VI. CONTRASTS IN NOUN USAGE: EVERY "MAN" FOR HIMSELF

Thus far, I have explored the meaning of *'ish* in Hebrew mainly by its usage in context ("syntagmatic analysis"). However, modern linguistics holds that in order to determine what a given word means, one must also look at its place within the same semantic field of that language's vocabulary ("paradigmatic analysis"). As Ziony Zevit writes, "It is only through contrasts, i.e., circumstances where only *'ish* was used . . . to the exclusion of others, that we can determine the limits of application and hence the 'meanings.'"[1] Indeed, it appears that some linguists would ideally reverse the order of analysis and begin with an investigation of synonyms.[2] Therefore this part of my memorandum will examine synonyms and contrasting noun usage, offering some observations and a few preliminary conclusions.

My interest here is to test my hypothesis that *'ish* primarily a term of affiliation. Therefore I will address the following question: Given the circumstances in which the word *'ish* is used, is it more like the general personal noun *'adam* (human being), or more like terms that intrinsically convey affiliation, such as *ben*?

VI.A. What Is the Semantic Field of *'ish*?

VI.A.1.   In the Even-Shoshan concordance to the Hebrew Bible, the *qerovim* (synonyms and related words) for *'ish* are given as: *'adam*, *'enosh*, *ba'al*, *gever*, *metim*, and *nefesh*.[3] Such a categorization seems to be made presuming either that the primary sense of *'ish* is "adult male" (as HALOT does) or that *'ish* is a generic term for people (as IBHS does). However, if my hypothesis is correct regarding the meaning of *'ish*, then perhaps that noun belongs instead in a semantic field consisting of other terms of affiliation. Such a domain might include, for example, *ben*, *ba'al* (which is also in Even-Shoshan's list), *'adon*, *bachur*, *tzelem*, and *chaver*.

VI.A.2.   The question of assignment of semantic field ought to take into account the semantic categories built into the structure of Hebrew. It is beyond my expertise to establish the semantic field definitively. Here I will simply contrast *'ish* with selected terms, usually one at a time.

VI.B. *'ish* versus *'adam*

VI.B.1.   So far as I know, only *'adam* has been the subject of comprehensive semantic contrast with *'ish*. In III.A.5, I quoted certain conclusions of the late Alison Grant's important study.[4]
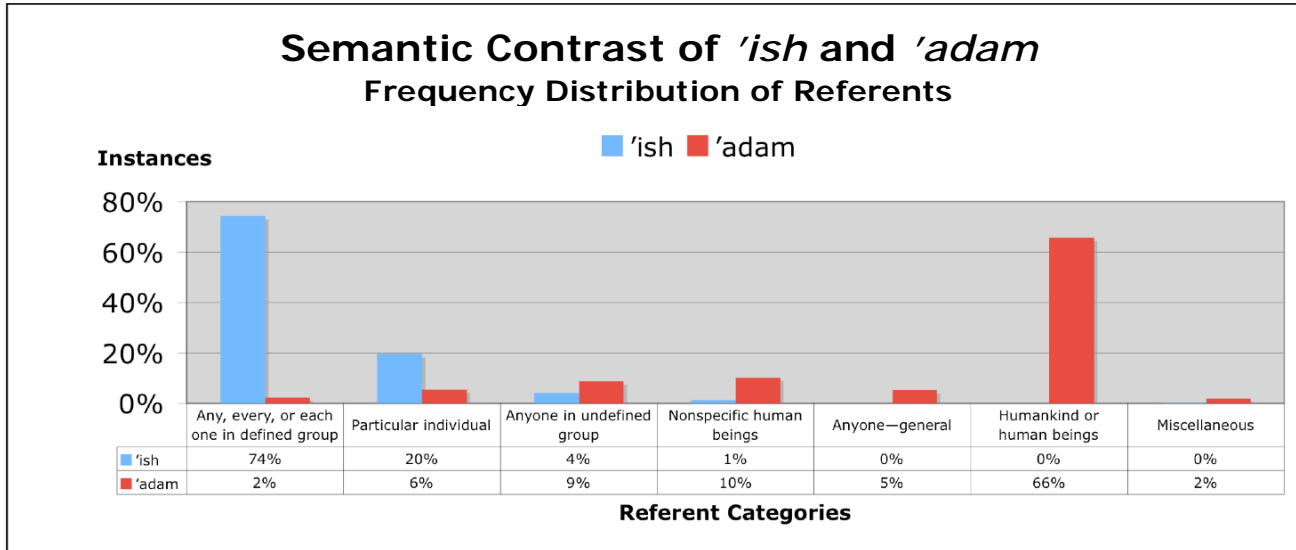
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[1] Pers. comm., 3/1/06.

