A NOTE ON VERB - COMPOUND SUBJECT AGREEMENT
IN BIBLICAL HEBREW

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A note on verb-compound subject agreement seems to be opportune due to the scanty information available in most Hebrew grammars and syntax books.[1] For a better understanding of this linguistic device, [2] an explanation of its two types is presented followed by its respective formulas that were designed to guide the reader through this paper.

For a didactic purpose, a verbal clause with a compound subject is classified into two **general types** with their peculiar variations. The **first type** is $[vp= (s_1+s_2)+s_1\text{-}w\text{-}s_2 . . .]$.[3] The verb is in the plural (vp) taking the compound subject (s_1+s_2) as a plural unity. This type does not show any differentiation between the elements of the compound subject in the action of the governing verb. The verb takes both elements as equally participating in the action. Consequently this type of clause will not be analyzed in this investigation. Examples that belong to the this type of clause are described below:

nms   nms vmp

Gen 40:1 "ויהי אחר הדברים האלה חטאו משקה מלך־מצרים והאפה לאדניהם למלך מצרים And it was some time after this, the butler of the king of Egypt and the baker [they] offended their lord, the king of Egypt" $[vmp=(s_1\text{-}s_2)+sms_1\text{-}w\text{-}sms_2 . . .]$. There is not a leading subject; both are equally active in the verbal action. In this case, the ambiguity does not allow a precise conclusion concerning the elements of the compound subject (leading or companion).

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[1] Although quite a few grammars and syntax books try to explain this linguistic device, their explanations leave much to be desired: A. B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* (Edinburgh: N. p., 1901), § 113 a, b; F. E. König, *Historisch-comparative Syntax der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig: N. p., 1897), § 349 m, n; Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976), § 67.2, 68. Concerning the Aramaic language, see Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander, *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1962), § 99 g-j: According to Bauer and Leander this linguistic device appears also in biblical Aramaic, e.g. Ezr 4:19; 5:1; 5:3; 5:6; Dan 4:11; 5:11; 6:5; 7:27. This premise is supported by Stanislav Segert, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Leipzig: Veb Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1975), § 7.3.2.2., 7.3.2.3.

[2] I call this phenomenon a linguistic device for it shows that the ancient Hebrew writers were aware of its function and used it to express their thoughts.

[3] $[vp=(s_1+s_2)+s_1\text{-}w\text{-}s_2 . . .]=[$verb in the plural in agreement with both subjects plus the compound subject with a linking *waw* . . . then the rest of the clause]. Abbreviations used in this note are as follows: verb (v), noun (n), masculine (m), feminine (f), plural (p), singular (s), first/second subject (s_1/s_2), pronoun (pr), suffix (sf), adverb (adv), in agreement with (=).

vmp nms nms

Esth 3:15 והמלך והמן ישבו לשתות " "And the <u>king</u> and <u>Haman</u> [they] <u>sat down</u> to drink" [mss₁-w-mss₂+vmp=$(s_1$-$s_2)$ . . .]. There is not a leading subject in this clause; both have the same force in the verbal action.

The **second type** is represented by [v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2. . .].[4] The verb should agree in number and gender with the first element of the compound subject to fit into this category of clause. Only this type of clause, with its variations, is significant for this study. The function of this clause type is presented below followed by some examples. Only clauses governed by a verb of perfective or imperfective conjugation with a compound subject whose components are linked by a *waw* are discussed.

The focus of this study is on compound subjects represented by persons. Those which are represented by objects (Prov 27:9 "oil and perfume") or abstract concepts (Isa 51:3 "joy and gladness," Esth 4:14 "relief and deliverance") can, for the most part, be considered as a strong unity (see Joüon § 150 p). Consequently, the verb-predicate is usually in the third person singular, and the masculine gender has the priority.

