

The Biblical Hebrew Particle $\eta\aleph$ ¹

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Abstract

It may be argued that current lexica provide “translation values” for most of the nuances that can be expressed by $\eta\aleph$. However, these resources provide very little or no criteria for establishing when a translation value x, y or z should be opted for. Descriptions of the most typical use of $\eta\aleph$ or the difference between $\eta\aleph$ and $\beth\aleph$ in other linguistic works are also not substantiated by means of empirical evidence. In this study the syntax and semantics of each instance of $\eta\aleph$ is investigated, and the most prototypical patterns of use are described and compared with those of $\beth\aleph$. It is established that, although the two lexemes are sometimes near-synonyms, the former is prototypically a conjunctive adverb and the latter a focus particle. As far as the semantic potential of $\eta\aleph$ is concerned, five semantic-pragmatic polysemically-related categories (the most typical which are labelled as “noteworthy addition” and “affirmation”) are distinguished, as well as the syntactic constructions and translation values that could be associated with each category of use.

Keywords

particle, $\eta\aleph$

1. Introduction

The “first” translation value most major BH dictionaries assign to $\eta\aleph$ is that of “also”.² Furthermore, they do agree that $\eta\aleph$ can also be translated as “even, indeed, really, how much more/less”. While there is consensus that the latter translation value is associated with the fixed expression $\beth\aleph$, there is

¹) The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this publication and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

²) Besides its treatment in dictionaries and in T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem and Leiden, 1985), pp. 141-143, $\eta\aleph$ has received little systematic attention from BH scholars, despite the fact that commentators and translators often disagree about its interpretation.

disagreement about the word class that **וְ** belongs to, e.g. BDB,³ HAH⁴ and DCH⁵ regard it as a conjunction, while HALOT⁶ denotes it as a “particle”. B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor classify it under the heading “emphatic adverb”,⁷ but then sub-classify it with **וְ** as “particles recognized as coordinators”.⁸ More problematic, however, is what is called in theoretical lexicography the “comments on the semantics” of **וְ**.⁹ Semantic distinctions in the lexica are made, but the grounds of the distinctions, beyond that of possible translation values, are seldom clear. For example, the translation value of “even”¹⁰ in BDB is associated with “implying something surprising or unexpected”. In HALOT “even” is first listed next to “also” as one of the basic meanings of **וְ**, and then as a translation value of the sub-category “enhancing”. In DCH the translation value of “even” is listed as both a subcategory of “also, and, moreover” (when **וְ** occurs before a pronoun) and as a separate polysemic distinction of **וְ** labelled “even, specifying” (DCH 1993, p. 352).¹¹ HAH groups all instances of “Betonung des Gesagten” (i.e. “gar, sogar, ja, fürwahr”) together, but lists under the heading “adversative” the translation value “vielmehr”.

While it can be argued that most of the semantic nuances illustrated by means of the translation values referred to above capture the semantic potential of **וְ**, it is not clear from the information provided in all of the lexica whether these translation values refer to definable semantic classes, whether there is a polysemic relationship between these classes and/or whether these classes can be associated with specific syntactic constructions (except in the case of **וְ** **כִּי**). Furthermore, the question arises which of the classes represent

³ F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (BDB) (Oxford, 1907).

⁴ U. Rütterswörden, D. R. Meyer und D. H. Donner, *Gesenius, Wilhelm: Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament. 18. Auflage* (HAH) (Berlin, 1987).

⁵ D. J. A. Clines (ed.), *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (DCH) (Sheffield, 1993).

⁶ L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament; subsequently revised by Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm* (HALOT) (Grand Rapids, 1988).

⁷ B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, 1990), pp. 662-663.

⁸ In C. H. J. van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé, and J. H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield, 1999), p. 312, **וְ** is regarded as a focus particle, which in turn is categorized under the umbrella term “adverb”.

⁹ Cf. T. Imbayarwo, *A Biblical Hebrew Lexicon for Translators Based on Recent Developments in Theoretical Lexicography* (Doctoral dissertation; Stellenbosch, 2008).

¹⁰ BDB comments on “even, indeed” as if they are synonyms.

¹¹ DCH, p. 352.

the most prototypical uses of וְ ,¹² but whether and in what way וְ differs from מֵ cannot be gleaned from this information. The only resource that comments on the latter two issues is B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor. They state that of the two, וְ is "simpler and closer to וְ . וְ can also serve as a correlative, lining up the situation of its clause with that of the previous clause... Followed by וְ , וְ can have an emphatic role... מֵ generally has more distinctly logical force than וְ , though it can be used as an emphatic".¹³ However, apart from three examples, Waltke and O'Connor do not provide much empirical evidence for their depiction of וְ .

In recent studies of two other problematic "small words",¹⁴ I illustrated the value of a descriptive model that (1) takes the syntactic distribution of these lexemes seriously; (2) tries to understand the differences of translation values as, among other things, the lexicalization of pragmatic or contextual relationships; and (3) profiles the uses of syntactic and semantic categories in terms of their frequency. This study wants to provide an insight into the semantic potential¹⁵ of וְ by illustrating (a) which nuance is displayed when; (b) which are the prototypical (and less prototypical) uses of וְ ; and (c) how וְ differs from מֵ in the Hebrew Bible.