[2] In the *Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew* ("SDBH") (Reinier de Blois, editor; United Bible Societies, www.sdbh.org; a work in progress with less than three thousand entries so far), the results of paradigmatic analysis are treated as primary and conveyed as lexical domains, while the syntagmatic analysis is reflected in the contextual domains, which are organized as subentries to the lexical domains. The SDBH entry on *'ish* has not yet been compiled; this memorandum is a first step in that direction.

[3] *Qonqordantzyah Chadashah: le-Torah, N'vi'im u-Khtuvim*, ed. Abraham Even-Shoshan (4th edn., 1982; 1985 printing).

[4] Alison Grant, "*'adam* and *'ish*: Man in the OT," Australian *Biblical Review* 25, 1977, pp. 2–11.

I will dwell on it here because scholars have largely disregarded it. (I have seen it cited in discussions of Genesis 1–3 only once, and the dictionaries ignore it.) Her interest was to clarify the meaning of *'adam* in Genesis 1–3; she focused on *'ish* only to the extent that it shed light on *'adam*. She proceeded to classify each referent of both words according to whether it was *particular*—either a particular individual or related to a particular group—versus a *general* reference to human beings. Then she tallied her characterizations of all instances and compared the two words on that basis. I have furthered her work by rearranging her categories, charting the distribution percentage (of the total instances of each term), and tabulating her final results, as shown below.

Semantic Contrast of *'ish* and *'adam*
Frequency Distribution of Referents

Instances

	Any, every, or each one in defined group	Particular individual	Anyone in undefined group	Nonspecific human beings	Anyone—general	Humankind or human beings	Miscellaneous
'ish	74%	20%	4%	1%	0%	0%	0%
'adam	2%	6%	9%	10%	5%	66%	2%

Referent Categories

Uses of *'ish* and *'adam* in the Hebrew Bible

	Categories of Referent	Frequencies 'ish	Frequencies 'adam
A1.	Anyone or everyone in a particular group (plural form)	501	0
A2.	Anyone or everyone in a particular group (singular collective)	244	0
A3.	Each and every member of a particular group of human beings	369	0
A4.	Each and every member of a particular group of animals or things	20	0
A5.	Anyone in a particular group without indication of gender	128	0
A6.	Anyone in a particular group with male gender (e.g., husbands)	165	0
A7.	Anyone in a defined group whose members are likely to be male	190	9
A8.	Everyone in a particular group of human beings (versus animals, things, or divine beings)	0	4
B1.	A particular individual, aside from the first human being	427	0
B2.	The initial progenitor of all human beings	2	30
B3.	Particular progenitor of a lineage	0	1
C.	Anyone—no clearly defined group or gender	91	49
D.	Nonspecific human beings (either a particular group or a general sense is possible)	29	58
E.	Anyone—human beings generally	0	30
F.	Humankind or human beings in general (incl. ref. to Ezekiel and others as *ben 'adam*)	2	371
G.	Miscellaneous (e.g., text seems garbled; place name)	6	11
	TOTAL	2174	562

VI.B.2. Grant confirmed her working hypothesis that a biblical author would employ the word *'ish* when thinking of either a particular individual or group of individuals, or any member of a particular group; whereas to refer either to humankind, human beings in general, or any human being, the text uses the word *'adam*. She concluded that the terms *'ish* and *'adam* can hardly be considered to be synonyms: "The two words may be sharply distinguished in meaning. . . . The distinction is preserved almost without exception throughout the whole of the Hebrew OT."[5]

VI.B.3. One could further study the apparent anomalies to account for the apparent minor overlaps in usage. Yet already the essential semantic distinctions seem to be robust, as follows:

	Frequency of usage	
	'ish	*'adam*
• Affiliation is involved[6]	>74%	<2%
• Particular individual reference[7]	20%	0%
• General human reference[8]	<6%	>71%

The real question is this: how can these two words belong in the same semantic field? The burden of proof would seem to be on those who claim that they do.

VI.B.4. The usage of *'ish* and *'adam* overlaps significantly in only two categories (C and D), pointing to possible situations where the Bible might be treating the two terms as interchangeable: "anyone" or "human beings" if the scope of the group and the social gender are not at issue. Such situations account for only 19% of all instances of *'ish* and 5% of all instances of *'adam*. According to my hypothesis, if "the group in question" happens to be humankind, then indeed *'ish* or *'adam* could designate the referents equally clearly. In short, the two terms can be functionally synonymous—but only in a very limited context. None of us would dare claim that the English words "friends" and "farmers" are synonyms just because a few of our friends happen to be farmers, yet we like to believe that the words *'ish* and *'adam* are synonyms because in the Bible they too sometimes refer to the same people, or form a stock word pair.[9] Such a belief may not serve lexicographers and interpreters well.