Review of Literature

This linguistic device was already dealt with by commentators of the Middle Age particularly Rashi. He comments about this device in Gen 9:23, specifically regarding ויקח שם ויפת את השמלה " and Shem took accompanied by Japheth a garment. . ." He states that "it is not written 'they took,' but 'he took,' indicating that Shem surpassed Japheth in his meritorious deed."[5] It indicates that Rashi understood perfectly that the first element of a compound subject was the initiator of the action, or the one who had more responsibility in causing the action.

Also Ibn Ezra seems to have had the same understanding as Rashi, for in Ex 36:1 he stated regarding ועשה בצלאל ואהליאב "and Bezalel shall work accompanied by Oholiab. . ." that "here Bazalel is making and casting by himself,"[6] even though Oholiab was participating with him in the action of casting (see also his comments on Ex 15:1; Num 12: 1; Deut 32:44). Therefore it is not a new topic to be dealt with, but a very well known linguistic device that was overlooked through time by modern scholars.

The first opinion on this matter in modern times is found in Gesenius-Kautzsch's grammar. They argue that the verb is in agreement with the "principal person" of a compound

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[4][v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2. . .]=[verb in the singular in agreement with the first subject plus the compound subject with a linking *waw* . . . then the rest of the clause].

[5]ספר בראשית in מקראות גדולות [*Miqraoth Gedoloth on the Book of Genesis*, in Hebrew], vol. 1 (New York: Pardes Publishing House, 1951), see under the respective passage.

[6]ספר שמות in מקראות גדולות [*Miqraoth Gedoloth on the book of Exodus*, in Hebrew], vol. 2 (New York: Pardes Publishing House, 1951), see under the correspondent passage.

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subject, or "with the first, as being the subject nearest to it."[7] Although Gesenius-Kautzsch get straight to the point, they do not present any explanation for their conclusion leaving the reader wondering in regard to the function of this device.

Carl Brockelmann states that a verb with two subjects remains mostly in the singular, and agrees in gender with the first subject, e.g. Gen 3:8; 9:23; 24:61; I Sam 18:3. The verb, according to him, rarely appears in the plural, e.g. Gen 40:1. Further he argues that sometimes the verb agrees with the second subject, e.g. II Kgs 4:7, and that a suffix may also agree with the main idea or term of the sentence, e.g. Gen 30:26.[8] We can see that he only lists the different possibilities and exceptions without further explanation.

J. Wash Watts mentions this type of verb-subject agreement by stating that "a verb with two or more subjects joined by a *waw* may agree with one and be understood with the other, or it may be in the plural to express agreement with them taken together." Watts' statement is very likely to be based on William Rainey's proposition.[9] It seems that Watts' conclusion relies on a predecessor without adding any contribution or explanation to it.

Joüon-Muraoka defines a compound subject, whose governing verb is in the singular, as *per modum unius* (the compound subject is taken as a single idea).[10] It, however, seems only the case when the elements of the compound subject are inanimate things or abstract concepts (e.g. Ho 4:11 "fornication and wine and new wine," 9:2 "threshing floor and wine vat," 10:8 "thorn and thistles," Prov 27:9 "oil and perfume," Isa 51:3 "joy and gladness," Esth 4:14 "relief and deliverance"). Therefore the term *per modum unius* should not be applied indiscriminately to all compound subjects.

M. Moreshet is one of the few scholars who tried to cover the entire matter on verb-compound subject agreement.[11] He argues that it is not always correct to say that the person mentioned first in the compound subject is the main agent of the action.[12] I would say that this is true only when the verb is in the plural and both elements of the compound subject are in the singular or when the verb does not agree with the first element. When the verb agrees,

[7]E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 468, § 146 e-f.

[8]Carl Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1956), § 132.

[9]J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 16; William Rainey, *Elements of Hebrew Syntax by an Inductive Method* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), § 40.6.

[10]Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, translated and revised by T. Muraoka, vol. 2 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1991), § 150p.

[11]M. Moreshet, "הנשוא הקודם לשני נושאים בלשון המקרא" ("The Predicate Preceding a Compound Subject in Biblical Language," only in Hebrew) *Leshonenu* 31 (1967): 251-260.

[12]Moreshet, 253.

however, in gender and number with the first element of the compound subject, the leading subject is obvious.