For this purpose, I commence with a few general remarks on the distribution of וְ . Next, I profile the syntactic distribution of וְ in terms of the frequency of each category and compare it with that of מֵ . In the main part

¹² In line with insights from the field of cognitive semantics, it is assumed in this study that a high priority should be placed on distinguishing prototypical members of a category from its less prototypical members; cf. C. H. J. Van der Merwe, "Biblical Hebrew lexicology: a cognitive linguistic perspective", *KUSATU* 6 (2006), pp. 87-112; C. H. J. Van der Merwe, "Lexical Meaning in Biblical Hebrew and Cognitive Semantics: A Case Study", *Biblica* 87/1 (2006), pp. 85-95. The gist of prototype theory is the following: of the category bird, a sparrow and a robin would be prototypical members, while an ostrich and a penguin would be less prototypical members. For an explication and critical assessment of prototype theory, cf. D. Geeraerts, "Prospects and Problems of Prototype Theory", *Linguistics* 27/4 (1989), pp. 587-612. In the case of an ancient language of which only a closed corpus of texts is available, it is assumed that frequency of use may be interpreted as evidence of the prototypicality of that category.

¹³ Waltke and O'Connor, p. 663.

¹⁴ C. H. J. van der Merwe, "A Cognitive Linguistic Perspective on וְ in the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges and Ruth", *Hebrew Studies* 47 (2007), pp. 238-277; C. H. J. van der Merwe, "Another Look at the Focus Particle מֵ ", *JSS* (forthcoming).

¹⁵ The semantic model underpinning this investigation can be summarized as follows: "The semantics of lexical and constructional units is not a bag of meanings, but is a (prototypically and schematically) structured meaning potential that is sensitive to contextual effects" (D. Geeraerts, "Introduction. A rough guide to cognitive linguistics", in: D. Geeraerts [ed.], *Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings* [New York, 2006], p. 10). Hence, the exhaustive treatment of the syntagmatic distribution of וְ .

of the article the major semantic-pragmatic categories to be distinguished are discussed.¹⁶ Special attention is paid to the question of whether a category *x* can typically be associated with a syntactic category *y* (or syntactic categories *y*, *z*, etc.). Word class labels will be used to capture the syntagmatic features of each syntactic category.¹⁷ In conclusion, the semantic potential of **ףא** is then summarized with special reference to the “prototypicality”, syntactic distribution (i.e. word class) and translation value that can be attached to each category of use.

2. Distribution of **ףא**

According to BDB and HALOT, the lexeme occurs about 120 times in the Hebrew Bible. DCH and HAH are more precise by indicating that it occurs 134x. HALOT also points out that most of the occurrences are in Deutero-Isaiah, Psalms and Job, while BDB observes that **ףא** occurs mainly in poetic material, but that **כִּי ףא** is evenly distributed in prose and poetry. The latter is an instructive observation, since it may suggest that **כִּי ףא** represents a fixed expression that acquired its own meaning. Of the 134 occurrences of **ףא**, 24 (i.e. 18%) belong to this category. Of these 24 instances, four are in Job,¹⁸ but not one occurs in the Psalms or Isaiah. If one subtracts these 24 instances from 134, it leaves 110 instances of **ףא**. Of these 110 cases, 14 (i.e. 10%) occur in Job, 23 (i.e. 20%) in Psalms, and 30 (i.e. 27%) in Isa. 26-48.

This uneven distribution of **ףא** is in stark contrast to that of **אָב**, which is relatively evenly distributed throughout the Hebrew Bible, and also throughout the entire book of Isaiah. Another significant difference between **ףא** and **אָב** is the low frequency of instances where **ףא** is preceded by **וְ**, i.e. 15 instances (i.e. 14%) over against the 257 (i.e. 33%) of **אָב**.¹⁹

¹⁶ It can be rightly argued that BH does not distinguish these categories (R. Sim, personal communication). However, English and many other languages do. In a grammar or lexicon of BH aimed at English speakers, identifying the syntactic, semantic and/or pragmatic environments where a target language (in this case English) does lexicalize these categories has an important heuristic value.

¹⁷ Scholars disagree widely over the criteria for categorizing lexical items that are often lumped together under the heading “adverb” or “particle”. Cf. C. Schwarz, “Was ist ein ‘Adverb?’”, *Linguistische Berichte* 81 (1982), p. 61-65; K. Fischer (ed.), *Approaches to Discourse Particles* (Amsterdam, 2006). In this study the syntactic-semantic scope of **ףא** is used as the main criterion for distinguishing various word class labels.

¹⁸ Job 9:14; 15:16; 25:6 and 35:14.

¹⁹ For the details, cf. A. Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 101, 239.

3. The Syntax of וְאֵל : A Profile in Terms Frequency

3.1 Introduction

Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze state: “as opposed to וְאֵל , וְאֵל does not necessarily directly precede its syntactic domain”.²⁰ The question is whether this observation is borne out by the data. We will therefore now consider in more detail the syntax of וְאֵל . Special attention will be paid to the frequency of each category. It will be hypothesized that the frequency of each syntactic category distinguished may point, on the one hand, to the more prototypical uses of וְאֵל and, on the other hand, to some of the similarities and differences between וְאֵל and וְאֵל .