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[5] Page 2.

[6] See below, VI.B.5.

[7] In 6% of total instances, *'adam* appears at first glance to refer to a particular individual. Of those, 30 out of 31 refer to the first human being. Grant speculated that "the ancient Hebrew reader" would have retained the nonspecific sense of *'adam* even while reading about the first *'adam* in Genesis 2–3: humankind was spoken of in the story "*as if* it were a particular individual." Although I do not agree with her reading of that passage, clearly that *'adam* is a special case, as SDBH recognizes. Outside of such references to a progenitor (of all humankind or of a lineage), *'adam* never refers to a particular individual.

[8] For *'ish*, categories C+D+E+F. For *'adam*, categories E+F.

[9] The Bible pairs the two terms on several dozen occasions: *'eyn sham 'ish we-qol 'adam* (2 Kings 7:10); *wa-yishshach 'adam / wa-yishpal 'ish* (Isa. 2:9); *lo' 'avar bah 'ish / we-lo' yashav 'adam sham* (Jer. 2:6); etc.

VI.B.5.　Regarding the presence of affiliation, Grant provided a lower bound for how often *'ish* refers to an individual "as a *member* of a particular group."[10] As shown in the table above, that generalization covers at least 74% of all instances of the term, according to her count (category A).[11] Conversely, less than 2% of the instances of *'adam* can be said to refer to someone as part of a group (A7+A8).[12] "The human beings to whom [*'adam*] refers . . . do not belong to any one sex or to any particular nation," Grant writes.[13] This sharp semantic contrast increases the likelihood that *'ish* always conveys affiliation. That is, it appears to be the case in Hebrew that a given noun either *is* or *is not* a term of affiliation, rather than being only *usually* so.

VI.B.6.　Grant found that of all instances of *'ish*, 80% bear the meaning of "anyone, everyone, each, someone" whereas only 20% refer to a particular individual. This statistic has important procedural implications for lexicography, which I will discuss below.

VI.B.7.　Regarding the relation of *'ish* to social gender, Grant did not focus on this issue, yet she did make one astute observation in that regard: the fact that this noun means "each" some 20 times with *non-human* referents (A4) "suggests that the word *'ish* itself carries the meaning 'each one (of a group)' rather than meaning 'man.' "[14]

VI.B.8.　Grant took largely for granted the idea that *'ish* is intrinsically male. Only in a few of her categories did she check the extent of male referents. Aggregating four categories in which she did so yields 574 instances where *'ish* is employed individually in the sense of "anyone."[15] Of those, she found 219 (38% of the aggregate category) where she tried but could not find any indication of social gender from either the grammar or the context. In short, although *'ish* often refers to a man, not every *'ish* is necessarily a man—even for the *human* referents.[16]

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[10] Page 9, emphasis in the original.

[11] This statistic is surely an undercount. Grant meanwhile found 427 instances where *'ish* refers to a particular individual (20% of total; category B1). But after she identified such an instance, she did not look further for an implicit reference to a particular group, such as a spouse or a household or a tribe. I have adduced evidence in Parts I–V that those instances do in fact allude to either a group or a principal.

[12] At stake are 13 instances, and in 4 of them *'adam* appears to be a shorthand way of distinguishing the human from the non-human items listed. Grant does not mention which are the 9 remaining attestations.

[13] She underscored this assessment with the grammatical observation for *'adam* that a plural form, construct state, and pronominal suffix are all conspicuously missing in the Bible—these being the forms through which affiliation "would most naturally be expressed." The noun *'ish* does have those grammatical forms, although, as we saw in Parts I and II, *'ish* distinctively conveys affiliation even when its grammatical form is singular or absolute.

[14] Page 9. Yet she stopped short of developing this idea. She immediately added: "Frequently both ideas are present together, but either one may be present without the other being explicit." That is, she still considered the main lexical meaning of *'ish* to be "man" (adult male), which is how she continued to refer to that Hebrew term in her discussion.

[15] A5+A6+A7+C. The aggregate total amounts to 26% of all instances of *'ish*. By "individually" I mean that *'ish* appears in the singular yet is not used as a collective.

