH studies are classified and discussed below according to their specific category of meaning and their accordance with the Arabic conceptions of wāw al-ma‘īyyah. A survey of the examples leads to a basic classification into five categories: joint noun-phrases playing one syntactic role, examples conveying lack of agreement in number between subjects and predicates, interrupted syntactic structures, circumstantial clauses, and difficult verses. Next, each category is discussed separately.

3.1 Joint Noun-Phrases Playing One Syntactic Role

All the examples in this section contain joint noun-phrases serving one syntactic function, which is considered by scholars to demonstrate the wāw with the meaning “with” or “together with.”30 The first example, Exod. 10:10: ἡ ἀλεύθερα ἀνθρώποι μετὰ τοῦ τέφεστος καὶ τῷ πώλει. ἤτοι ἀνθρώποι μετὰ τοῦ τέφεστος καὶ τῷ πώλει—“And he said to them, ‘The LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Look, you have some evil purpose in mind’”—includes the pair τέφεστος-τῷ πώλει. The second member of this pair, τῷ πώλει, is not semantically equivalent to the first member since the children are interpreted as accompanying their parents. However, the nuance of accompaniment derives from the meaning of the noun-phrases and not from the connecting conjunction. Syntactically, there is no reason to assume that the wāw itself conveys more than mere coordination, as demonstrated, for instance, by the RSV translation. The same can be said about all other examples under this category.

In Lev. 1:12: הַכֹּהֵן, עַל‑הַבָּשָׁר, בַּלַּיְלָה, כַּאֲשֶׁר, רֹאשׁוֹ, כִּי, מִנְּחִירָיו, יֵצֵא, עַל‑וְאֶת‑טַפְּכֶם, רֹקַע, עִמָּכֶם, אֲשַׁלַּח, בּוֹרֵא. “And he shall cut it into pieces, and its head and its fat, and the priest shall lay them in order upon the wood that is on the fire upon the altar”—again, the meaning of the noun-phrases represents suggests that they are part of the offering, and semantically not its equivalent; rather, the wāw itself simply connects the three objects. The same nuance of lack of semantic equivalence and accompaniment may be found in the pair מְלַאך קָדָשׁ וְאַגְמֹן and מְלַאך קָדָשׁ וְאַגְמֹן in Isa. 42:5: מְלַאך קָדָשׁ, ‘The LORD is with His anointed, and with His anointed.—“Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it.” A similar semantic nuance of accompaniment also appears in Exod. 12:8: יֵצֵא, עַל‑וְאֶת‑טַפְּכֶם, בּוֹרֵא, אֲשַׁלַּח, לִנְתָחָיו. “They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted (meat) on fire and unleavened bread, over bitter herbs they shall eat it,” where בּוֹרֵא refers to the noun הבורא, and אֲשַׁלַּח, being some sort of bread, cannot be understood as referring to הבורא as well, but only to something that is eaten. Another such example is Job 41:12: וְאַגְמֹן לִפְנֵי הָאָבֶן כֶּדֶרֶד נְשָׁמָה, כְּדוּד, עַל‑טַפְּכֶם—“Out of his nostrils comes forth smoke, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes,” where כְּדוּד semantically accompanies לִפְנֵי הָאָבֶן.

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Though these five verses show joint noun-phrases that are not semantically equivalent, they play a similar syntactic role, and there is no reason to assume that the wāw conjoining them is the one conveying their semantic difference. The wāw in these cases is probably just a coordinator. An Arabic noun in a sequence of nouns playing one syntactic role can be regarded as mafʿūl maʿahu not on the basis of its semantic inequality to the other noun but only when it is marked by the accusative case. In the absence of such formal marking in BH there is no unequivocal way to differentiate regular coordinated noun-phrases from those that include a mafʿūl maʿahu, and such a differentiation cannot be done relying on semantic observations alone.

