Linguistic Analysis behind Innovative Renderings of אִישׁ in a Newly Published Translation

David E. S. Stein

A new English translation

In 2023, the Jewish Publication Society and Sefaria.org jointly issued a retranslation of the Hebrew Bible into Modern English idiom, under the title *THE JPS TANAKH: Gender-Sensitive Edition*. Its shorthand name is RJPS, in which "R" stands for "Revised." Its base translation was the venerable NJPS (1962–1982; 1985; 1999), which employed a meaning-based approach.[1] To prepare the new version, the present author systematically assessed all renderings of the personal noun אִישׁ.[2]

Topic and goal of this article

A set of seventy cases involving אִישׁ has prompted new renderings in RJPS. This article focuses on understanding those cases. An exemplar of this set is Judg 7.23, in which a narrator is describing what turns out to be a successful Israelite revolt against Midianite domination, as led by Gideon:

וַיִּצָּעֵק **אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל** מִנַּפְתָּלִי וּמִן־אָשֵׁר וּמִן־כָּל־מְנַשֶּׁה **וַיִּרְדְּפוּ** אַחֲרֵי מִדְיָן:

And now *ʾîš yiśrāʾēl* rallied **[sg.]** from Naphtali and Asher and from all of Manasseh, and they **[pl.]** pursued the Midianites. (NJPS, adapted)

Although אִישׁ is singular in form, each of these two clauses contains a telltale sign that it is being used to refer to more than one person.[3] In the first clause, the verb's semantics presuppose a collec-

---

[1] The NJPS translation committee's goal was "to render the Hebrew text as they believed the original author of that text meant it to be understood by his contemporaries" (Orlinsky 1970, 18). It featured "intelligibility in diction" and a thought-for-thought rendering of the text's plain sense (ibid., 17). In turn, the RJPS project has sought to restore those translators' intent in light of recent changes in English, mainly the increasingly gendered usage of *he/him/his/himself* and the word *man*. On this retranslation's goals and features, see its preface at purl.org/jps/rjps-preface. On its methods, see "Notes on Gender in Translation," purl.org/jps/gender. On selected rendering decisions, see Stein 2023 (and ongoing).

[2] Hebraists commonly gloss the masculine singular form of אִישׁ itself as "man" or "person." However, those typical glosses clearly fail for the cases treated herein. Masculine forms of אִישׁ appear 2,198 times in the Bible, and their evaluation is crucial for gender accuracy in translation, due to a combination of two factors. First, contrary to popular belief, אִישׁ in Biblical Hebrew is lexically gendered only minimally (Stein 2019). And second, when its masculine forms are employed in non-specific (class) reference or non-referentially, the referent's gender is not specified (Stein 2008; 2013). Therefore, women may well be in view.

[3] Similar constructions appear also in 12.1 and 20.20. Other exemplary cases of this type include Judg 8.1, 22; 15.10; 20.17; 1 Chr 10.1; 2 Chr 13.15.

---

tion of individuals: the action described is a mustering or rallying of an entire militia.[4] And in the second clause, the same singular subject is aligned with a plural verb.

Another typical example in the set is Judg 15.10, which reports a question that was posed by certain Judahites to the Philistines in response to the sudden arrival of Philistine troops:

<div dir="rtl">

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה לָמָה עֲלִיתֶם עָלֵינוּ

</div>

Said **[pl.]** *ʾîš yəhûdâ* **[sg.]**, "Why have you come up against us?" (NJPS, adapted)

In this instance and seven others like it, singular אִישׁ follows a plural verb as grammatical subject.

Such usages of אִישׁ are remarkable in that they exist alongside similar ones with the typical plural form, אֲנָשִׁים.[5] Both forms appear in some of the same phrases, sometimes in close proximity.[6] In 2 Sam 15, the following pair of cases actually denote the same referent:

<div dir="rtl">

וַיְגַנֵּב אַבְשָׁלוֹם אֶת־לֵב אַנְשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

</div>

so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. (v. 6 ESV)

<div dir="rtl">

וַיָּבֹא הַמַּגִּיד אֶל־דָּוִד לֵאמֹר
הָיָה לֵב־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם׃

</div>

And a messenger came to David, saying,
"The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom." (v. 13 ESV)

Do those two constructions differ in meaning?[7] From a cross-linguistic perspective, one would expect so, because languages with singular and plural nominal forms typically place them in some

---

[4] The verb's plural form וַיִּצָּעֲקוּ "[they] rallied," although attested elsewhere, is pointedly not used here (cf. the next example, where the verb is plural). This verb (*niphal* צעק) appears 5 more times in the Hebrew Bible; of those, 2 are singular, with singular אִישׁ as subject (like the present case, Judg 7.23), while the other 3 are plural, governing various plural or collective subject noun phrases.

[5] The words אִישׁ and אֲנָשִׁים are best viewed as alternate forms of the same frequently occurring word, even though they come from different roots. The linguistic phenomenon called *suppletion* is known to give rise to irregular alternations of this kind. The relation of אֲנָשִׁים to אִישׁ is akin to the English irregular plural *people* for the singular *person*, each term deriving from a different Anglo-French root. On the plural and feminine forms of אִישׁ as suppletive, see n. 6 in Stein 2021b.