3.2 The Syntax of וְאֵל

The syntactic model that is used to distinguish the various syntactic categories limits itself not only to the description of the formal combination probabilities of וְאֵל in a single clause or sentence. It also implies a quest to understand the scope of וְאֵל , which may include more than one clause. This investigation has shown that such a quest requires a careful analysis of the information structure of the context in which וְאֵל is used, and that semantic considerations are often needed to determine the syntactic units governed by וְאֵל .

Furthermore, although there is unmistakably a polysemic relationship between וְאֵל and וְאֵל , the former developed into a fixed expression with a specific semantic content. For this reason, as well as the fact that this is the only use of וְאֵל that has no counterpart among the uses of וְאֵל , this category is treated completely separately from the other uses of וְאֵל .²¹

The following syntactic configurations are therefore distinguished:²²

3.2.1 וְאֵל + Entity

(i) וְאֵל + Second Member of a Coordinated Construction (Rare: 3/110, i.e. 2.7%)
The items that are coordinated may be a noun (#1) or a noun phrase (#2).

²⁰ Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, p. 312.

²¹ This is the reason why the frequency of the other syntactic categories is profiled in terms of a total of 110. The 24 instances of וְאֵל are subtracted from the 134 times וְאֵל is attested.

²² Since it was not possible to make any sense of them, and in each case one or other type of text-critical issue is involved, the following cases are not accounted for here: Deut. 33:3; 2 Kgs 2:14; Hab. 2:15; Pss. 44:10; 58:3; 108:2.

- 6 וְהַנִּשְׁאָרִים בְּכֶם יִמְקוּ בְּעוֹנֵם בְּאַרְצָת
אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וְאַף בְּעוֹנֹת אֲבוֹתֵם אַתֶּם יִמְקוּ:
And those who remain among you will rot away in the land of your enemy because of your iniquity, and *also because of the iniquities of their ancestors with them* they will rot away (Lev. 26:39).²⁶
- 7 אֲבָרֵךְ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱשֶׁר יַעֲצֵנִי
אֶף־לַיְלֹת יִסְרוּנִי כְלִיּוֹתֵי
I bless Yahweh who gives me counsel, *even during the nights* my kidneys instruct me (Ps. 16:7).²⁷
- 8 לְכֹן אֲמַרְתִּי שְׁמַעְה־לִּי
אֲחִיָּה דַעִי אֶף־אֲנִי:
Therefore I say: “Listen to me, let *me also* declare my knowledge (Job 32:10).²⁸
- 9 וַיֵּרָא שְׂרָה־הָאֵפִים כִּי טוֹב פְּתָר וַיֹּאמֶר
אֶל־יוֹסֵף אֶף־אֲנִי בַחֲלוֹמֵי
When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, “*I also* saw in my dream:...” (Gen. 40:16).²⁹

In a number of instances (6 times) the constituent immediately following אֶף is governed by אֶף (#10). However, it cannot be said that “also x” does y, since, what x does is a corresponding reaction to what z did. This is a type of construction that is also attested a number of times where אֶף is used.³⁰ Example #10 is a good illustration of the fact that אֶף and אֶף־אֲנִי may be regarded as near-synonyms. In the case of אֶף, this use represents 5.4% of the corpus. In the case of אֶף־אֲנִי, this category makes out 6.1% of the corpus.

- 10 וְהִלַּכְתִּי אֶף־אֲנִי עִמָּכֶם בְּקָרִי וְהִפִּיתִי
אֶתְכֶם גַּם־אֲנִי שֶׁבַע עַל־חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם
I will *also* go against you (lit. walked with you in hostility), and I will also strike you sevenfold for your sins (Lev. 26:24).³¹

(iv) אֶף + Sentence (36/110, i.e. 32.7%)

In this category אֶף governs a sentence. The sentence is sometimes (11 times) introduced by a verb phrase (#11-13).

²⁶ Lev. 26:42; Deut. 15:17; Judg. 5:29; Job 37:1; 1 Chron. 8:32; 9:38.

²⁷ Job 14:3. In two instances אֶף is preceding a temporal adjunct, viz. Isa. 46:7 and Neh. 9:18.

²⁸ Deut. 2:11,20; Job 32:17 (2 times). In 2 Sam. 20:14, אֶף is not immediately preceding the constituent it governs semantically. This is the only case in the corpus.

²⁹ See also Lev. 26:42; Ps. 68:19; Neh. 13:15.

³⁰ E.g. Gen. 44:9; Exod. 18:23; Num. 22:33.

³¹ Lev. 26:16,28,41; Ps. 89:28; 2 Chron. 12:5.