3.2 Examples Conveying Lack of Agreement in Number between Subjects and Predicates

In many studies a large group of examples is adduced in which the wāw of concomitance or accompaniment is present in connection with the lack of agreement between subjects and their predicate. Interpretation of the wāw in these cases as “with” solves the problem of lack of agreement, and allows the predicate to be attached directly only to the first noun-phrase. One such example, mentioned above in the survey of BH studies,\textsuperscript{31} is Exod. 21:4: אֲדֹנָיוֹ לַאָדֹנֵיהָ וְהוּא לַאָדֹנֶיהָ וִילָדֶיהָ אִם—“If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s and he shall go out alone.” The predicate הָאִשָּׁה is in 3rd fem. sg. and therefore agrees in number only with the noun הָאִשָּׁה and not with her children. Similar examples repeatedly mentioned above are 1 Sam. 25:42; 2 Sam. 14:9; Est. 4:16; and Neh. 5:14.

Nonetheless, it can still be questioned whether these examples really demonstrate wāw meaning “with” or merely reflect rules of agreement between plural nouns and their predicate similar to those regular in Arabic. An examination of the situation in Arabic is necessary at this point. On the one hand, Arabic has special rules of agreement between regularly coordinated plural subjects and their predicate, according to which two and more coordinated subjects usually follow one verb in the singular. On the other hand, Arabic also has a special construction in which a second subject can take the accusative; this is the wāw al-maʿīyyah construction, which is our main concern here. How do Arab grammarians differ concerning the functions of the wāw in these two constructions? The answer lies again in the case system. If a second noun in a sequence of nouns preceding a singular predicate is in the nominative, it is a second subject coordinated by a regular coordinative wāw. If the noun is in the accusative the type of coordination is irregular and the wāw is considered wāw al-maʿīyyah meaning “with,” e.g., kāna wa-ʿabāhu ʿalā mà qad ʿalimnā—“He was (i.e., stood) with his father [accusative] as far as we know.”\textsuperscript{32}

Is there a way to make the same differentiation in BH? On the one hand, BH has many examples of lack of agreement in number between subjects and their predicate.\textsuperscript{33}

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\textsuperscript{31} HALOT, 258, 4; Clines, Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, 596, 3; Kaddari, Dictionary, 231, 9; Joüon and Muraoka, Grammar, 520–21, §150p.

\textsuperscript{32} The example is cited from Fischer, Grammar of Classical Arabic, 175, §328b.

\textsuperscript{33} On the great variety of examples lacking agreement in number in BH, see J. Levi, Die Inkongruenz im biblischen Hebräisch (Wiesbaden, 1987).
On the other, there is no case system in BH. There is, therefore, no formal way to differentiate the two types in BH, and the question of whether the wāw should be regarded as wāw al-ma‘āyyah meaning “with” in examples lacking agreement in number is hypothetical and unanswered; and if an explanation along the lines of the wāw al-ma‘āyyah is possible, no way exists to know to which of the numerous examples displaying lack of agreement in number in BH it should really apply.

3.3 Interrupted Syntactic Structures

The following two examples can be defined as interrupted syntactic structures since they exhibit a gap between certain coordinated members playing one syntactic role in the clause. In Gen. 44:2: “And put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest,” and in 1 Sam. 6:11: “And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the images of their tumors”—a gap appears between the first object and the following other objects. In Gen. 44:2 wāw is separated from wāw, and in 1 Sam. 6:11 wāw is separated from wāw. The interruption in the sequence of objects in these verses is probably the trigger for seeking a different explanation for the wāw that connects the non-initial objects to the clause. In 1 Sam. 6:11, however, the interpretation of the wāw as “with” may apply to each of the three coordinated objects, which makes the identification as an interrupted construction irrelevant to the role of the wāw in this verse. In such a case this verse is simply another example of joint noun-phrases serving the same syntactic function and belongs to §3.1 above.