Moreshet mentions that a phrase with a personal pronoun placed after the subject is another manner of emphasising the main agent, e. g. Num 11:30 ויאסף משה אל המחנה הוא וזקני ישראל "And Moses returned to the camp, he and the elders of Israel" and Gen 19:30 וישב במערה הוא ושתי בנתיו "So he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters."[13] Therefore this type of clause was not included in his investigation.

Although Moreshet has accomplished a valuable work, he has some limitation. Jaakov Levi's critique is that Moreshet's work lacks a good statistical method which would cover every instance of this linguistic phenomenon in the OT.[14] Furthermore, he spent more space in describing other linguistic devices rather than explaining the reasons for his conclusions. Also he disagree with the main argument of this article, for Moreshet the first element of the compound subject, which is in agreement with the governing verb, is not necessarily the principal actor of the main verb. His assumptions seems to be based on some modern scholars (as U. Cassuto) that this linguistic feature is a popular form without a specific reason.[15]

Although there is a scanty literature about this linguistic device, two articles have been published lately on verb - compound subject agreement. It indicates a recent interest on this linguistic device. In 1990 Robert Ratner wrote an article where he defines this linguistic device in two syntactical categories:[16] (1) The first category is when the governing verb agrees with the masculine element of the compound subject, which Ratner called "expected syntax"; (2) the second category is when the governing verb agrees with the feminine element of the compound subject, which he called "feminine takes precedence." Ratner conclude that the feminine take precedence in a compound subject when it is the principal person of the action of the verb (see Num 12:1-2; Judg 5:1, etc.).

Another article on this topic was published by E. J. Revell in 1993.[17] He agrees with the main tenets of this study; for Revell, the governing verb agrees with the principal element of the compound subject or the more important of them, and the other element of the compound subject represents a less important associate, which he named "adjuncts." These two articles do not lessen the value of the present article, for both differ from it regarding their approach to the matter, and their systematization of the function of this linguistic device.

13Ibid., 254.

14Jaakov Levi, *Die Inkongruenz im biblischen Hebräisch* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), 45.

15See the introductory summary of Moreshet's article in *Leshonenu* 31 (1967).

16Robert Ratner, "The 'Feminine Takes Precedence' Syntagm and Job 19,15," *ZAW* 102 (1990): 238-251.

17E. J. Revell, "Concord with Compound Subjects and Related Uses of Pronouns," *VT* 43 (1993): 69-87.

The present study was built particularly on J. Levi's work. He did the most extensive study on verb-compound subject agreement in Biblical Hebrew.[18] Therefore I have devoted a large space for the presention of his conclusions, and the reader is encourage to refer back to it as he reads this article. Levi established, based on his statistical analysis, four rules with their deviations concerning the linguistic behavior of the verb-compound subject agreement:

Rule 1. *The verb strives to stand in the beginning of the sentence.* The deviations from this rule are: (a) When a sentence has two parts, one with the coordinated and the other with the subordinated clause. A sentence having the order "subject + predicate" appears generally with a linking particle.[19] (b) After the verb אמר (Gen 47:1; Lev 8:31). (c) As a literary device in chiastic structure.[20] (d) When the subject is emphasized by its position in the sentence.

Rule 2. *The verb predicate stands in the singular before a compound subject that has its first element in the singular.* The reasons for the deviations from this rule are: (a) When an element stands between the verb and the subject,[21] e.g. ויעש משה ואהרן . . . כן עשו (Ex 7:6; Num 8:20); וילך דוד ואנשיו (II Sam 16:13); וילכו כל הלילה יואב ואנשיו (Ex 7:20); ויעשו כן משה ואהרן (II Sam 2:32). There are several possible elements introduced between the verb and the compound subject: (1) The direct object marker את: Gen 25:9 ויקברו אתו יצחק וישמעאל בניו "They buried him, Isaac and Ishmael his sons."[22] (2) The preposition אל: Ex 34:31 וישבו אליו אהרן וכל הנשאים בעדה "And they returned to him, Aaron and all the leaders in the congregation."[23] (3) The preposition מן: Ex 40:31 ורחצו ממנו משה ואהרן ובניו "with which Moses and Aaron and his sons washed." (4) The preposition ב: Deut 21:19 ותפשו בו אביו ואמו והוציאו אתו "Then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out." (5) An adverb: Gen 46:6 ויבאו מצרימה יעקב וכל זרעו אתו "And they came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him."[24] (b) When an adverb or object is placed before it: Gen 40:1 ויהי אחר הדברים האלה חטאו משקה מלך מצרים והאפה לאדניהם למלך מצרים "Some time after this, the butler of the king of Egypt and the baker offended their lord the king of Egypt."[25]