- 11 טְבַחָהּ טְבַחָהּ מִסִּבָּה יִינָה
אֶף עָרְכָהּ שְׁלַחָנָהּ: She has slaughtered her animals,
she has mixed her wine, she has
also set her table (Prov. 9:2).
- 12 הַגִּידוּ וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֶף יוֹעֲצוּ יַחְדָּו Declare and bring near [your
case]. What's more, let them con-
sult with one another (lit. together)
(Isa. 45:21).³²
- 13 רְאִוּךָ מַיִם | אֱלֹהִים רָאוּךָ מֵיִם יַחֲלִילוּ
אֶף יִרְגְּזוּ תְהוֹמוֹת: The waters saw you, O God, the
waters saw you and trembled. Yes,
the depths of the sea shook with
fear (Ps. 77:6).³³

In the majority of the cases (20 times), the sentence governed by אֶף has a fronted constituent (#14-16). At the surface level these instances are therefore not distinguishable from instances where the domain of אֶף is only the constituent immediately following it (§3.2.1(iii)).

- 14 אֶרֶץ רָעָשָׁה | אֶף-שָׁמַיִם נָטְפוּ מִפְּנֵי
אֱלֹהִים The earth quaked and the heavens
poured down rain at the presence
of God (Ps. 68:7)
- 15 וַגְּדַלְתִּי וְהוֹסַפְתִּי מִכָּל שֶׁהָיָה לִפְנֵי
בִירוּשָׁלַם אֶף חֲכֻמָּתִי עִמָּדָה לִי: So I became great and surpassed
all who were before me in Jerusalem;
what's more, my wisdom remained
with me (Eccl. 2:9).³⁴
- 16 יָדִי תִכּוֹן עִמּוֹ אֶף-זְרוּעֵי תְאֻמָּצָנוּ: My hand shall support>remain with
him, yes, my arm will strengthen
him (Ps. 89:22).³⁵

אֶף may (5 times) also govern a nominal clause (#17-18)

- 17 אֲזָנַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִאֲזִינוּ
אֶף אִזְוֵי-שִׁרְיֹחַ בְּפִיהֶם: They do have ears, but they do not
hear, what's worse, there is no breath
in them (Ps. 135:17).

³²) Isa. 41:23; 44:16,19; Job 36:16; Est. 5:12.

³³) Isa. 42:13; 46:6; 48:15.

³⁴) Lev. 26:40,44; Num. 16:14; Deut. 33:28; Isa. 26:8,9; Pss. 16:9; 68:17; Job 6:27; 15:4; 36:29; Prov. 23:28.

³⁵) Pss. 16:6; 77:18; Isa. 26:11; 43:7. In Isa. 33:2 the verbal predicate is ellipsed.

18 שְׁמַע אֵלַי יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִקְרָאֵי אֲנִי-הוּא
אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן אֶף אֲנִי אַחֲרוֹן:

Listen to me Jacob, and Israel whom I called, I am the He. I am the first *and I am the last* (Isa. 48:12).³⁶

(v) אָף + Sentences (11/110, i.e. 10%)

Members of this category have in most cases the same surface-level features as those where אָף governs only one sentence. In others words, אָף may be followed by a verb (#19) or by a fronted non-verbal constituent (#20). In #21 the sentence is, however, introduced by a sentence adverbial.

19 הָרִימוֹת יְמִין צְרִיזוּ הַשְּׂמֹחֶת בְּלֹא-אוֹיְבָיו:
אֶף-תָּשִׁיב צוּר חֲרָבוֹ וְלֹא הִקְיִמְתּוֹ
בַּמִּלְחָמָה:

You have raised the right hand of his foe, you have made all his enemies rejoice. *What's worse, you turned back the flint>edge of his sword and not supported him in the battle...* (Ps 89:43-44).³⁷

20 מִפְּלִטֵי מְאִיְבֵי אֶף מִזְקְמֵי תְרוּמָמְנֵי
מֵאִישׁ חָזֵם תַּצִּילֵנִי:

...who delivered me from my enemies; *indeed, you exalted me above my adversaries; you delivered me from the violent* (Ps. 18:49).³⁸

21 4 וְאֶף-אֲמַנָּם שְׂגִייתִי אֶתִּי תִלֵּין מִשׁוּגְתֵי:
5 אִם-אֲמַנָּם עָלַי תִּגְדְּלִיו וְתוֹכִיחוּ עָלַי
חֲרָפְתִּי:
6 דְּעוּ-אֲפֹ כִּי-אֵלֹהִים עֹשֵׂתֵי וּמְצוּדוֹ עָלַי
הִקִּיף:

⁴ And *what's more, if indeed I have erred, my error remains with me.*

⁵ *If indeed you magnify yourselves against me, and make my humiliation an argument against me,*

⁶ *know then that God has put me in the wrong, and closed his net around me.* (Job 19:4-6).³⁹

(vi) Yes/No Question Word + אָף + Sentence (7/110, i.e. 6.3%)

This category displays the same syntactic configurations as those of (iv) and (v), viz. the sentence that is governed by אָף is introduced by a verb (#22),

³⁶ Also Pss. 74:16; 89:12. In Song 1:16a the subject of the nominal clause is ellipsed..

³⁷ Also Pss. 93:1-2; 96:10; Isa. 43:19; 1 Chron. 16:30.

³⁸ Isa. 48:13. Also Ezek. 23:40; Song 1:16b-17.