[6] The singular and plural usages do appear synonymous on the surface, for they share collocated words and the same situational contexts. Notably, these variants repeatedly appear together within the same biblical narratives. Consider the following sets: Josh 10.6, 24; Judg 12.1, 4–5; 1 Sam 11.8–15 (3 singular and 3 plural, interspersed); 1 Sam 15.4, 17.25, and 17.52.

[7] The plural and singular terms do not seem to differ in referential gender, i.e., whether women are in view. The expression כָּל־אַנְשֵׁי מִגְדַּל־שְׁכֶם is clearly gender-inclusive in Judg 9.49, just as כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל is in 1 Chr 16.3. UBS translators have been advised regarding both אַנְשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל in 2 Sam 15.6 and אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל in v. 13

kind of opposition.[8] Yet a number of biblical grammarians and lexicographers, including Gesenius, have treated the singular construction as *equivalent* to the plural (which explains why their ESV renderings are the same, as shown above).[9] That seems to be the prevailing view in biblical studies.[10] That view is hereby called into question!

The set of interest

RJPS, like NJPS, takes the MT as its source. Thus in this article, the singular or plural morphology of a particular instance of אִישׁ is as given in the Aleppo Codex, the Leningrad Codex, and their family of manuscripts.

For this article, seventy instances of singular אִישׁ were analyzed together. They employ the construct state in six similar expressions, tabulated below in order of appearance, and distributed as shown—found mostly in the books of Judges and Samuel.[11]

---

that they denote "the people of Israel" in general rather than only its males (Omanson and Ellington 2001, 936). In any case, the present article will conclude that the gender profile is beside the point, at least for choosing idiomatic renderings in English.

[8] A singular form regards its referent as a unity, whereas a plural form regards it as a group of distinct individuals (Löbner 2013, 80). Because the two forms evoke different meanings and thus offer speakers a choice, linguists commonly speak of a "singular–plural contrast" (e.g., Taylor 2002, 367). See also Hirtle 1982; Eschenbach 1993, 27; Tobin 2000, 105.

Grammatical number must be distinguished from a language's counting system. As Alan Cruse notes, the two systems are "syntactically and semantically distinct" (Cruse 2011, 272). Consequently, the fact that ancient Hebrew speakers often used singular אִישׁ non-referentially as a unit of enumeration (e.g., שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ in Num 11.16) is not germane to this article.

[9] E.g., Gesenius 1829, 84, s.v. 1.g; Kaddari 2006, s.v. 4; Clines 2018, 319. Likewise for אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל in our first exemplar in Judg. 7.23, UBS translators were recently advised that it "has a plural sense," and so also for אִישׁ יְהוּדָה in our second exemplar in 15.10 (Ogden and Zogbo 2019, 390, 686).

[10] Another approach in the literature treats the singular form as what JM calls a "noun of species"—so that in effect, יִשְׂרָאֵל = אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל. JM §135c reads: "almost any singular noun may be used as a **noun of species** or of category — the generic use — and then it is equivalent to a plural.… The phrases איש יהודה 1 Sam 11.8 and איש ישראל Josh 9.6 are more frequent than the plural אנשי י׳ and express the notion of a generic group better" (467, emphasis in original). Yet this view is at odds with how people use language; it does not account for why speakers repeatedly prefer a longer expression (e.g., איש יהודה) over a shorter one (e.g., יהודה) when either could be used to label the same referent. Because a shorter label involves less effort, it should be preferred by default. Thus it stands to reason that a speaker who uses the longer label must somehow find it more informative, *contra* JM.

[11] See the [Appendix](#) for a tabulation of the seventy instances. For a caution about the textual instability of verb agreement compared to non-Masoretic texts, see Young 2013, 478.

Semantically speaking, construct phrasing with a personal noun such as אִישׁ evokes a relationship of affiliation: the persons are identified with their group or place—and they also represent it.

	Deut	Josh	Judg	1Sam	2Sam	1Kgs	1Chr	2Chr	Jer	*Instances*
אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל	2	3	18	7	11	1	3	1	—	46
אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
אִישׁ יְהוּדָה	—	—	1	2	9	—	—	3	2	17
אִישׁ בִּנְיָמִן	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
אִישׁ יָבֵישׁ גִּלְעָד	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
אִישׁ טוֹב	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
Instances:	2	3	23	12	20	1	3	4	2	70

In all seventy cases, אִישׁ is in construct with a proper noun that (depending upon the context) can denote either a certain geographic locale or its associated societal group: Israel, Ephraim, Judah, Benjamin, Jabesh-gilead, and Tob, respectively. In these usages, the narrator or speaker makes reference to a specific entity, rather than to a nonspecific class.[12] What sets these seventy cases apart from other such instances of singular אִישׁ is that these exhibit a *semantic duality*, referring to a plurality of persons who are treated as a single body.[13] This is not how the vast majority of the Bible's instances of אִישׁ in the masculine singular construct behave.[14] Tellingly, all seventy cases occur where the depicted situation is constituted by at least two parties coming together, either in conflict or in harmony. Finally, two narratives together account for nearly 40% of all instances; both tell a story of internecine warfare among a deeply polarized Israelite populace. These facts will be accounted for shortly.