[16] Because Grant did not question the application of *'ish* to nongendered referents, she presumably accepted the conventional view that in those cases the biblical use of *'ish* was a linguistic expression of a supposed Israelite view that men were qualified to represent all human beings, including women. (As we

VI.B.9.   In terms of the grammatical model that I presented in Part V, Grant's tally appears to mean that the Bible employs *'ish* in a fashion that connotes "adult male" no more than 20% of the time. Thus in the overwhelming majority of cases, the referent's social gender is— grammatically speaking—either wholly or partly *unspecified*. In many (if not most) of the latter situations, the discourse context and/or the linguistic context meanwhile provides clues conveying that the referent's social gender is male. Yet in hundreds of cases, Grant found that the usage is gender inclusive—accounting for *at least* 1 in 5 (22%) of all grammatically unspecified gender instances of individual (neither plural nor collective) usage.

VI.B.10.   As discussed in Part II, IBHS (1990) characterizes *'ish* as a "generic noun of class" (§§ 13.4c, 13.8b), and also *'ish* and *'ishshah* as "the broadest possible generic terms for people" (§ 12.3b). In light of Grant's study (1977), only the first assessment appears correct. That is, the truly generic term for a human is *'adam*, whereas *'ish* has precious few generic referents. By mostly (if not always) referring to an individual as "a *member* of a particular group," *'ish* is really not inherently a "term for people." Yes, *'ish* remains a "generic noun of class" but the class is not necessarily human beings; rather, it depends upon the particular group in question.

VI.C. *'ish* versus *nefesh*

VI.C.1.   Of the remaining lexical "similar terms" that Even-Shoshan cited, the most frequently attested by far is *nefesh*.[17] As the standard dictionaries note, it has a concrete sense that is presumably its primary sense: "throat, neck, windpipe." By extension it refers to (breathing) individual persons. If so, a sense of affiliation with any group—other than living beings in general— would seem to be lacking.

VI.C.2.   In actual usage, however, *nefesh* does seem to presume affiliation in at least some situations. It seems to be used in the sense of "someone, anyone" (e.g., *nefesh ki techeta'*, Lev. 4:2, 5:1; cf. 4:27, 5:15, 17, 21).[18] Furthermore, it recurs as a member of an extended family (lineage) in expressions stating the consequence of violating certain precepts: that *nefesh* will be "cut off" from that person's *'ammim*. In other words, *nefesh* can connote—if not denote—affiliation.

VI.C.3.   Still, in the Bible the word *'ish* is several times more likely than *nefesh* is to occur in proximity to (e.g., within three words of) a given instance of the group noun *'am*.[19] Perhaps the distinction between *'am* in the singular as "people, troop," versus *'ammim* in the plural is significant. That is, perhaps *nefesh* is a "manifestation (either male or female) of the lineage," whereas *'ish* is a "member" of an *'am*. To express this hypothesized contrast more poetically, one

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have seen, the proofs advanced for this view are the so-called priority of masculine grammatical gender, as well as the biblical narratives, laws, and genealogies that presume patrilineage—in which some men [and an occasional woman] represent both women and other men.)

[17] Both in the Bible and in classical Hebrew, *nefesh* occurs about a third as often as *'ish*—that is, even more often than *'adam*.

[18] I do not see this meaning of *nefesh* mentioned in HALOT or BDB.

[19] The same conclusion holds if one corrects for the fact that *'ish* is a more common word to begin with. But these are very rough statistics. Of course a real analysis would look at syntactic and semantic relationships, not merely at proximity.

might say that the word *nefesh* views a person like a mushroom, which is the visible fruiting body of an enormous underground fungus; for its part, *'ish* reduces a person to someone carrying a membership card with data that matches what is written on the central membership roster.

VI.C.4.   In short, the noun *nefesh* seems to be in the same semantic domain as *'ish*, and it is a plausible candidate as a synonym. More study is warranted.

VI.D. *'ish* versus *'enosh*, *gever*, and *metim*

Three other terms relatively closely reflect the sense "a man" (adult male) or "a human being": *'enosh*, *gever*, and *metim*. The parallel expressions *'ashrei ha-gever* (Pss. 34:9, 40:5, 94:12, 127:5) and *'ashrei ha-'ish* (Ps. 1:1) might suggest that those nouns function in the same way. Yet the expression *'ashrei 'adam*, which occurs 6 times, did little to help *'adam* be a synonym of *'ish*. Furthermore, the relatively infrequent attestations of *'enosh*, *gever*, and *metim* put them in a different league from *'ish* altogether.[20] And I know of no evidence that any of these terms functions so as to indicate affiliation—not any better than *'adam* does, except that *metim* has the advantage of being a plural term. In short, these three nouns seem unlikely candidates as synonyms of *'ish*.