³⁹ Also Job 34:12. However, it might be argued that a coordinated sentence with the same (only differently lexicalized subject) is involved here.

a non-verbal constituent (#23) or a nominal clause (#24). However, the difference between this use of **אָ** and those of (iv)-(v) is not only the fact that the sentence is introduced by a question word. These instances are regarded as a separate syntactic category, since **אָ** does not link, as it does in those instances in (iv)-(v), the content of clauses it introduces to that of any preceding utterance.

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| 22 | וַיִּגֶשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר
הֲאֵף תִּסְפֶּה צְדִיק עַם-רָשָׁע: | Then Abraham came closer and said, “ <u>Will you even/indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?</u> ” (Gen. 18:23). ⁴⁰ |
| 23 | הֲאֵף שׁוֹנֵא מִשֹּׁפֵט יַחְבוּשׁ | <u>Can indeed one who hates justice rule?</u> (Job 34:17). |
| 24 | הֲאֵף אֵין-זֹאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
נֹאֲמֵי-יְהוָה: | <u>Is it not indeed so</u> , O people of Israel? says the LORD (Amos 2:9). |

3.2.2 **אָ** + Clause // **אָ** + Clause (// **אָ** + Clause) (13/110, i.e. 11.8%)⁴¹

This use (#25) of **אָ** represents a category that is synonymous with a frequently occurring category of **גַּם**. The latter category represents 21% of the uses of **גַּם** in the Hebrew Bible. It is remarkable that in Isaiah this type of use of **גַּם** occurs only in Isa. 48:8 and 66:3-4, while this type of use with **אָ** is limited to Isa. 40-46.

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| 25 | מִי־הִגִּיד מִרֵּאשׁ וְנִדְעָה וּמִלְּפָנַיִם וְנֹאמַר
צְדִיק אָף אֵין-מְגִיד אָף אֵין מְשִׁמֵּעַ אָף
אֵין-שֹׁמֵעַ אִמְרֵיכֶם: | Who declared it from the beginning, so that we might know, and beforehand, so that we might say, “He is right”? <u>There was neither who declared it, nor one who proclaimed, nor one who heard your words</u> (Isa. 41:26). |
|----|--|--|

⁴⁰ Gen. 18:23; Job 40:8. In Gen. 18:13 the question word is followed by a sentence adverbial. In Gen. 3:1 the question word is lacking, and a content clause introduced by **כִּי** is governed by **אָ**.

⁴¹ These statistics may be misleading. This use is restricted to five verses in the book of second Isaiah (Isa. 40:24 (3x), 41:10 (2x); 41:26 (example #25); 44:15 (2x); 46:11 (3x)).

3.2.3 כִּי אֲף + Sentence with an Ellipsed Main Clause or Predicate (23/134, i.e. 17.1% of Instances).

This category represents a specialized use of the fixed expression כִּי אֲף.

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 26 | וַיֹּאמְרוּ אַנְשֵׁי דָוִד אֵלָיו
הֲנֵה אֲנַחְנוּ פֹּה בְּיְהוּדָה יְרֵאִים
וְאֵף כִּי־נֵלְךָ קַעֲלָה אֶל־מַעֲרְכוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים: | But David's men said to him:
Look, we are afraid here in Judah;
<i>how much more then if we go to
Keilah against the armies of the
Philistines?</i> (1 Sam. 23:3) ⁴² |
| 27 | הֲנֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְשָׁמַיִם וְשָׁמַיִם לֹא יִכְלְבוּךָ
אֲף כִּי־הִבֵּיתִי הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בָּנִיתִי: | Look, the highest heavens cannot
contain you, <i>how much less this house
that I have built?</i> (1 Kgs 8:27). ⁴³ |

3.3 A Comparison of the Syntactic Profiles

The most significant differences between the syntax of אֲף and אֵף are the following:

- The most frequent occurring syntactic configuration of the former is אֲף + sentence (32.7%), while that of the latter is אֵף + constituent (55%);⁴⁴
- אֲף more often governs more than one sentence than אֵף does (10% vs. 2%);
- אֲף governs “both an entity x as well as an entity y as far a notion z” is concerned less often than אֵף does (10% vs. 21%). The multiple entities that אֲף governs are restricted to sentences (אֵף often governs phrases). Furthermore, the use of אֲף in these constructions is restricted to Isaiah 40-46;
- In a few instances (6%) where אֲף is preceded by a question word, it has no connective function. This phenomenon happens only once with אֵף.⁴⁵

As far as similarities are concerned, the following are noteworthy:

- Both lexemes seldom (3% of their occurrences) precede the second member of a coordinated construction;

⁴² Deut. 31:27; 1 Sam. 14:30; 21:6; 2 Sam. 4:11; 16:11; 2 Kgs 5:13; Ezek. 14:21; Prov. 11:31; 15:11; 19:7; 21:27. In Job 4:19 אֲף expresses the same meaning as כִּי אֲף.

⁴³ Job 9:14; 15:16; 25:6; 35:14; Prov. 17:7; 19:10; 2 Chron. 6:18; 32:15.

⁴⁴ For the statistics on אֵף, cf. C. H. J. van der Merwe (*JSS*, forthcoming).