---

[12] The Bible includes additional instances of singular אִישׁ that denote a variety of groups of people; however, because unlike the present cases, those involve nonspecific reference (i.e., reference to a class of entities that exists only in the discourse, also known as *irrealis*), they do not shed light on the present ones.

[13] As already demonstrated, the duality is evident in ways both grammatical and semantic. Additional grammatical clues include singular co-reference while representing a larger body (e.g., Josh 9.7; 1 Sam 13.6), and apposition with an obviously collective term (2 Sam 16.15). Semantic clues include a report of conversation that is internal to the referent, which therefore cannot be a singleton (Judg 20.22; 1 Sam 17.25), and a hearer's reaction that is well out of proportion to a singleton referent (2 Sam 15.13–14). In addition, the audience expectation of textual coherence often demands a group reading even with a singular verb (Judg 20.41; 21.1; 1 Sam 14.24; 17.25; 2 Sam 15.13; 20.2). On semantic duality, see Gil (1996, 64).

For cases with the quantifier כֹּל, see Jacobus Naudé's finding that "כֹּל with a singular definite noun expresses 'the totality of the individual members of the specific group or set'" (BHRG §36.5.1(3), 310).

[14] There are 327 instances of the masculine singular construct, per Accordance Bible Software's module (i.e., the 70 under study comprise 21% of the total). Of those, there are another dozen that pair אִישׁ יְהוּדָה with either יֹשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם or יֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם "inhabitants of Jerusalem" (NJPS). I have set those cases aside for the time being, due to special challenges in interpretation of the full noun phrase.

A situation-oriented analysis

This article reports on a cognitive-linguistic and communication-oriented analysis of the passages in question. The approach is *situation oriented*.[15] It treats אִישׁ as a special type of word called a *situating noun*, which is a tool for efficient communication about situations.[16] In the Hebrew Bible, אִישׁ (including its feminine and plural forms) is a preferred and characteristic part of the vocabulary for depicting any situation in a schematic manner. When אִישׁ is used in a referring expression, it prototypically regards its referent not in terms of intrinsic features (as most nouns do) but rather *in terms of the situation*.[17] For example, when a certain Midianite priest asks his daughters why they have returned home earlier than usual, they reply in terms of the participant whose advent radically altered their usual situation (Exod 2.19):

<div dir="rtl">

אִישׁ מִצְרִי הִצִּילָנוּ מִיַּד הָרֹעִים

</div>

"An Egyptian man rescued us from the hand of the shepherds." (Fox 1995)

With just five words, their sketch omits many details, yet it suffices to explain how their situation changed. Their prominent usage of אִישׁ signals that the party in question, newly introduced into the discourse, is an essential participant for grasping the situation that they are depicting.[18]

In the Bible, אִישׁ is the default label for *the parties to a conflict*—that is, a situation with two opposing sides (Stein 2020, §§6.9.2–6.9.8). Using אִישׁ, a speaker can depict a conflict in merely schematic terms because its conceptual structure is already so familiar. Perhaps the most succinct exemplar is 1 Kgs 20.20; it describes the Israelites' categorical success in battle during an Aramean siege of Samaria:

<div dir="rtl">

וַיַּכּוּ אִישׁ אִישׁוֹ

</div>

…and each of them struck down his opponent. (NJPS)

---

[15] A *situation* consists of several elements, such as human participants, that are configured in relationship to each other. Extreme types of situations include a crisis, an emergency, and a predicament. The human mind continually thinks in terms of situations; human cognition seems to be largely devoted to doing so (Yeh and Barsalou 2006). Thus attention to situations, albeit highly abstract, is cognitively basic. See further Stein 2021a, 2021b, 2022.

[16] A *situating noun* is commonly used to depict a situation, to ask a question about it, or to issue a directive to alter it, or to characterize a participant in it. Its use indirectly evokes a situation. See further Stein 2021b.

[17] The mental habit of attending to situations naturally conditions communication (Sanford and Garrod 1998; Taylor 2002, 72). As one linguist observed (Lambrecht 1994, 46), "Informing a hearer of something … necessarily involves not only participants but also something to participate in." While a speaker is depicting a situation, the audience forms a mental representation of it (ibid.). That mental model is typically populated by participants whom the audience must keep track of. The speaker's orchestration of this model is handled by the audience in automatic and unnoticed ways (Löbner 2013:15, 57–58).

[18] I.e., the intrinsic features that the label אִישׁ ascribes to this referent, namely that he is an adult male person, are both incidental to this word's function in the discourse and a matter of reliance upon a prototype.

Given the audience's general knowledge about battles, it goes without saying (in Hebrew) that participants face each other as adversaries. Hence each opponent can be simply labeled in terms of his participation, via the situating noun אִישׁ.