VI.E. *'ish* versus *ba'al*

VI.E.1.   The noun *ba'al* occurs 161 times in the Bible, which is one-fourteenth the frequency of *'ish*. (Of the total instances, 76 [that is, 47%] refer either to the deity Baal or to a plural category of deities, Baalim.)[21] Even so, expressions that include either of those nouns function in a wide range of shared senses, as we shall see.

VI.E.2.   Both terms can be applied not only to human beings but also to <u>animals</u>, as in the designation of a bird as *ba'al kanaf* (winged, Prov. 1:17; cf. Eccles. 10:20) and a ram that is *ba'al ha-qarnaim* (two-horned, Dan. 8:6, 20), and to <u>inanimate objects</u>, as with a thresher that is *ba'al pipiyot* ("many-spiked"). I cannot think of a case where *'ish* is applied to such referents in exactly the same way—that is, as a genitive applied adjectivally with regard to qualities—although the absolute form is applied to them in the sense of "each, any, one" (III.B.2.b). Nevertheless, such usages are prima facie evidence that as we saw for *'ish*, the word *ba'al* is a term of relationship rather than of intrinsic humanness.

VI.E.3.   To refer to a <u>householder</u>, the construct expression *ba'al ha-bayit* appears three times in the Bible (Exod. 22:7; Judg. 19:22, 23). Note that the latter two instances actually appear

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[20] The noun *gever* occurs 66 times in the Bible and 96 times altogether in classical Hebrew; *'enosh*, 42 times in the Bible and 86 times in classical Hebrew—compared to *'ish* with 2179 times in the Bible and 2734 times in classical Hebrew, which is about *thirty times* as often. (Source for frequency data: DCH, Vol. III, p. 52; Vol. 1, pp. 68–69. Comparison using the apparently larger stock of Qumran texts available via Accordance 6.9.1 yields even a slightly larger ratio of *'ish* to the other terms. Meanwhile, *metim* occurs only about two dozen times in the Bible.) When two terms' frequency of use differs by more than an order of magnitude, they must play rather different roles in the language. Do these purported synonyms of *'ish* differ from it only in application, connotation, or idiomatic use? Or do those synonyms perhaps not share the same basic meaning to begin with?

[21] Based on my count via Accordance 6.9.1.

in apposition with *'ish*—that is, as *ha-'ish ba'al ha-bayit*. Whereas *'ish* alone can designate a householder (I.B.2; II.B.2), *ba'al* is not so attested.

VI.E.4. To refer to local <u>authorities</u>, the bound form *ba'alei ha-'ir* (where the absolute term is usually the town's name) appears 19 times (Josh. 24:11; Judg. 9:2, 3, 6, 7, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 39, 46, 47, 51; 20:5; 1 Sam. 23:11, 12; 2 Sam. 21:12), although 14 of those are found in the same episode. This usage can be compared to that of *'ish* (e.g., *'anshei ha-'ir*; see the 24 instances cited in II.B.3; there may be others).

VI.E.5. To refer to an <u>authority</u> in the sense of an owner or master, *ba'al* appears numerous times (e.g., Exod. 21:28, 29, 34, 36, 22:10, 11, 13, 14) and also apparently for other kinds of authority (*ba'al*, meaning unclear, Lev. 21:4; *ba'alei goyim*, Isa. 16:8; *ba'al peqidut*, Jer. 37:13). Presumably the application of *ba'al* to divinities also derives from this authority sense of the term. (For *'ish* in its authority sense, in both absolute and found forms, see I.B.3; II.B.3.)

VI.E.6. Regarding <u>mastery</u> of a skill, the expression *ba'al ha-lashon* ("trained [snake] charmer," Eccles. 10:11) can be compared with *'ish lashon* (Ps. 140:12) and with *'ish devarim* ("good with words," Exod. 4:10). Likewise, *ba'alei chitztzim* (archers, Gen. 49:23) or *ba'alei ha-parashim* (horsemen, 2 Sam. 1:6) can perhaps be likened to *'ish milchamah* (warrior, Josh. 17:1) or *'ish chayil* (stalwart, 1 Sam. 31:12). Indeed, already ibn Janah and Radak explained the *'ish* in *'ish milchamah* as having the sense of master (*ba'al ha-davar*), although I now believe that *'ish milchamah* actually means "a party to war" (cf. *'ish milchamot* and *'ish riv*, III.B.4).

VI.E.7. To refer to a <u>party</u>: to a lawsuit (specifically, one's adversary), the term *ba'al mishpati* appears once (Isa. 50:8); to a transaction, *ba'al masheh yado* ("creditor," Deut. 15:2), and to a contract, both *ba'al berit* ("allies," Gen. 14:3) and *ba'alei shevu'ah* ("confederates," Neh. 6:18); compare *'ish*, where the form *ha-'ish* alone is often sufficient (III.B.4).