⁴⁵ Gen. 16:13. Cf. the discussion in C. H. J. van der Merwe (*JSS*, forthcoming).

- When either **וְאִם** or **וְגַם** governs a constituent, the construction tends to occupy the sentence initial position.

In the light of this comparison of the syntax of **וְאִם** and **וְגַם**, it is, among other things, evident why it may appear as if **וְאִם** always occupies a sentence initial position, and does not, like **וְגַם**, always immediately precede the entity it governs. However, contra to Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze,⁴⁶ this detailed analysis of the syntax of **וְאִם** has shown that **וְאִם**, like **וְגַם**, nearly always immediately precedes the entity it governs.⁴⁷

From the analysis of the semantics of **וְאִם** in the next section, it will be apparent that **וְאִם** and **וְגַם** are relatively often also semantically similar. However, it will be evident that they are not absolute synonyms.

4. The Semantics and Pragmatics of **וְאִם**

Comparing the syntax of **וְאִם** and **וְגַם** has shown that **וְאִם** typically governs a sentence or sentences, while **וְגַם** tends to govern constituents.⁴⁸ When the latter is the case, **וְגַם** is a focus particle⁴⁹ and the semantic function of **וְגַם** is to signal that an entity *x* must be added to an entity *y* as far as a discourse active proposition *z* is concerned. In the case of (#28), *z* is “other men that died” (in a particular battle). The translation values “also, too, as well as” are typical in this type of context.

28

וְאִמְרָתְךָ
גַם עֲבַדְךָ אֲוִרְיָה הַחִתִּי מָת:

You must say, “*Also your servant Uriah, the Hittite died*” (2 Sam. 11:21).

When the item to be added represents an extreme or unexpected case, the translation value of “even” is more appropriate (#29).

⁴⁶ Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, p. 312.

⁴⁷ In only one instance is this not the case, viz. 2 Sam. 20:14. As far as **וְגַם** is concerned, cf. Job 2:10.

⁴⁸ It appears that Waltke and O’Connor, p. 663, did not observe this significant syntactic difference between **וְאִם** and **וְגַם**.

⁴⁹ For word class “focus particle,” cf. E. König, *The Meaning of Focus Particles. A Comparative Perspective* (London, 1991).

31

וַיֹּאמֶר
 לֹא מָצָאתִיהָ
 וְגַם אַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם אָמְרוּ לֹא־הִיְתָה בְּזֶה
 קִדְשָׁה:

He said:

“I have not find her,
what’s more, the men of the place
said: ‘There has been no prostitute
here’” (Gen. 38:22).

When one considers the most typical syntactic use of וְאֵל in the Hebrew Bible, i.e. governing a sentence or sentences, it is immediately evident that וְאֵל nearly always relates the content of two sentences or sets of sentences. The relationships may be of the types described below.

(i) *Noteworthy Addition (Most Frequent, About 45%)*

וְאֵל signals that the information referred to in a sentence (#15)⁵¹ or sentences (#19)⁵² *y* needs to be considered, in addition to information referred to in an immediately preceding sentence (or sentences) *x* as far as an explicit or implicit notion *z* is concerned. In contrast to וְגַם , the information to be added after וְאֵל (in cases like #15 and 19) represents predominantly the most conclusive or compelling information of what is asserted in the context.⁵³ In other words, it must nearly always⁵⁴ be translated as “moreover, what’s more or what’s worse” or their equivalent, e.g. “and” in #18.⁵⁵

The two cases where it may be hard to argue that וְאֵל points unambiguously to the most conclusive part of a two- (#14) or a multi-pronged (#11) assertion may therefore be regarded as untypical uses of וְאֵל .

The fixed expression כִּי וְאֵל + sentence (with ellipsed main clause or predicate) has been treated in §3.2.2 as a category completely separate from the other occurrences of וְאֵל . Although this relatively frequently occurring expression (17.1%) developed into a lexeme with its own specialized meaning, it did retain two features of וְאֵל , viz. it signals a connection (i.e. a comparison) between two pieces of information, and the second piece of information (predominantly a condition) is the most compelling or conclusive of the two,

⁵¹ Lev. 26:40,44; Num. 16:14; Deut. 33:28; Isa. 26:8,9; 41:23; 45:21; Pss. 16:9; 68:17; 135:17; Job 6:27; 15:4; 36:29; Prov. 23:28. Also Ps. 119:3; Job 36:16; Est. 5:12.

⁵² Ezek. 23:40; 34:12. Also Job 19:4-5, Song 1:16b-17.

⁵³ This interpretation is in line with T. Muraoka, p. 143, who observes: “we may say that forcefulness is certainly felt in (rhetorical) rhetorical questions with *’af* and in climatic additions in the poetic style”.

⁵⁴ In the case of וְגַם about one third of the cases may be regarded as “neutral additions”.

⁵⁵ Also Pss. 74:16; 89:12.

hence the translation values “how much more” (#26)⁵⁶ and “how much less (#27).⁵⁷ For this reason, the fixed expression can be semantically classified under the heading “noteworthy addition”.