Another telling example occurs in 2 Sam 4.11, when King David states his finding of fact in a murder case:

<div dir="rtl">

אֲנָשִׁים רְשָׁעִים הָרְגוּ אֶת־אִישׁ־צַדִּיק בְּבֵיתוֹ
</div>

"[Two] wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own home.…" (RJPS)

Why does the king use the nouns אֲנָשִׁים and אִישׁ at all? Everyone in his hearing already knows that only adult males were involved; and both adjectives (רָשָׁע and צַדִּיק) are elsewhere regularly used as substantives by themselves. The king has no need to employ the nouns apart from their *situation-defining* function. Notably, while David knows the names of these men, he prefers to label them with the situating noun, even though it is more vague. And although he is addressing the first party in question, he prefers to refer to them in the third person, as אֲנָשִׁים. In this prototypical usage, each head noun is profiling its referent as a defining participant—as one of the two sides—in David's broad-brush summary of the incident.

One side in a two-party conflict

As a translator interpreting the biblical text, the present author perceived the same kind of situation-defining usage in the cases at hand. Let us return to the initial example, describing Gideon's revolt (Judg 7.23), which is repeated here for convenience.

<div dir="rtl">

וַיִּצָּעֵק אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִנַּפְתָּלִי וּמִן־אָשֵׁר וּמִן־כָּל־מְנַשֶּׁה
וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אַחֲרֵי מִדְיָן:
</div>

And now *ʾîš yiśrāʾēl* rallied from Naphtali and Asher and from all of Manasseh,

and they pursued the Midianites.

The situation of interest is a violent conflict. Conflicts are defined by their opposing parties. The use of singular אִישׁ instructs the audience to regard its referent situationally—as one of those sides, facing a common enemy—and not only as an assemblage of individuals.

In this view, the singular expression is *not* interchangeable with a plural one. The term אַנְשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל profiles its plural referent only in relation to the people of Israel, while the term אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל profiles them also in relation to the larger situation.

Happily, this finding enables us to solve a longstanding interpretive crux in 1 Chr 10.1. That verse describes the tragic outcome of a battle with the Philistines—and employs singular forms:
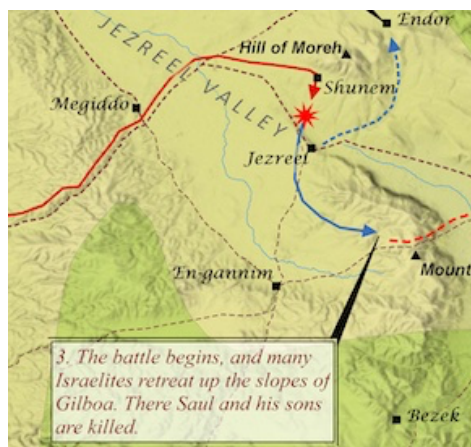
<div dir="rtl">

וַיָּנָס אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִפְּנֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים
</div>

… *ʾîš yiśrāʾēl* fled before the Philistines.…   (NJPS, adapted)

The problem is that in the earlier parallel account in 1 Sam 31.1, the narrator employed plural forms:

<div dir="rtl">

וַיָּנֻסוּ אַנְשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִפְּנֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים
</div>

…the men of Israel fled before the Philistines.…   (NJPS)

Commentators have differed regarding whether this shift in grammatical number is meaningful or not.[19] The reason that it is indeed meaningful is that if we were to ask, "What happened at that battle?" it could naturally be answered on either of two levels. The narrator of Chronicles, by invoking the larger situation via a singular referring expression, gives a broad-brush picture, pointing to the scrambling Israelite militia as a whole (see figure below, left). The narrator of Samuel, via a plural referring expression, offers a granular picture, depicting the multitude of Israelite soldiers in retreat (see figure on right). The difference between these two portrayals is a matter of construal—of how the speaker is directing the audience's attention (Langacker 2015).

3. The battle begins, and many Israelites retreat up the slopes of Gilboa. There Saul and his sons are killed.

Most of the seventy instances of אִישׁ (thirty-seven cases) are like the ones discussed, in which this singular noun denotes one of the sides in a hostile, two-party conflict.

A contingent in a multi-party conflict

Meanwhile, אִישׁ is used as a label in a smaller yet similar subset of instances—accounting for eighteen cases. The first one is 1 Sam 11.8, in a passage that recounts Saul's first act of leadership

---

[19] Several have regarded the change in Chronicles as merely stylistic: Braun 1986, 149, citing Kropat 1909, 11, and Rothstein 1902, 200. Yet as we have seen, a difference in meaning should be expected. Other commentators have treated the change as meaningful, by construing the usage of אִישׁ as representative: the purported report that one man/person fled is taken as standing for the whole army (Curtis and Madsen 1910, 180; Klein 2006, 285). However, if אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל can indeed mean "each/every man of Israel" (which is otherwise unattested), then what is the point of adding the universal quantifier elsewhere: כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל (e.g., 2 Sam 20.2)? Neither of the foregoing interpretations seems compelling.

as king, which was to rescue an Israelite city from a siege by the Ammonites.[20] We are told that he mustered the troops; and then the result:

וַיִּהְיוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף
וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה שְׁלֹשִׁים אָלֶף:

…the Israelites numbered 300,000, and *ʾîš yəhûdâ* 30,000. (NJPS, adapted)

This usage of אִישׁ profiles its referent as *a distinct entity within a larger military force*. That is, it regards Judah's force as one contingent of the available forces under Saul's unified command, with respect to the coming battle. The singular noun phrase conveys Judah's distinct identity as a political and military power (a fact that will become more relevant later in the book). The usage is thus similar to the previous example involving אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל: in a situation of forthcoming conflict, the term אִישׁ once again profiles a defining party in terms of that larger situation.[21]

Tellingly, the same situation-oriented construal can solve a well-known interpretive crux in 2 Sam 10.6. The Ammonites, having seriously insulted King David, engage mercenaries to assist them in the coming war.

