

BBH Workbook p. 128 #15
(Gen 46:1)

וַיִּסַּע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וַיָּבֵא בְּאֶרֶץ שֹׁבַע
וַיִּזְבַּח זְבָחִים לֵאלֹהֵי אָבִיו יִצְחָק

וַיִּסַּע

וַיִּסַּע, “and (he) set out,” is the Qal Imperfect 3ms of נִסַּע with Waw Conversive.

MORPHOLOGY

The typical vowel pattern for the Qal Imperfect strong verb is as follows:

יִכְתֹּב יִשְׁמֹר יִפְקֹד

Because gutturals prefer a-vowels, the stem vowel of III-
ע/ח verbs in the Qal Imperfect is Pathach:

יִשְׁלַח יִשְׁמַע תִּפְנֹעַ

The Qal Imperfect 3ms of נִסַּע would theoretically be the following:

יִנְסַע*

The Nun of the preceding theoretical form assimilates into the following consonant, however, yielding

יִסַּע

When Waw Conversive is prefixed to יִסַּע, the resulting form is וַיִּסַּע.

יִשְׂרָאֵל

יִשְׂרָאֵל, "Israel," here refers to the man also known as Jacob.

וְכֹל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ

וְכֹל- , "and all" or "and everything," consists of

- the conjunction Waw
- the pronoun כֹּל- (also spelled כָּל), "all, everything"

The relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר may here be translated "that" or "which."

לוֹ consists of

- the preposition לְ, "to"

- the 3ms pronominal suffix םוֹ, “him”

וְכֹל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ means “everything that (was, belonged) to him,” i.e., “everything that was his.”

Hebrew often expresses possession by means of the preposition לְ, whereas English often expresses possession through the verb “have.” Thus, וְכֹל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ might be translated “everything (or, all) that he had.”

Excursus: וַיִּסַּע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכֹל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ

Like English, Hebrew can have compound subjects, that is, subjects which consists of several elements. The following are compound subjects:

שָׂאֹל וְכֹל-אֲנָשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל	Saul and all the men of Israel (1 Sam 11:15)
הַצֹּאן וְהַבָּקָר	the flocks and the herds (Exod 34:3)
לָבָן וּבְתוּאֵל	Laban and Bethuel (Gen 24:50)

In Gen 46:1 **יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ**, “Israel and all that he had,” is a compound subject; it refers to a plurality of individuals (and probably the phrase **וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ** has non-human possessions in view as well as persons).

Because **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, the element of the compound subject **יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ** that is closest to the preceding verb **וַיֵּסַע**, is singular, the compound subject **יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ**, though *plural*, takes a *singular* verb. The singular verb **וַיֵּסַע** is thus the subject not simply of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** alone, but of the compound subject **יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ**.

In Hebrew, compound subjects regularly take singular verbs as well as plural verbs. (It is worth noting that of the three examples of compound subjects given at the beginning of this excursus, the first takes a singular verb, the second takes a plural verb, and the third takes both a singular verb and, later in the sentence, a plural verb!) In English a compound subject must (with a few exceptions) take a plural verb.

(Students of Greek will note that in that language as well, a compound subject, though plural, may take a singular verb.)

While we have favored the interpretation that in Gen 46:1 **יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ** is the subject of **וַיֵּסַע**, it is also grammatically

possible that **יִשְׂרָאֵל** alone is the subject of **וַיֵּסַע**. In this case the sense of **וַיֵּסַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ** would be as follows:

*And Israel set out, along with everything he had.
(or, And Israel, as well as everything he had, set out.)*

Clearly the difference between this and the following rendering (which takes **יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ** as the subject of **וַיֵּסַע**) is rather small:

And Israel and everything that he had set out.

While it is grammatically possible that either **יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ** or simply **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is the subject of **וַיֵּסַע**, it is more probable that the former is the subject.

Because Israel is the subject of the verbs following the clause **וַיֵּסַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ**, translating this clause as follows will make the entire sentence read more smoothly (see further the Final Translation below):

And Israel set out with all that he had.

וַיָּבֹא, “and he came,” is the Qal Imperfect 3ms of בוא with Waw Conversive.

MORPHOLOGY

Here the Holem Waw of וַיָּבֹא is spelled defectively as Holem: וַיָּבֹא. In the Bible, the form וַיָּבֹא is much more common than the form וַיָּבֹא.