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[18]Levi, 45.

[19]Ibid., 49, n. 12. See the following examples given by Levi: With the conjunction ו: Ex 9: 31; 11:10; 17: 10, 12; Num 14:6, 38, 44; 16:27; Josh 8:21; 18:7; 24:4; Judg 6:33; 9:34; I Sam 17:2; 24:22; II Sam 2:13, 29; 3:23, 30; 4:6; 16:5; I Kgs 1:8; II Kgs 12:22; 19:37; Isa 37:38; Jer 8:7; 40:13; Esth 3:15; Ezr 10:15; II Chr 35:9; with conjunction גם(ו): Ex 34:3; II Sam 1:4; 13:36; Jer 36:25; Zeph 2:14; with conjunction אך : I Sam 20:4; Ezr 10:15.

[20]Ibid., n. 13. Isa 51:11; 65:25; Jer 4:18; 6:21; Ezr 38:13; Ps 27:10; 85:11.

[21]See also Moreshet, 256.

[22]Levi, 50, n. 15. Josh 14:1, I Kgs 1:45, 8:63; Jer 36:24.

[23]Ibid., n. 16. I Sam 22:2; II Kgs 3:12; Zach 13:3.

[24]Ibid, n. 17. Ex 7:20; II Sam 2:32.

[25]Ibid., 51, n. 18. Ex 5:1; Ezr 3:8; II Chr 29:29; I Sam 22:13; Jer 27:13; Jer 22:18; Num 27:21; Lev 6:9; Jer 26:19, Gen 37:10, Num 20:19; Esth 7:4; I Chr 10:7; I Sam 20:23; Gen 31:34; Jon 3:8.

Rule 3. *The predicate agrees in gender with the nearest element of the compound subject*, e.g. Ex 16:6; 23:12; Gen 31:14; Jer 49:23; Gen 33:7, Lev 20:10;[26] Num 12:1; Jdg 5:1.[27] There are, however, a few cases of disagreement between the predicate and the nearest element, e.g. Isa 16:10; Jer 48:33. These cases are explained, according to Levi, by the following reasons: (1) When the phrase is a strong word-pair, e.g. Joel 1:9.[28] (2) When the relative sentence refers to the particle כל "all" or "each," e.g. Deut 28:61.[29] (3) When the nearest element stands as an abstract element in plural, e.g. Thr 3:38. (4) When the impersonal verb היה is present or when there is a reference to a subjective element, e.g. Ex 21:4[30] and probably II Chr 6:29. (5) When the writer emphasizes himself through the personal pronoun rather than through the nearest element, e.g. Esth 4:16.[31]

Rule 4. *When the clause is continued by a second verb, that verb stands in plural.*[32] Deviations appear when the verb is applied to the main person or when the compound subject consists of a strong unity.

Levi concludes that this linguistic device is predominant in Hebrew prose (also in prophetic books) and appears almost uniformly in the early as well in the later writings.[33] For Levi, it is a stylistic phenomenon found in the OT, used mainly for emphasis. According to him, this phenomenon was a common feature in the spoken language.[34]

There is, however, one point in his study that needs some clarification. He did not clearly establish the function of this linguistic device. He only described it. Therefore, my study is a tentative explanation of the function of the verb-compound subject agreement in Biblical Hebrew. This tentative study takes into consideration all the research mentioned above with special attention to Levi's work.