וַיִּשְׂכְּרוּ אֶת־אֲרַם בֵּית־רְחוֹב וְאֶת־אֲרַם צוֹבָא עֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף רַגְלִי
וְאֶת־מֶלֶךְ מַעֲכָה אֶלֶף אִישׁ וְאִישׁ טוֹב שְׁנֵים־עָשָׂר אֶלֶף אִישׁ:

[They] hired Arameans of Beth-rehob and Arameans of Zobah—20,000 foot soldiers—
and the king of Maacah 1,000 men and *ʾîš ṭôb* 12,000 men. (NJPS, adapted)

Scholars have long differed about the intended referent of the noun phrase אִישׁ טוֹב, literally "man of Tob."[22] Again some say that the singular is equivalent to the plural; thus אִישׁ טוֹב means 'men [or: inhabitants] of [the district called] Tob';[23] others see אִישׁ as the first part of a *name*—either of

---

[20] Similarly 1 Sam 15.4, but the syntax is unusual, featuring the resumptive use of an accusative (direct-object) marker: וַעֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים אֶת־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה "and 10,000 [as] *ʾîš yəhûdâ*." This phrase can be construed as informative per BHRG §33.4.2(2): it signals that "the object is identifiable, animate, and persistent within the context." I.e., the referent of אִישׁ יְהוּדָה is treated as a distinct entity; אִישׁ is not being used as a mere counting unit. (So also LXX: καὶ τὸν ιουδαν, versus the usual ἄνδρες for counting; Targum: יָת אֱנָשׁ יְהוּדָה, versus the usual גֻבְרָא for counting.)

[21] In this verse, the main Israelite contingent is treated as a given, for Saul had called it up (v. 7). Generally the term אִישׁ is not used for a participant whose presence is given. In contrast, אִישׁ succinctly introduces the Judahite contingent that was not individuated until now. The latter is reported apart from the Israelite contingent (rather than as part of it), judging from the similar case in 2 Sam 24.9.

[22] The expression appears also in v. 8. (In v. 6, upon their arrival, the parties are ordered according to their leaders. In v. 8, arrayed on the battlefield, they are listed instead by size.) The same proposed solution applies there.

[23] Fuenn 1887; BDB; Gesenius, Meyer, and Donner 1987; Omanson and Ellington 2001.

the leader of that contingent of 12,000 troops or of their place of origin;[24] and others read it as the title of a leadership office, akin to מֶלֶךְ "king" in this verse.[25]

A situation-oriented construal can make ready sense of the text, with the help of one plausible assumption, as follows. The noun אִישׁ refers straightforwardly to a contribution of forces from the land of Tob, ready to fight on the side of the Ammonites. The evident syntactic parallel of אִישׁ טוֹב with מֶלֶךְ מַעֲכָה "the king of Maacah" presupposes that the latter *is also in command of Tob's contingent*—much as 1 Sam 11.8 had told us that Saul was in command both of an Israelite contingent and Judah's.[26]

That presupposition seems quite plausible here, given the geography: Maacah and Tob must have been near each other—for we know that each one was adjacent to the Transjordanian territory of Manasseh.[27] In other words, an alliance of Maacah with its neighbor Tob could easily have been a matter of common knowledge that went without saying in this text. If so, then the narrator uses the singular label אִישׁ to denote Tob's fighting force *in terms of the overall conflict situation*, while creating a distinction from the king's own force. With that, the passage becomes coherent and informative.[28] What makes this solution to the crux more attractive than previous proposals is that it is utterly conventional—as evinced by seventeen similar usages of אִישׁ.

A party to a parley or to a pact

Two smaller subsets in the tabulation of seventy instances will be mentioned only in passing, due to space constraints. In a third subset (10 cases), אִישׁ is employed to situate its referent as one of the parties to an intergroup parley. Those parties are engaging in a dialogue that seeks to resolve

---

[24] Translations include: LXX, Vulgate, Syriac. Interpreters include: Josephus (1737, 7:6.1), Joseph Kara, and Abravanel (at v. 8). Cf. the names Ish-baal (2 Sam 2.8; 1 Chr 8.33) and Ishhod (1 Chr 7.18).

[25] Jirku 1950; HALOT (1:43, §3b) accepts Jirku's proposal.

[26] This presupposition explains why Tob's contingent is elided altogether in the simplified retelling of 1 Chr 19.7, 9. (In v. 7, only the עַם "people" of the king of Maacah is mentioned, while in v. 9 the king stands for all of the troops under his command.)

[27] Cf. Josh 13.11; Judg 11.3, 5; 1 Chr 7.14–16.