בְּאֶרֶץ שֶׁבַע

בְּאֶרֶץ שֶׁבַע, “to Beersheba,” consists of

- the proper noun בְּאֶרֶץ שֶׁבַע, “Beersheba”
- the directional He ending הָ, “to”

MORPHOLOGY

When the directional He ending הָ is added to a noun phrase consisting of more than one word, the ending is often added to the first word of the noun phrase. E.g.,

אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן

to the land of Canaan
(Gen 11:31)

הַאֶהֱלָה שָׂרָה

to the tent of Sarah

(Gen 24:67)

בְּאֶרְהָבָה שָׁבַע

to Beersheba

(Gen 46:1)

Note that the directional He ending is never accented.

MORPHOLOGY

The spelling of שָׁבַע here (normally שָׁבַע) is peculiar in two respects:

- (1) The word שָׁבַע occurs at a major break in Gen 46:1, marked in printed Bibles by an accent called *athnach*. An *athnach* indicates that (in the estimation of the Masoretes) a slight break is to occur at this point in the reading of the text, and thus words in this position are said to be “pausal” or “in pause.”

Pausal forms sometimes undergo vowel changes; in the present instance, the Seghol in the first syllable of שָׁבַע has changed to Qamets:

שָׁבַע

- (2) The Shin of שָׁבַע here has a “Euphonic Daghesth,” which the Masoretes inserted in order to aid the pronunciation of שָׁבַע after בְּאֶרֶה (which, unlike בְּאֵר without the directional He ending, ends in Qamets He). This Euphonic Daghesth is not important for our present analysis and may be safely neglected.

Summary: וַיֵּסַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ וַיָּבֵא בְּאֶרֶה שָׁבַע

And Israel set out with all that he had, and he came to Beersheba.

וַיִּזְבַּח

The third clause of Gen 46:1 begins with וַיִּזְבַּח, the Qal Imperfect 3ms of זָבַח with Waw Conversive. We may provisionally translate וַיִּזְבַּח “and he sacrificed.”

זִבְחִים

זִבְחִים, “sacrifices,” is the plural form of the masculine noun זָבַח.

MORPHOLOGY

זָבַח is a Segholate noun because it

- (a) consists of two syllables, and
- (b) is accented on its first syllable.

Recall that all Segholate nouns have the same vowels in the plural, regardless of their vowels in the singular. E.g.,

<i>Sing.</i>		<i>Pl.</i>	
מֶלֶךְ	→	מְלָכִים	king(s)
נֶפֶשׁ	→	נַפְשוֹת	person(s)
סֵפֶר	→	סִפְרִים	book(s)
נֶעֶר	→	נַעֲרִים	lad(s)
זָבַח	→	זִבְחִים	sacrifice(s)

(If the first consonant of a Segholate noun is a guttural, this consonant will be pointed with Hateph Pathach instead of Vocal Shewa; e.g., עֲבָדִים.)

TRANSLATION

When a verb takes a direct object which comes from the same root as the verb (here the common root is זָבַח), the object is called a *cognate accusative*. Because Hebrew uses cognate accusatives more than English does, it is often

necessary to translate the verb in a Hebrew cognate accusative construction other than literally in English. For example,

חַטָּאוֹת יִרְבְּעֵם
אֲשֶׁר חָטֵאתָ

the **sins** of Jeroboam,
which he **committed** (lit., sinned)

(1 Kgs 14:16)

וַיִּבְרַח יִפְתָּח נֶדְוָר

Jephthah **made** (lit., vowed) a **vow**

(Judg 11:30)

לְשַׁלֵּל שָׁלַל
וּלְבַז בָּז

to **seize** (lit., spoil) **spoil**
and to **capture** (lit., plunder) **plunder**

(Ezek 38:12)

וַיִּזְבַּח זְבָחִים, lit. "and he sacrificed sacrifices," may be translated "and he offered sacrifices."

לֵאלֹהֵי

לֵאלֹהֵי, "to the God of," consists of

- the preposition לְ, "to"
- לֵאלֹהֵי, the construct form of the noun אֱלֹהִים, "God"

MORPHOLOGY

When the preposition לְ is prefixed to לֵאלֹהֵי,

- (1) The preposition לְ takes the short vowel (Seghol) which corresponds to the reduced vowel under the Alef of אֱלֹהֵי (Hateph Seghol):

לְאֱלֹהֵי*

- (2) The Alef of אֱלֹהֵי quiesces (becomes silent), thereby losing its vowel (Hateph Seghol) and causing the preceding vowel (Seghol) to lengthen (to Tseré):

לְאֵלֹהֵי

אָבִיו יִצְחָק

אָבִיו, "his father," consists of

- the noun אָב, "father"
- the 3ms pronominal suffix יוֹ, "his"

The construct chain אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיו means "the God of his father."

The proper noun יִצְחָק, "Isaac," stands in apposition to אָבִיו.

Final Translation

And Israel set out with all that he had, and he came to Beersheba and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.