In any event, the consideration of interrupted syntactic structures as cases of wāw meaning “with” is not needed in order to explain them in a reasonable way. As I have shown elsewhere, interrupted syntactic structures, including those in which an object is separated from its verb, are an integral part of BH syntax; they should not be regarded as difficult, and do not require a special explanation.34

3.4 Circumstantial Clauses

A number of examples of circumstantial clauses are also understood occasionally to convey the meaning “with.” One such example is Gen. 11:4: “Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens.’” Other examples of circumstantial clauses, cited above, are Deut. 5:23; 1 Sam. 17:41; 1 Kgs. 18:2; and 2 Kgs. 8:7—including two asyndetic circumstantial clauses in Exod. 12:11 and 22:9. Two questions are at stake regarding this category: (1) whether certain circumstantial clauses can be analyzed as cases of wāw al-ma‘āyyah according to Arabic grammar, and (2) if such a category exists in Arabic, whether it can be identified in BH as well.

As to the first question, Arabic grammarians indeed indicate that circumstantial clause can be considered a case of wāw al-ma‘āyyah, when a verb in the second clause is in the subjunctive; e.g., hal ta’kulu as-samak wa-taṣraba al-labana—“Do you eat

[indicative verb] fish and drink [subjunctive verb] milk at the same time?"

As to the second question, this type of Arabic circumstantial clause is not the same as the BH examples cited above. Moreover, as was said above, BH does not differentiate any type of circumstantial clause from other types by a special formal marking similar to the Arabic use of subjunctive verbs; therefore, there is no way to distinguish them. As suggested by Steiner, circumstantial clauses generally obtain their special status from their word order and not from any special meaning borne by their introducing conjunction. This view is strengthened by the existence of asyndetic circumstantial clauses, for which no meaning can be ascribed to any conjunction. Therefore, certain circumstantial clauses can perhaps be regarded as cases of wāw al-maʕīyah in Arabic, but BH does not have a similar category.

3.5 Difficult Verses

The difficulty implicit in Exod. 1:5: "All the offspring of Jacob were seventy persons, Joseph was already in Egypt"—is discussed in detail above. The difficulty lies in the loose connection of the circumstantial clause to the preceding clause and the exclusion of Joseph from the count of Jacob’s descendants. Saadya Gaon resolves this difficulty in the verse by rendering the wāw as "with," and other grammarians settle it in a similar manner.

Another difficult verse, and by far the best example reflecting the wāw meaning "with" in BH, is 1 Sam. 14:18: "And Saul said to Ahijah, 'Bring hither the ark of God.' For the ark of God went at that time with the people of Israel." The only reasonable interpretation of the verse as is to assume that the wāw introducing the noun-phrase means "with." The last example is 2 Sam. 12:30: "And he took the crown of their king from his head; the weight of it was a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was placed on his head; the weight of it was a talent of gold.

The difficulty in this verse is solved in the parallel verse in 1 Chr. 20:2: "And David took the head of the king of the children of Ammon; and the weight of it was a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was placed on David's head."

As stated above, the LXX reads in this verse "before Israel" instead of "with the people of Israel."
crown of their king from his head; he found that it weighed a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was placed on David’s head.”

The difficult texts of these three examples are indeed best solved by ascribing the meaning “with” to the *wāw*. Nonetheless, the doubts regarding all the other examples discussed above make us wonder whether we are allowed to rely only on three supposedly sound examples, in which attaching the meaning “with” to the *wāw* is called for in order to solve difficulties.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, among the numerous examples adduced by scholars as cases of the so-called *wāw al-maʿtiyyah* only three examples of the conjunction *wāw* in BH can perhaps be explained by the meaning “with.” These are Exod. 1:5; 1 Sam. 14:18; and 2 Sam. 12:30, discussed in the foregoing section. In these three examples the application of the meaning “with” to the conjunction *wāw* is intended to solve a difficulty in the Hebrew text. In all of them there also is a suggested alternative analysis or a text-critical solution. In all other examples, the meaning “with” or “together with” is either unsuitable and should be explained alternatively, or it is merely possible and disputable. Only three examples, in which a need to solve a difficulty in the Hebrew text is felt, are in any case too scarce to allow the presentation of the meaning “with” or “together with” for the *wāw* as genuine and equal in status to its other meanings in BH dictionaries, grammars, and other studies.