VI.E.8. Regarding someone who manifests a certain <u>quality</u>, Proverbs offers two parallel pairings that are relevant: *ba'al 'af* || *'ish chemot* (22:24), and conversely *'ish 'af* || *ba'al chemah* (29:22). It seems to me that *'ish* in these instances means "exemplar of a quality" whereas *ba'al* means "possessor of a quality."[22] And the phrase *'ish ba'al se'ar* ("[he was] someone who possessed [a lot of] hair," 2 Kings 1:8) can be compared with *achi 'ish sa'ir* ("my brother is the hairy type," Gen. 27:11). Likewise we have *ba'al mashchit* ("destroyer," Prov. 18:9) along with *ish mashchit* (Prov. 28:24; NJPS: "vandals") and also simply the participial substantive *mashchitim* (Jer. 6:28).

VI.E.9. To refer to a <u>husband</u>, *ba'al* appears 14 times in the Bible (Gen. 20:3; Exod. 21:3, 21:22; Deut. 22:22, 24:4; 2 Sam. 11:26; Hos. 2:18; Joel 1:8; Prov. 12:4, 31:11, 23, 28; Esther 1:17, 20). Yet in all of these cases, *ba'al* is either in bound forms (*b''ulat ba'al*, or *ba'al ha-'ishshah*, or *ba'al n''ureha*) or with a possessive suffix to show affiliation. It is not attested as being used with a first-person possessive ("my *ba'al*"). In contrast, out of the dozens of times where *'ish* refers to a husband, at least four instances are absolute forms with conspicuous usage (see II.B.3), and nine of them portray a female character as speaking the inflected form *'ishi* ("my husband").

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[22] The fact that both nouns are used variously to refer to an authority, a householder, or a husband (see below) adds further resonance to their pairing in those two proverbs.

In three passages, *ba'al* and *'ish* both appear, referring to the same person (Deut. 24:1–4; 2 Sam. 11:26; Hos. 2:18). The latter instance famously plays on a presumed semantic distinction between the two terms:

וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם־הַהוּא נְאֻם־יְהוָֹה תִּקְרְאִי אִישִׁי   In that day—declares Yhwh—you will call me "my *'ish*";

וְלֹא־תִקְרְאִי־לִי עוֹד בַּעְלִי: you will no longer call me "my *ba'al.*"

To shed light on that verse, Walter A. Maier III ("Ishi," *ABD*) has sketched a contrast of the two terms as follows:

> When *ba'al* is used in the sense of "husband," there often is an implied emphasis on the formal, contractual relationship between the man and woman, on the legal rights of the man as husband ("lord") of the woman (Gen. 20:3; Exod. 21:3, 22; Deut. 22:22; 24:4; cf. 2 Sam. 11:26). On the other hand, *'ish* ("man"), used in the sense of "husband," can carry connotations of the man as counterpart, companion of the woman, of his being in a close relationship with the woman (Gen. 2:23–24; 3:6; cf. Gen. 3:16; 29:32, 34; 30:15, 20; 2 Sam. 14:5; 2 Kgs. 4:1). In the context of Hosea 2, *'ish* is a more personal, intimate term than *ba'ali*.

Maier's contrast of each word's connotations does withstand scrutiny. Furthermore it confirms my earlier speculation that when *'ish* means "husband" it does so in the sense of "[intimate, male] affiliate, domestic partner" (III.B.6).

VI.E.10. As we have said, both *'ish* and *ba'al* are terms of relationship. Significantly, *'ish* takes on the contextual meanings discussed above often in absolute form (both indefinite and definite) as well as in appositive phrases or in construct chain; however, *ba'al* often seems to require a construct chain. It is the expressions in which those two terms are used that are synonymous, more so than the terms themselves. And nowhere do I see that *ba'al* involves group membership, even in marriage. Nevertheless, *'ish* and *ba'al* plausibly reside in the same semantic domain.

VI.F. *'ish* versus *ben*

VI.F.1. To take the full semantic measure of *ben*—one of the Bible's most pervasive words, appearing nearly 5000 times—would be a huge undertaking. As a proxy for purposes of this memorandum, I will begin with the glosses in HALOT: (*1*) (*a*) son, (*b*) young animal; (*2*) grandson; (*3*) familiar address; (*4*) *with collectives* single, individual; (*5*) member of a nation, tribe; (*6*) member, fellow of a group, class guild; (*7*) one of a group or type, with a certain destiny; (*8*) having the age of; (*9*) a designation of disdain; (*10*) *metaphorical*.[23] The HALOT analysis appears to view the most concrete sense as primary (something like "immediate offspring"), such that other meanings then follow by extension.