A feature of the semantic category “noteworthy addition” is that **וְאֵל** typically governs a sentence, and in a few cases more than one sentence. In the former case it could therefore be labelled as a *conjunctive adverb*⁵⁸ and in the latter case a *macro-syntactic connective*.⁵⁹

(ii) *Affirmation (About 20%)*

וְאֵל signals that the information referred to in a sentence (or sentences) *y*, affirms⁶⁰ the information referred to in an immediately preceding sentence (or sentences).⁶¹ In other words, what must be added to strengthen an argument is not a second new proposition, but the specification of a discourse active one.

The border between “noteworthy addition” and “affirmation” is not always clear-cut. In #20⁶² it is fairly clear that the sentences governed by **וְאֵל** further specify “delivers me from my enemies”, and in this way affirms what is said in the previous utterance. In the case of #16, the question may be asked: is Ps. 89:22b additional information “what’s more”, or does it merely further specify and affirm what is said in 22a, in other words, “yes, indeed”?⁶³

Despite this “fussy border” between the semantic categories “noteworthy addition” and “affirmation”, what is relevant as far as this investigation is concerned, is the following: firstly, in comparison with **וְאֵל**, **וְאֵל** occurs significantly more frequently (19/134 versus 13/769) in contexts where it can have an

⁵⁶ Deut. 31:27; 1 Sam. 14:30; 21:6; 2 Sam. 4:11; 16:11; 2 Kgs 5:13; Ezek. 14:21; Prov. 11:31; 15:11; 19:7; 21:27.

⁵⁷ Job 9:14; 15:16; 25:6; 35:14; Prov. 17:7; 19:10; 2 Chron. 6:18; 32:15.

⁵⁸ For the word class “conjunctive adverb”, cf. H. Bussman, *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* (London, 1998), p. 95.

⁵⁹ For the concept “connective”, cf. J. Caron, “Towards a Procedural Approach to the Meaning of Connectives”, in J. Costermans and M. Fayol (eds.), *Processing Interclausal Relationships. Studies in the Production of Comprehension of Text* (New Jersey, 1997), p. 53.

⁶⁰ This interpretation disagrees with T. Muraoka, p. 143, who also observes that “emphasis in the sense of asseveration is not a function of the particle”.

⁶¹ In two cases noun phrases, and not sentences, are involved, viz. Isa. 35:2 and Prov. 22:19.

⁶² Deut. 33:3; Isa. 26:11; 42:13; 43:7,19; 46:6; 48:13,15; Pss. 16:6; 77:17,18; 89:22; 93:1; 96:10; 1 Chron. 16:30. Also Isa. 33:2; Job 6:27.

⁶³ Cf. how the following versions differ in their translation of **וְאֵל**: NRSV: “my hand shall always remain with him, my arm *also* shall strengthen him”; NIV: “My hand will sustain him, *surely* my arm will strengthen him”; NJPS: “My hand shall be constantly with him, *and* my arm shall strengthen him”.

affirmative interpretation, and secondly, the shift in meaning from “noteworthy addition” to “affirmation” is not hard to “motivate.”⁶⁴

The above-mentioned shift in meaning may also explain another (secondary) shift in meaning, viz. those instances where $\eta\aleph$ does not connect two pieces of information, but is used in a question as a sentence adverbial.⁶⁵ In each instance the factuality (“is indeed”?) of an event (#22)⁶⁶ or state of affairs (#24) is questioned.⁶⁷

Apart from operating as a *sentence adverbial*, the syntactic features of this semantic category are similar to those of “noteworthy addition”. $\eta\aleph$ is predominantly a *conjunctive adverb* and sometimes a *macro-syntactic connective*.

(iii) Addition (About 15%)

Another less frequent, but not rare, use of $\eta\aleph$ is one that corresponds with the most prototypical use of $\aleph\aleph$ as a focus particle (see the first paragraph of §4.). The translation values in most cases (16/21) are “also, too” (#6).⁶⁸ In five instances it may be argued that an extreme or unexpected entity must be added. In these cases, a translation value of “even” (#7)⁶⁹ would be appropriate. These instances would be regarded as “noteworthy additions” and then belong to (i) above.

In a few instances (3/134), $\eta\aleph$ is the second member of a coordinated phrase. In the case of #2, it may be argued that the information signalled to be added by means of $\eta\aleph$ has one or another type of relevance in the context. In other words, the permission of the king (Neh. 2:8) was the most important part of what Nehemiah told his audience that inspires them to act (Neh. 2:18b). This use of $\eta\aleph$ then also belongs to (i) above.

The same cannot be said of #1⁷⁰ and #32. Is $\eta\aleph$ here functioning as a near-synonym of η ⁷¹ or does it do something more, a nuance that can be expressed by “as well as”? Consider also examples #14 and #18 above.

⁶⁴ For the concept “motivation” in this context, cf. G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What can Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago, 1987), p. 91.

⁶⁵ For the word class “sentence adverbial”, cf. H. Bussman, p. 428.

⁶⁶ In Gen. 18:13 the question word is followed by a sentence adverbial. In Gen. 3:1 the question word is absent and a content clause introduced by η is governed by $\eta\aleph$.

⁶⁷ Gen. 3:1; 18:13,24; Job 34:17; 40:8.