[28] This construal of אִישׁ טוֹב is similar to a proposal by Wee (2005, 197). He then rejects his own idea on the grounds that nowhere else in the Bible is a foreign force labeled with אִישׁ in this manner. Yet the present article finds that *domestic* forces are so named on a regular basis; why would such a conventional expression not apply likewise to foreign forces? Furthermore, there is no counterexample—no instance of a distinct body of foreign troops being given a different (competing) label while that body is depicted as ready to act in concert alongside, or in the face of, another force. (Rather, foreign forces are usually depicted as an undifferentiated mass, labeled either by nationality or by the king who leads them.)

their conflicting interests.[29] The other subset (5 cases) situates the people Israel in its covenant with God, during a rite that formalizes that covenant, by labeling them collectively as כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל.[30]

Discussion

Cognitive linguistic theory (de Blois 2004:110–11) explains how the basic concept behind אִישׁ, namely to regard an individual human participant in terms of their situation, can be extended to its usage in denoting a group: such usage is motivated by a shift in focus toward the concept's *function*, which in the case of אִישׁ is to situate the referent efficiently during communication. The singular noun's application to a group is an extended meaning, even as it continues to impart its meaning mainly on the discourse level (i.e., in communication between speaker and audience).[31]

On what basis do I claim that a situation-oriented meaning is the plain sense? Partly on the grounds of *high cognitive availability*; that is, this noun's discourse function in our seventy cases is fully in line with literally thousands of this noun's attested prototypical usages. Such usages evoke an entrenched, conventional sense of the noun that would have come to mind immediately.

Furthermore, attending to the usual situating function of אִישׁ readily yields a text that is both coherent and informative, which is the hallmark of the plain sense (Stein 2018, 550–52). There is no need for an audience to consider less typical meanings of אִישׁ. This one works right away!

One well-known label might seem obvious to describe these usages of אִישׁ: collective.[32] The problem is the ambiguity of that term. Already in 1996, a linguistic typologist noted that GKC uses

---

[29] On how this approach resolves the longstanding interpretive crux אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל in Josh 9.6–7, see the commentary in Stein 2023 (and ongoing), purl.org/stein/josh.9.6.

[30] This category differs from the others in two respects. First, the parties are not in conflict. Yet they remain two distinct parties that together constitute the situation of interest. Second, the syntax makes these usages ambiguous as to semantic duality. For example, in 1 Chr 16.3, וַיְחַלֵּק לְכָל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל "David distributed [a treat] to *kol ʾîš yiśrāʾēl*," does the latter phrase mean "every person in Israel" (which has been its usual rendering), or "the totality of the Israelite party [to the covenant with God]"? Such cases were assessed by emulating the human mind's standard processing of language (Stein 2018, 550–52): the other sixty-five instances establish that the label אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל situates and expresses semantic duality *conventionally*; i.e., those pragmatic functions have cognitive priority.

[31] Even in the two related cases where the term אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל has only a one-person referent (Num 25.8, 14), it seems to be employed pointedly to indicate one of the sides in an intergroup conflict. If so, then the application of אִישׁ to a group (as one of those sides) is a small step, cognitively speaking.

[32] Young 2013 notes that in Biblical Hebrew, collective nouns "vary both in their degree of variability in [grammatical] agreement, and in their patterns of agreement" (ibid., 478). He does not mention any nouns that have both a plural form and singular collective usages (like אִישׁ).

it with three distinct meanings, without acknowledging the differences (Gil 1996, 68).[33] To be precise, the usages of אִישׁ under study can be called collective in the following sense: it can variously profile a collection of persons *as a unified body*, or profile it *as a group of individuals that share something in common*. If the syntax displays (singular) number agreement, then the referent is conceptualized at the level of the collection. If instead the verbal agreement or a co-referential pronoun is plural, then the group's members are in view. Regardless, what sets singular אִישׁ apart from other collective nouns is what it predicates about either the collection or its members: their situatedness.[34]

Rendering into English

Now let us return to the issue of faithful translation into English. These passages are challenging because English does not work like Biblical Hebrew. In English, a situational nuance in meaning is *not* conveyed via the domain of grammatical number. Although English does have a situating noun for persons, namely *man/woman*, its singular form is rarely used collectively.[35] However, a situational nuance can instead be reflected in English lexically, via an idiomatic rendering.

When a situating noun is not available as an equivalent rendering, the next best option is usually a relational noun.[36] Such nouns can convey that the referent should be regarded in relation

---

[33] Biblicists have yet to notice that some "collective" nouns mean more than the simple sum of their denoted elements (cf. Gil 1996, 63–64, to wit: what the word *forest* denotes is more than a set of trees). Even the linguistically informed BHRG (2017, 53, 201) offers inconsistent definitions and examples.

[34] Singular אִישׁ is like the noun עַם "people" in its collocating with singular verbs of gathering or spreading out (Exod 5.12; 32.1), with singular speech verbs (e.g., Num 21.5; Josh 24.16, 21), and with plural verbs and pronouns. When singular אִישׁ functions collectively, it emulates the third, flexible type of collective noun in Dougald McLaurin's provisional cognitive-linguistic schema for such nouns (McLaurin 2021). McLaurin's main corpus was Deuteronomy. He did not discuss אִישׁ, presumably because its two instances of collective usage in that book (27.14; 29.9) are so subtle; see above at n. 30.