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[23] I refer to the dictionary entry for *ben* as a "proxy" for its meaning not only because of having proven the inadequacy of the entry for *'ish*, but also because of linguists' observations regarding the limitations of what lexicographers have produced. Harold P. Scanlin has stated the matter baldly: "The last place to look for the meaning of a word is in the dictionary" ("The Study of Semantics in General Linguistics," in Walter P. Bodine, ed. *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* [Eisenbrauns, 1992], p. 134).

VI.F.2. Several aspects of the Bible's usage of *ben* suggest that it is a term of affiliation:

(*1*) It is used in patronyms to show relationships that include not only biological descent but also clan affiliation.

(*2*) As is well known, calling a man by only his patronymic (*ben* so-and-so) was considered disparaging. But how did the expression convey this sense? A simple explanation is that it implied that the referent maintains an undue attachment (loyalty) to his own clan at the expense of the proper deference (loyalty) due to those of different stock.

(*3*) As Baruch A. Levine has pointed out, in Gen. 49:22 *ben* may appear as the plural *banot*, where it seems to mean "bough, shoot (of a vine)." As "part of a repertoire of botanical imagery used to describe lineage," it therefore maintains the sense of being connected to the existing trunk or stalk.[24] The shoot develops its own identity yet remains a part of the larger plant.[25]

(*4*) The Bible regularly employs *ben* in the sense of "individual within a collective," "member of the group," and the like. The plural construct expression *benei yisrael* (Israelites) is a banner example of the membership sense.

VI.F.3. Even if one prefers to believe that the primary meaning of *ben* is "son," it should be easy to see the similarity of *ben* to *'ish* as terms of affiliation. Expressions with these terms are used interchangeably, such as: *benei yisra'el* and *'ish yisra'el* (both occurring frequently); *ben mavet* (1 Sam. 20:31) and *'ish mavet* (1 Kings 2:26); *'ish gibbor* ‖ *ben chayil* (1 Sam 14:52); etc. Even so, *ben* does not seem to function in the sense of "anyone, someone, each one" that is so prevalent for *'ish*.

VI.F.4. I perceive a significant difference in focus between *'ish* and *ben*: The word *ben* has a derivative connotation; someone who is a *ben* is always <u>less than</u> the group in question. In contrast, someone who is an *'ish* can sometimes also <u>equal</u> the group by representing it (as agent, leader, delegate, patriarch, interchangeable component ["each"], etc.). To make this point metaphorically: When one employs the word *ben*, it highlights an individual who stands onstage within a larger chorus—the group, which is illuminated by the term. Conversely, when one employs the word *'ish*, the spotlight is on the representative who steps forward for a momentary solo while the group stands just behind, acknowledged yet in the background.

VI.F.5. In sum, *'ish* and *ben* seem to be part of the same domain, as terms of affiliation.

VI.G. *'ish* versus Other Terms

VI.G.1. My analysis in Parts I–V found that the Bible uses many nouns interchangeably with *'ish*. For example:

- *'ish* in the sense of "leader" appears in poetic parallelism with the substantive *yoshev* (e.g., Isa. 5:3–7; Jer. 4:3–4, cf. 4:9; 18:11; 35:13; Dan. 9:7).[26]

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[24] "'Seed' versus 'Womb': Expressions of Male Dominance in Biblical Israel," in S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting, eds., *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East* (2002), p. 340. Levine is presumably basing the etymological derivation on comparative philology.

[25] Such a characterization matches the emotional reality of extended families, and it matches how family ties were explicitly perceived in the ancient Near East.

[26] In these and other contexts, *yoshev* appears to refer to the "ruling class of royal officials"; Marvin L. Chaney, "Whose Sour Grapes? The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1–7 in the Light of Political Economy," *Semeia*

- *'ish* in the sense of "agent" occurs apparently interchangeably with other nouns: *'eved* (Gen. 24:17, 21; 1 Kings 20:31, 33; 2 Sam. 10:2, 5), *na'ar* (1 Sam. 25:5, 11; 2 Kings 5:23–24), *mal'akh* (Num. 22:5, 9; Josh. 2:1, 6:25; 1 Sam. 25:11, 14; 2 Kings 6:32), and *mevasser* (1 Sam. 4:12–17).
- *'ish ha-'elohim* is applied mostly to the same figures who are also described as *navi'* (prophet).

VI.G.2. At first glance these terms appear to be synonyms of *'ish*, because they refer to the same persons in the same situations. However, that conclusion does not necessarily follow. Synonyms may indeed be used interchangeably, but not every word that is so used is a synonym. Let me recycle an analogy that I used earlier: when I speak about those of my friends who happen to be farmers, I may use the two terms interchangeably; but the varying designation in my speech does not mean that "friend" and "farmer" are English synonyms.