Function of $[v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 \ldots]$ Clause Type

The $[v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 \ldots]$ clause type is used when there is a need of differentiation

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[26]Ibid., n. 19. Deut 5:14; 7:14; 22:15; 29:19.

[27]Ibid., n. 20. Num 20:11; Jer 42:18; 44:6; Esth 9:26; 9:16.

[28]Ibid., n. 21. I Sam 13:22; Isa 16:10; Jer 13:22; Ezr 23:29; Jer 49:24; 51:3; Prov 27:9; 29:15; Esth 1:6.

[29]Ibid., 52, n. 22. II Chr 6:29.

[30]Ibid., n. 24. Gen 30:26; Lev 27:10, 33.

[31]Ibid., n. 25. According to Levi, it is possible that in Esth 4:16 and in Neh 5:14 a correction took place.

[32]Ibid., n. 26. Levi states that in 104 cases the sentence was continued by an additional verb; in 97 of these the additional verb stands in plural, 7 times in singular.

[33]Ibid., 53.

[34]Ibid., 56.

between the elements of the compound subject in the action of the governing verb.[35] If there is not such a need, then another clause type is used.[36] The linking *waw* of this clause type may be classified as a *waw* of accompaniment. A representative number of examples that support this statement are given in the next section.

Levi has rightly asserted that scholars of the Mishna and the Talmud have recognized this function in their argumentation in the Darash and Halakah. According to some of these Jewish scholars, the verb indicates the main agent or the initiator of the activity.[37] A similar view appears also in Jewish commentators of the Middle Ages (Rashi on Gen 9: 23; Ibn Ezra on Ex 15:1; Num 12:1; Deut 32:44; Isa 14:11) as I have mentioned above.[38] Further support for this is given by H. M. Orlinsky; he recognizes that the singular verb agrees with the leading element of the compound subject. Regarding Isa 7:1 he argues that the instigator was Rezin of Aram. Orlinsky's assumption is founded on David Qimhi's statement concerning Isa 7:1, where the Hebrew text has ולא יכל (the verb is in singular with two subjects) "and he was not able" referring to both Rezin and Pekah. Qimhi stated that the reason for the singular verb is because Rezin was the main instigator of the war, even though he brought with him Pekah.[39] Thus Pekah would be a companion of Rezin in making war, but not the main instigator of that.

Knowing the function of this type of clause is not enough for understanding all the implications of this device. The next step is to be able to recognize it and its variations.

Variations of $[v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 \ldots]$ Clause type

There are two major variations of this clause type that may affect the translation and the interpretation of a text. These variations are basically related to the position of the verb in the sentence, namely, the prepositive and postpositive positions of the governing verb in relationship to the compound subject.

Prepositive verb: This is the most common form. The verb comes first, then the compound subject whose elements are linked by a *waw* $[v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 \ldots]$ (see Levi's rule 2 above). The verb agrees in number and gender with the main subject which is named in this

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[35]Sometimes the differentiation between the leading subject and its companion can have the extra support of a prepositional phrase, e. g. Josh. 10:15 וישב יהושע וכל ישראל עמו "Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him" See also II Sam 10:13.

[36]If there is not a reason to differentiate the elements of the compound subject, then the verb may be in the plural, indicating that all elements are equally participating in the action of the governing verb. See Gen 25:9; Josh 14:1; I Kgs 1:45; 8:63; Jer 36:24.

[37]Levi, 44.

[38]See Review of Literature.