[35] Collective usages of the singular form *man*, as attested in major dictionaries, are quite limited: *man-of-war* as the label for a naval warship, whose crew is regarded as a unit; similarly, *Frenchman* as a sailing ship that hails from France (OED §25; now rare); and *the man* as a catch-all phrase for White people, in a race-conscious context (OED §18c). None of these usages is appropriate as a rendering within the biblical contexts of use.

[36] A *relational noun* prompts the audience to relate its referent to something else that in the discourse may be only implicit. For example, use of the role term *messenger* presupposes related elements: a sender, a message, and a recipient. Relational nouns can thereby indirectly evoke situations. (This explains why in English the relational noun *husband* is commonly used to render אִישׁ within the context of marriage.) That being said, their cognitive and communicative impacts differ from those of a situating noun, because the latter reflects a more primal conception that is processed more quickly by the mind (Stein 2021b).

to something larger than itself—which can point toward the situation. That is the recourse taken by the RJPS translation. To illustrate, it renders the six main examples in this article as follows.[37]

Instance	Rendering
Judg 7.23	And now <u>Israel's side</u> … rallied
Judg 15.10	Those on <u>Judah's side</u> asked, "Why…?"
2 Sam 15.13	"The loyalty of <u>Israel's force</u> has veered toward Absalom."
1 Chr 10.1	<u>Israel's side</u> fled before the Philistines
1 Sam 11.8	and <u>Judah's contingent</u> 30,000.
2 Sam 10.6	and the king of Maacah [<u>with both his</u>] 1,000 men and <u>Tob's contingent of</u> 12,000 men.

Summary

Both the singular and plural forms of אִישׁ can be employed to refer to a specific group of persons, although the two terms have different pragmatic implications. They regard their referent distinctly, by putting attention on different aspects. Hence singular אִישׁ can be placed in a pragmatic contrast with אֲנָשִׁים.

Like other collective terms, singular אִישׁ regards the referenced group as one entity. At the same time, it continues to do what אִישׁ almost always does, which is to profile its referent against the depicted situation. This is the purpose that motivates these usages; it explains why they occur where they occur, and not elsewhere.

This article has discussed and illustrated usages of אִישׁ that employ a "collective" construal of the depicted situation. These are found, appropriately enough, in four conceptually related situational contexts: two-party conflict; multi-party hostilities; a parley to resolve a conflict; and a rite formalizing Israel's covenant with God. Such usages reinforce the view that אִישׁ is part of the vocabulary for depicting a situation.

By starting with the prototypical functioning of אִישׁ as a situating noun, this approach explains the motivation for collective usages, which has heretofore eluded biblical scholars. It does so in a linguistically sound manner. And it consistently yields texts that are both coherent and informative—while solving what have been longstanding interpretive cruxes.

---

[37] Nearly all English translations, including NJPS, render אִישׁ in most of these instances with a plural, typically as "the men of.…" Even the avowedly Hebrew-oriented translator Everett Fox (2014) does so. Occasionally a more situational construal is evident, as in "Everyone in Israel is on Absalom's side!" as the CEV rendering of the clause discussed above in 2 Sam 15.13; and cf. the NJPS rendering of כֹּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל in Judg 20.33 as "the main body of Israel's force."

Declaration of conflicting interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

References

Abravanel, Isaac. *Commentary on Former Prophets* (in Hebrew). sefaria.org/Abarbanel_on_II_Samuel .10.8.1.

Braun, Roddy L. 1986. *1 Chronicles*. WBC 14. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Clines, David J. A. 2018. "איש." *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew Revised*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1:309–27.

Cruse, Alan. 2011. *Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*. 3rd edn. Oxford Textbooks in Linguistics. New York: Oxford University Press.

Curtis, E. L., and A. A. Madsen. 1910. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*. ICC. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

de Blois, Reinier. 2004. "Lexicography and Cognitive Linguistics: Hebrew Metaphors from a Cognitive Perspective." *DavarLogos* 3 (2):97–116. https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/2313980.pdf

Eschenbach, Carola. 1993. "Semantics of Number." *Journal of Semantics* 10(1): 1–31. doi:10.1093/jos/ 10.1.1.

Fox, Everett. 1995. *The Five Books of Moses: A New Translation with Introductions, Commentary, and Notes*. The Schocken Bible, Vol. 1. New York: Schocken.

———. 2014. *The Early Prophets: A New Translation with Introductions, Commentary, and Notes*. The Schocken Bible, Vol. 2. New York: Schocken.

Fuenn, Samuel Joseph. 1887. "איש." *The Treasury: A Lexicon of the Language of the Bible and Mishnah* (in Hebrew). Warsaw: Alexander Ginaz.

Gesenius, Wilhelm. 1829. "איש." *Thesaurus Philologicus Criticus Linguae Hebraeae et Chaldaeae Veteris Testamenti*, 1:84–86. Leipzig: Vogelii.

Gesenius, Wilhelm, Rudolph Meyer, and Herbert Donner. 1987. "איש." *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*. 18th edition. 1:50–51. New York: Springer.

Gil, David. 1996. "Maltese 'Collective Nouns': A Typological Perspective." *Rivista de Linguistica* 8(1): 53–87.