VI.H. Conclusions

VI.H.1. Just because two words are used interchangeably or in parallel expressions does not necessarily mean that they are synonyms. Rather, such words may each approach the same referent in distinct ways that reflect different underlying conceptual domains.

VI.H.2. Words commonly thought to be synonymous with *'ish* may be better seen as residing in a different semantic domain. Although *'adam* and *'ish* are pointedly used in parallel expressions, each approaches its referent from quite a different vantage point. (The same can probably be said for *'enosh* relative to *'ish*.)

VI.H.3. In addition to *'ish*, other nouns convey an intrinsic sense of affiliation, namely *ben*, *nefesh*, and *ba'al*. The former two terms, like *'ish*, convey a sense of group membership; the latter term does not but rather leverages its affiliational import via the expressions of which it is a part. Such terms might be productively classed in the same semantic domain, perhaps to be called affiliational or relational nouns.[27]

VI.H.4. Of the nouns examined, *'ish* most broadly conveys a sense of *group membership* as required to freely express distribution or fungibility, including for nonhuman and even inanimate groups: "each, every, any, some, one." (In certain settings, *nefesh* does seem to mean "someone, anyone"—but never "each.")

VI.H.5. Of the nouns examined, *'ish* most broadly conveys a sense of *representation* in social circles, such that its range of contextual meanings spans both the highest authority and the lowliest subordinate. (Of the other terms considered, only *ba'al* has a social-status aspect—but that aspect sits only on the "authority" end of the status scale.)

VI.H.6. The foregoing study in contrasts with other nouns has reiterated that *'ish* does not *denote* "adult male," nor is it a generic term for "person." Rather, it can *connote* either of those meanings in certain contexts.

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87 (1999), pp. 105–122, esp. 112–115. He cites, for example, Amos 1:5, 8, where *yoshev* is paired in poetic parallelism with *tomekh shevet* (holder of the scepter).

[27] The word "affiliational" does not appear in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*, yet I use it because its meaning is readily grasped.

VI.H.7.   I will now make a sweeping procedural claim regarding the proper scholarly treatment of my hypothesis (that *'ish* is primarily a term of affiliation, not of maleness): logically speaking, *it must be accepted as correct until it is disproven*. Let me now state that argument:

　　VI.H.7.a.   As Alison Grant pointed out, *'ish* most often denotes membership in a particular group. Yet lexicographers usually explain the 80% of cases of *'ish* (the nonparticular usages) in terms of the remaining 20% (where the referential function is particular): they claim that over time the concrete primary meaning as "adult male" was broadened to mean something more abstract.[28] However, the lopsided distribution of the referents of *'ish* suggests that we should first try it the other way around—to explain the 20% in terms of the 80%—for it is the former type that are the anomalies.

　　VI.H.7.b.   The simplest and most elegant explanation for how *'ish* functions is that its individual (particular) references also carry a sense of affiliation—just as do its predominant class references. As I argued in Part IV on the basis of the empirical evidence presented in Parts I and II, with *'ish* the *references to an individual also carry an implicit reference to a particular group*. In other words, it appears that biblical Hebrew applies a term conveying group affiliation not only to groups but occasionally also to particular individuals.

　　VI.H.7.c.   By Occam's razor, we should prefer the simpler hypothesis to the conventional explanation. Furthermore, the simpler hypothesis runs along the grain of the evidence of actual biblical usage, whereas the more complex explanation (involving semantic extension) cuts across the grain of the evidence.

　　VI.H.7.d.   Many readers of this memorandum will no doubt approach its arguments by presuming that the conventional understanding of *'ish* is correct until proven otherwise. My teacher Ed Greenstein articulated this view well when he wrote, "There is no compelling reason to understand *'ish* except as 'an adult male,' who can also represent an adult or person generically."[29] But in theory at least, the burden of proof is on philologists who wish to retain the conventional view. My hypothesis is inherently compelling—by virtue of its simplicity and its providing a better fit with the biblical (and ancient but extrabiblical) data.

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Perhaps at long last it is time to address the issues of rendering *'ish* in English translation, particularly the consequences of treating "man" as an English equivalent. That is the subject of the next part of this memorandum.

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[28] In this vein, the grammarians Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka refer to "someone" as a "weakened" meaning of *'ish*, while they call "each/every" a "strong" meaning (*A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, transl. and rev. by T. Muraoka, Vol. II § 147.b–c).

[29] Pers. comm., 12/25/06.