⁶⁸ Gen. 40:16; Lev. 26:42 (2x); Deut. 15:17; 2:11,20; Judg. 5:29; 2 Sam. 20:14; Job 32:10,17 (2x); 37:1; Neh. 13:15; 1 Chron. 8:32; 9:38.

⁶⁹ Also in Isa. 46:7 and Neh. 9:18 $\eta\aleph$ precedes a temporal adjunct. Cf. also Ps. 68:19; Job 14:3.

⁷⁰ Also Ps. 89:6.

⁷¹ In C. H. J. van der Merwe (*JSS* [forthcoming]), it has been established that in a similar syntactic construction, i.e. $\aleph\aleph$ without η in a coordinated phrase, $\aleph\aleph$ is used as a near-synonym of η .

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וַיִּוְדוּ שָׁמַיִם פְּלִאֵי יְהוָה
אֶת־אֱמוּנָתְךָ בְּקִהְלֵךְ קְדָשִׁים:

Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, *and/as well as your faithfulness* in the assembly of the holy ones (Ps. 89:5).

(iv) *A Corresponding Reaction of an Actor x to that of an Action by an Actor y*

In about 5% of cases, אֶת points out, just like the focus particle אֵל, ⁷² the role of people or God in a corresponding reaction (#10). ⁷³

(v) *Noteworthy In-/Exclusion (about 10%)*

Another category that was listed separately, on mainly syntactic grounds, is that of אֶת + clause // אֶת + clause (// אֶת + clause) (#25). ⁷⁴ This use of אֶת as a *correlative conjunction* ⁷⁵ is regarded as “noteworthy inclusion”, since it signals that the information referred to in each sentence preceded by אֶת carries equal weight as far as the substantiation of explicit or implicit assertion is concerned.

As far as the categories (iii-v) are concerned, אֶת operates as a near-synonym of אֵל. Like אֵל, it appears in a few cases to be a near-synonym of אֵל. In (iii-iv) its syntagmatic distribution corresponds with that of אֵל when it is used as a *focus particle* and in (v) when it is used as a *correlative conjunction*.

5. Conclusions

This empirical study confirms the hypothesis that it is possible to provide a more nuanced description of אֶת than those that may be found in current lexica, the works of Muraoka (1985), Waltke and O’Connor (1990) and Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze (1999). Although each of the 134 instances of אֶת cannot be assigned unambiguously to one discrete semantic category, and although about 30% of its occurrences display exactly the same syntactic and semantic features as אֵל, this study has shown that the most prototypical uses of אֶת differ from those of אֵל. What is more, commencing with the most proto-

⁷² See §3.2.1(iii).

⁷³ Lev. 26:16,28,41; Ps. 89:28; 2 Chron. 12:5.

⁷⁴ Also Isa. 40:24 (3x); 41:10 (2x), 44:15 (2x); 46:11 (3x). Despite the syntactic similarities, the use of אֶת in Isa. 40:24 and 46:11 are not prototypical examples of this category in the same way as Isa. 41:26. For example, in Isa. 46:11, four sentences (which form two pairs) are involved, but the third one lacks אֶת.

⁷⁵ For the notion “correlative conjunction”, cf. R. D. Huddleston and G. K. Pullum, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Cambridge, 2002).

typical uses of וְאִם, the following semantic-pragmatic categories have been identified, as well as the syntactic constructions (formalized in terms of word class labels) and translation values that could be associated with each category of use:

1. וְאִם typically signals *noteworthy addition*. This happens predominantly when וְאִם is a conjunctive adverb, or sometimes when it is used as a macro-syntactic marker (i.e. when it governs the content of more than one sentence). In these cases, English translation equivalents like “moreover, what’s more, what’s worse” capture the semantic relation signalled by וְאִם. In a few cases where וְאִם functions as a focus particle, noteworthy addition is also involved. In cases where וְאִם governs a constituent, a translation value can be “even”, and where it occurs in a coordinated phrase, “also” seems to capture the nuance of noteworthy addition. Although כִּי וְאִם gained a very specific meaning, translatable as “how much more” or “how much less”, this fixed expression unambiguously signals a noteworthy addition.
2. In a number of instances a semantic relation of *affirmation* is displayed by וְאִם. That happens mainly when וְאִם is a conjunctive adverb or a macro-syntactic connective. In these cases a translation value of “yes, indeed” can be used to express the affirmative relation. In those few instances where the factuality of event or state is questioned in the form of a sentence adverbial, וְאִם can best be rendered as “indeed?”
3. In addition, when it mainly functions as a near-synonym of the focus particle,⁷⁶ it is hard to describe the addition signal by וְאִם as noteworthy, and the mere “*addition*” is then to be rendered as “and, also, as well as”.
4. Also, in analogy to the focus particle אֲנִי, there are a few instances where a *corresponding reaction* of an actor is signalled to be translated as “also x”, or “in turn x”.
5. *Noteworthy in-exclusion* “(n)either . . . (n)or” in the format of a correlative conjunction is rare, but indeed attested.

⁷⁶ In contrast to its use as conjunctive adverb or macro-syntactic connective, which occurs predominantly in poetic texts, the use of וְאִם as a focus particle is significantly more frequent in non-poetic texts.