[39]Harry M. Orlinsky, "Studies in the St. Mark's Isaiah Scroll, IV," *JQR* 43 (1953), 332; L. Finkelstein, ed., *The Commentary of David Qimhi on Isaiah*, in Columbia University Oriental Studies (New York: AMS Press, 1926): ולא יכל. רצין כי הוא היה עיקר המלחמה והוא הביא עמו פקח, וכן אמר עלה רצין נראה, כי הוא העיקר. p. 45.

paper as the **leading subject** of the action (compare to Levi's rule 3 above). The second subject is only the companion of the leading subject, helping him/her to perform the action.[40]

Variations may occur when a particle, a prepositional phrase, or a word is included between the verb and the compound subject, e.g. $[v=(s_1)+particle/word/prp$ phrase$+ s_1-w-s_2]$. An example of this occurs when the personal pronoun is used for the repetition of the leading subject already contained in the verb (e.g. Gen 19:30). Another variation takes place when the leading subject is mentioned twice in the same clause. First the leading subject is mentioned right after the verb, then a prepositional phrase followed by the compound subject ($[v=(s_1) + s_1+$ prep. phrase$+ s_1-w-s_2]$, e.g. Num 11:30). The examples mentioned above indicate that the personal pronoun may also play an important role in the differentiation of the leading subject. For further variations of this type of clause see Levi's rule 2 above.

If a new verbal clause follows a $[v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 . . .]$ clause type having the compound subject of that clause as its subject, its verb will be in the plural taking both elements of the compound subject as equally participating in the action ($[v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 . . . \rightarrow vp=(s_1-s_2) . . .]$, Gen 9:23; Est 2:21; see Levi's rule 4 above).[41] If both elements of the compound subjects are feminine, the verb in the following verbal clause will be in the feminine. If only one subject is feminine, the verb will be in the masculine ($[vf=(s_1)+fs_1-w-ms_2 . . . \rightarrow vmp=(s_1\ s_2) . . .]$, Gen 3:8; 24:55; 33:7; Num 12:1). Therefore the priority is for the masculine gender as in the Romance languages (Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian). An example of masculine gender priority is found in Esth 4:4:

vmp   nmp   nfp   vfp
Esth 4:4 ותבואינה נערות אסתר וסריסיה ויגידו לה "And Esther's maidens came together with her eunuchs, and they told her," $[vfp=(s_1)+fps_1-w-mps_2\rightarrow vmp=(s_1-s_2) . . .]$. The verb בוא ("to come, go") is, in this case, a prepositive verb in the feminine plural and agrees with the leading subject of the action. Yet, the verb of the following clause is in the masculine plural taking both subjects in the same level of participation in the action. The priority, however, is to the masculine gender.

The following examples are clauses with a prepositive verb and a compound subject that may or may not be followed by a verbal clause $[v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 . . . \rightarrow v=(s_1-s_2) . . .]$ or $[v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 . . .]$ respectively. There are some passages that seem to be problematic, in which the verb appears in the singular then later on in the plural having the same compound subject: Ex 29:10 וסמך אהרן ובניו "Aaron, accompanied by his sons, shall lay"; Ex 29:15

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[40]If the verb does not agree with the first element of the compound subject or if it takes the compound subject as a single idea (*per modum unius*), we cannot know which subject is leading the action (Gen 40:1). Although this type of clause has a compound subject, it does not belong to the $[v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 . . .]$ clause type in regard to its function.

[41]$\rightarrow vp=(s_1-s_2) . . .$: It represents a following verbal clause whose verb agrees with both elements of the compound subject of the preceding clause.

וסמכו אהרן ובניו "Aaron and his sons shall lay"; Ex 29:19 וסמך אהרן ובניו "And Aaron, accompanied by his sons, shall lay"; Lev 8:14 ויסמך אהרן ובניו "And Aaron, accompanied by his sons, laid"; Lev 8:18 ויסמכו אהרן ובניו "Aaron and his sons laid"; Lev 8:22 ויסמכו אהרן ובניו "Aaron and his sons laid"; Num 3:4 ויכהן אלעזר ואיתמר "Eleazar, accompanied by Ithamar, served as a priest"; I Chro 24:2 יכהנו אלעזר ואיתמר "Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests." Notice, however, that the context may explain these passages. The writer may have had in mind the purpose of differentiating the leading subject of the compound subject in one but not in the other instance. Further examples of prepositive verb with a compound subject are as follows:

               nfs   nms   vms

Gen 3:8 ויתחבא האדם ואשתו מפני יהוה אלהים בתוך עץ הגן "And Adam hid himself, accompanied by his wife, from the face of Yahweh the Lord in the midst of the trees of the garden" [vms=(s$_1$)+mss$_1$-w-fss$_2$ . . .].

