

"WAW" CONJUNCTIVE

I. INTRODUCTION

Before we can take up the study of Hebrew clauses, we must first understand the use of the Hebrew "waw" (ך). In Biblical Hebrew, the waw is used in a wide variety of ways, which makes the matter rather confusing for the beginning student. There are three primary categories of usage:

- a. *Waw-conjunctive*
- b. *Waw-disjunctive*
- c. *Waw-consecutive*

In this section, we will take up a consideration of the *waw-conjunctive*.

II. WAW-CONJUNCTIVE [Ross, § 7.3; Waltke, § 39.2.1]

Waw is very flexible in its use as a connective. The basic use is for simple coordination of items, ideas, or actions. In this instance, waw is translated as "and." The letter ך is attached as a prefix to the word that is being coordinated.

A. The Form of Waw-Conjunctive

1. Most often as ך

אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה = a man and a woman

2. Variant Forms (depends on the first letter of the word)

וּ ך ך ך

B. Translation of Waw-Conjunctive

1. The coordinating conjunction "and" (most common)

הָאִישׁ וְהָאִשָּׁה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל = The man and woman (are) in Israel.

2. The alternative "or"

אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ-וּבִתְּךָ = You or your son or your daughter ...

3. The negative alternative "nor"

The sequence ...**וְלֹא** ... **לֹא** = neither . . . nor¹

Note: Care must be taken. If **וְלֹא** stands before an entire clause, then it *may* be a waw-disjunctive.

C. Notes on Usage

1. Waw-conjunctive is basically used for joining two or more items (or actions) in a series.
2. Waw-conjunctive may be used on any part of speech, including verbs.

Example: 2 Kings 18:4

"He removed the high places, and he smashed the sacred stones."

. . . . וְשָׁבַר הִסִּיר
Piel Perf Hiph Perf
of שָׁבַר of סָרַר
"smash" "remove"

3. If two verbs are joined by waw, they normally must be the same tense to have waw-conjunctive. Otherwise, the waw will probably be a *waw-consecutive*.
 - a. Exception: As we will see in the session on waw-consecutive, we can have a chain of *perfect* verbs with waw-consecutive.
 - b. Other exceptions do happen, particularly with poetic literature. One exception that has been observed is Ps 22:6 (Heb), where two perfects are joined by waw, but there is some temporal or logical sequence implied. Hence, the waw is waw-consecutive.
4. When waw occurs on a noun, you must ask yourself if that noun is simply an item in a series, or whether the noun is initiating a major clause. A waw on a noun in a simple series is waw-conjunctive, whereas a waw on a noun that initiates a major clause *may* be a waw-disjunctive.

Note: Exceptions can be found to this principle with poetic literature (note the exception with Ps 22:16 under the discussion of waw-disjunctive below).

¹Other constructions are also possible including **וְגַם** ... **לֹא** (Gen 1:26); **ו** ... **אֵין** (Gen 45:6); **ו** ... **לֹא** (Ex 10:6); **ו** ... **אֵל** (Ex 36:6); **וְלֹא** ... **וְלֹא** (Deut 9:23); etc.

WAW DISJUNCTIVE

I. INTRODUCTION [Ross, § 21.1; Waltke, § 39.2.3]

With the example in 2 Kgs 18:4, we saw how *waw* could be used (as *waw* conjunctive) to join two clauses in sequential *relationship*. Sometimes, however, *waw* may also be used with clauses that do not stand in sequential relationship, but rather have some sort of "break" between them. If this is the case, then we have a *waw*-disjunctive.

II. FORM

- A. The *waw*-disjunctive will look exactly the same as *waw*-conjunctive. However, *waw*-disjunctive will not occur on finite verbs. When *waw*-disjunctive occurs, it has a *waw* on a form other than a finite verb that initiates a major clause (primarily, nouns, participles or adjectives used substantively, adverbs, interjections, particles [e.g., הִנֵּה = *demonstrative particle*], and prepositional phrases).

Note: By a non-finite verb, we mean a participle or infinitive (construct or absolute).

- B. *Waw*-disjunctive does not occur on a verb (except participles). When *waw* occurs on a noun, it may be either *waw*-conjunctive or *waw*-disjunctive. If the noun prefixed by *waw* is the first word of a major clause, then it is very likely to be *waw*-disjunctive (see exception below under IIIC).

III. FUNCTION OF WAW-DISJUNCTIVE

- A. Any major clause within a narrative that has this construction will represent some kind of break in the narrative.
- B. Example from Gen 22:7

הַשֶּׁה	וְאַיִהּ	וְהָעֵצִים	וְהָאֵשׁ	הִנֵּה
the-lamb	but-where?	and-the-wood	the-fire	see!

Explanation: The first *waw* (on "wood") is *waw*-conjunctive, whereas the second *waw* (on the interrogative adverb "where?") is *waw*-disjunctive.

- C. **Exception**
Sometimes a major clause initiated by a *waw* on a noun will not break the narrative, but will simply be a *waw*-conjunctive. This has been noted in poetic literature, such as in Ps 22:16.

כְּחִי	כְּחַרְשׁ	יָבֵשׁ	Ps 22:16
strength-of-me	like-the-potsherd	he-is-dried-up	
וְלִשְׁוֹנִי	מְדַבֵּק	מִלְּקוֹחֵי	וְלַעֲפָר־מָוֶת
you-lay-me	death	and-in-dust-of	roofs-of-mouth-of-me
	being-stuck	and-tongue-of-me	

NIV: My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.

IV. TYPES AND TRANSLATION VALUES

A. **Contrastive = "but"** (i.e., contrastive to the main clause)

Ex: "There was famine in all the (other) lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was food." (Gen 41:54)

וּבְכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הָיָה לֶחֶם . . .
 but-in-whole-of land-of Egypt he-was food

B. **Circumstantial**

Sometimes a waw-disjunctive can be used to provide circumstantial information about the action in the main verb (either contemporary with or prior to the action of the preceding clause). In a future session, we will learn various types of circumstantial clauses. One of the most common ones is a temporal clause (=when, while).

Ex: "And a man found him while wandering in the field." Gen 37:15

וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ אִישׁ וַתִּהְיֶה תְעוּהוּ בַּשָּׂדֶה
 and-he-found-him man in-the-field wandering and-see!
 2nd Clause 1st Clause

C. **Explanatory or Parenthetical = "Now"**

This introduces information that is parenthetical to the main narrative. It is quite common for a new paragraph to begin with this type of *waw* (though Lambdin, p 164, prefers to distinguish such cases as "initial" *waw*-disjunctive). [Explanatory/parenthetical cases may be signalled by a change in word order, or a major break in the idea.]

Ex: Gen 3:1

וַתְּהִי עַתָּה וַתִּהְיֶה הַחֲנֹשׁ הַיָּרֵחַ = "Now the serpent was more shrewd"
 now-the-serpent he-was crafty

D. **Terminative = "Thus"**

In some cases, the final thought of a paragraph may be initiated by *waw*-disjunctive, and the word "thus" may be an appropriate translation.

וַהוּא שָׁפַט אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה: = "Thus, he judged Israel twenty years"
 he-led now-he Israel *** he-led now-he year twenty