               vmp   vmp   vmp   nms nms vms

Gen 9:23 ויקח שם ויפת את־השמלה וישימו על־שכם שניהם וילכו אחרנית ויכסו את ערות אביהם "Then Shem took, accompanied by Japheth, a garment and they laid [it] upon their shoulders and they walked backward and they covered the nakedness of their father" [vms=(s$_1$) +mss$_1$-w-mss$_2$ . . .→ vmp=(s$_1$-s$_2$) . . .vmp=(s$_1$-s$_2$) . . .vmp=(s$_1$-s$_2$) . . .].

               nms nms vms

Gen 11:29 ויקח אברם ונחור להם נשים "Abraham took, accompanied by Nahor, wives for them" [vms=(s$_1$)+mss$_1$-w-mss$_2$ . . .].

               vmp   nms nms vms

Gen 21:32 ויקם אבימלך ופיכל שר־צבאו וישבו אל־ארץ פלשתים "Then Abimelech rose up, accompanied by Phicol the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines" [vms=(s$_1$)+mss$_1$-w-mss$_2$ . . .→ vmp=(s$_1$-s$_2$) . . .].

               vmp   vmp nms nms vms

Gen 24:50 ויען לבן ובתואל ויאמרו מיהוה יצא הדבר לא נוכל דבר אליך רע או־טוב "Then Laban answered, accompanied by Bethuel, and they said: from Yahweh comes the matter, we can not speak to you bad or good" [vms=(s$_1$)+mss$_1$-w-mss$_2$ . . .→ vmp=(s$_1$-s$_2$) . . . vmp=(s$_1$-s$_2$) . . .].

               nfs nms vms

Gen 24:55 ויאמר אחיה ואמה תשב הנער אתנו ימים או עשור "Then her brother said, accompanied by her mother, let the maiden remain with us at least ten days" [vms=(s$_1$)+mss$_1$-w-fss$_2$ . ..].

               vfp   vfp nfp nfs vfs

Gen 24:61 ותקם רבקה ונערתיה ותרכבנה על־הגמלים ותלכנה אחרי האיש "Then Rebekah arose, accompanied by her maidens, and they rode upon the camels and they followed the man" [vfs=(s$_1$)+fss$_1$-w-fps$_2$ . . .→ vfp=(s$_1$-s$_2$) . . . vfp=(s$_1$-s$_2$) . . .].

               vmp nmp nfs vfs

Gen 33:7 ותגש גם־לאה וילדיה וישתחוו "Leah likewise drew near, accompanied by her children, and they bowed down" [vfs=(s$_1$)+fss$_1$-w-mps$_2$ . . .→ vmp=(s$_1$-s$_2$) . . .].

Gen 34:20 וַיָּבֹא חֲמוֹר וּשְׁכֶם בְּנוֹ אֶל־שַׁעַר עִירָם וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֶל־אַנְשֵׁי עִירָם לֵאמֹר "So <u>came Hamor,</u> accompanied by Shechem his son, to the gate of their city, and <u>they spoke</u> to the men of their city saying" [vms=(s_1)+mss$_1$-w-mss$_2$ . . .→ vmp=(s_1-s_2) . . .].

(vmp / nms nms vms)

Gen 44:14 וַיָּבֹא יְהוּדָה וְאֶחָיו בֵּיתָה יוֹסֵף וְהוּא עוֹדֶנּוּ שָׁם וַיִּפְּלוּ לְפָנָיו אָרְצָה "When <u>Judah came,</u> <u>accompanied by his brothers,</u> to Joseph's house, he was still there, and <u>they fell</u> before him to the ground" [vms=(s_1)+mss$_1$-w-mss$_2$ . . .→ vmp=(s_1-s_2) . . .].

(vmp / nmp nms vms)

Ex 15:1 אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר "Then <u>Moses sang,</u> <u>accompanied by the people of Israel,</u> this song to Yahweh, and <u>they spoke</u> saying" [vms=(s_1)+mss$_1$-w-mps$_2$ . . .→ vmp=(s_1-s_2) . . .].

(vmp / nmp nms vms)

Num 12:1 וַתְּדַבֵּר מִרְיָם וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמֹשֶׁה "And <u>Miriam spoke, accompanied by Aaron,</u> against Moses" [vfs=(s_1)+fss$_1$-w-mss$_2$ . . .].

(nms nfs vfs)

Esth 2:21 קָצַף בִּגְתָן וָתֶרֶשׁ שְׁנֵי־סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשֹּׁמְרֵי הַסַּף וַיְבַקְשׁוּ לִשְׁלֹחַ יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרֹשׁ "<u>Bigtan got</u> <u>angry, accompanied by Teresh,</u> . . . and <u>they sought</u> to lay hand on the king Ahashuerosh" [vms=(s_1)+mss$_1$-w-mss$_2$ . . .→ vmp=(s_1-s_2) . . .].

(vmp / nms nms vms)

Postpositive verb: The [v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 . . .] clause type may have a postpositive verb (verb after the subject). This occurs when the emphasis is on the subject ([s_1-w-s_2+v= (s_1) . . .]. In this case, the verb should still correspond to the number and gender of the leading subject (see deviations of Levi's rule 3). Otherwise, there is no differentiation between the leading and the companion subjects concerning their participation in the action of the governing verb (see Esth 3:15).

The following examples are of postpositive verbs [s_1-w-s_2+v=(s_1) . . .]. The verb still agrees with the main component of the compound subject in number and gender. The postpositive position of the verb is less frequent. In this case the compound subject is emphasized as a unity by its position in the clause. On the other hand the leading subject is differentiated by its agreement with the verb. I did not find any instance of [s_1-w-s_2+v= (s_1) . . .] clause type followed by a verbal clause having the compound subject as its subject, as occurs with the prepositive position of the verb [v=(s_1)+s_1-w-s_2 . . .]. Further examples of postpositive verb with a compound subject are as follows:

Ex 21:4 הָאִשָּׁה וִילָדֶיהָ תִּהְיֶה לַאדֹנֶיהָ "The <u>wife together with her children will belong</u> to her master" [fss$_1$-w-mps$_2$+vfs=(s_1) . . .].

(vsf nmp nfs)

                                  vfs   nfp prfs
Esth 4:16 כן אצום תערתי אני־גמ "I as well <u>will fast accompanied by my maidens</u>" [fss$_1$-w-
fps$_2$+vfs=(s$_1$) . . .].

Conclusion

The outcome of this investigation supports what was already implied by commentators from the Middle Ages (Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Qimhi) and also Gesenius-Kautzsch. The [v=(s$_1$)+s$_1$-w-s$_2$ . . .] clause type and its varieties are used in biblical Hebrew to differentiate the elements of a compound subject in their degree of participation in the action of the governing verb.

A summary of the general characteristics of this linguistic device is as follows: Both elements of a compound subject participate in the action of the governing verb, but with different degrees of activity. The leading subject is usually the first component of the compound subject. The verb should agree with the leading subject in gender and number. The linking *waw* may be considered as a *waw* of accompaniment.

This linguistic device has the function of indicating the main actor of the action. It adds flavor and specification to the flow of the narrative. Otherwise the reader would be left wondering which subject initiated the action of the verb. This function can only be noticed, with certainty, when the compound subject is represented by persons. A clear example of that is Ex 15:1: "Moses sang and the people of Israel sang after him/accompanying him/together with him." Moses is the leading subject and the people are his companions in the action of singing.

Having noted the definition, function, and characteristics of this linguistic device, we can recognize it with a certain degree of accuracy. It will enable us to avoid losing the purpose of the differentiation that may affect the exegesis of the text and the beauty of the narrative.