Hirtle, Walter. 1982. *Number and Inner Space: A Study of Grammatical Number in English*. Cahiers de Psychomécanique du Langage. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.

Jirku, Anton. 1950. "Der ‚Mann von Ṭob' (II. Sam 10 6. 8)." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 62: 319.

Josephus, Flavius. 1737. *The Antiquities of the Jews*. Translated by William Whiston. London: n.p. penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/

Kaddari, Menaḥem-Zvi. 2006. "אִישׁ." *Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew* (in Hebrew). Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press.

Kara, Joseph ben Simeon. *Commentary on the Former Prophets* (in Hebrew). AlHaTorah.org. mg.alhatorah .org/Parshan/R._Yosef_Kara/Shemuel_II/10.6#m7e0n6.

Klein, Ralph W. 2006. *A Commentary on 1 Chronicles*. Edited by Thomas Krüger. Hermeneia 13. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Kropat, A. 1909. *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik verglichen mit der seiner Quellen*. BZAW 16. Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann.

Lambrecht, Knud. 1994. *Information Structure and Sentence Form: Topic, Focus, and the Mental Representations of Discourse Referents*. Cambridge Studies in Linguistics 71. Cambridge University Press.

Langacker, Ronald W. 2015. "Construal." Pages 120–43 in *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. Edited by Ewa Dąbrowska and Dagmar Divjak. Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science 39. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Löbner, Sebastian. 2013. *Understanding Semantics*. 2nd edition. Understanding Language. New York: Routledge.

McLaurin, Dougald III. 2021. "Defining Collective Nouns: How Cognitive Linguistics Can Help Hebrew Grammarians." *Journal for Semitics* 30(2): 1–15. doi:10.25159/2663-6573/9288.

Ogden, Graham S., and Lynell Zogbo. 2019. *A Handbook on Judges*. UBS Handbook Series. Miami: United Bible Societies.

Omanson, Roger L., and John E. Ellington. 2001. *A Handbook on the Second Book of Samuel, Volume 2: 2 Samuel 2.1 to 24.25*. UBS Handbook Series. New York: United Bible Societies.

Orlinsky, Harry, ed. 1970. *Notes on the New Translation of the Torah*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

Rothstein, J. W. 1902. *Die Genealogie des Königs Jojachin und seiner Nachkommen*. Berlin: Reuther & Reichard.

Sanford, Anthony J., and Simon C. Garrod. 1998. "The Role of Scenario Mapping in Text Comprehension." *Discourse Processes* 26 (2–3): 159–90.

Stein, David E. S. 2008. "The Grammar of Social Gender in Biblical Hebrew." *Hebrew Studies* 49: 7–26. doi:10.1353/hbr.2008.0014 purl.org/scholar/HS-2008.

———. 2013. "Gender Representation in Biblical Hebrew." Pages 20–22 in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 2. Edited by Geoffrey Khan. Leiden: Brill. purl.org/scholar/ehll-gender.

———. 2018. "Cognitive Factors as a Key to Plain-Sense Biblical Interpretation: Resolving Cruxes in Gen 18:1–15 and 32:23–33." *Open Theology* 4: 545–89. doi:10.1515/opth-2018-0043.

———. 2019. "When Did the Biblical Hebrew Noun אִישׁ Become Lexically Gendered?" Paper presented to the Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew section, Society of Biblical Literature. Annual Meeting, San Diego, November 24. purl.org/scholar/lex-gender.

———. 2020. "Relational Meanings of the Noun אִישׁ ('îš) in Biblical Hebrew." PhD diss., Stellenbosch University. scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/107875.

———. 2021a. "The Hebrew Noun 'îš as a Marker of Essential Participation." *Journal for Semitics* 30(2): 1–18. doi:10.25159/2663-6573/9321.

———. 2021b. "The Situating Noun in Ancient Hebrew: A New Understanding of אִישׁ." Paper presented to the Biblical Lexicography section, Society of Biblical Literature. Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas, November 22, 2021; revised December 3, 2023. purl.org/scholar/situational.

———. 2022. "The Impact of Discourse Functions on Rendering the Biblical Hebrew Noun אִישׁ in a Gender-Sensitive English Translation." Pages 283–310 in *[Re]Gained in Translation: Bibles, Theol-*

ogies, and the Politics of Empowerment, Vol. I. Edited by Sabine Dievenkorn and Shaul Levin. Arbeiten zur Theorie und Praxis des Übersetzens und Dolmetschens 133. Berlin: Frank & Timme. purl.org/scholar/cjps-discourse.

———. 2023 (and ongoing). "Commentary on Translation Choices in the JPS Tanakh (RJPS)." Sefaria.org collection. purl.org/scholar/rjps-comm.

Taylor, John R. 2002. *Cognitive Grammar*. Oxford Textbooks in Linguistics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tobin, Yishai. 2000. "The Dual Number in Hebrew: Grammar or Lexicon, or Both?" Pages 87–122 in *Between Grammar and Lexicon*. Edited by Ellen Contini-Morava and Yishai Tobin. Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science 4. Philadelphia: Benjamins.

Wee, John Zhu-En. 2005. "Maacah and Ish-Tob." *JSOT* 30(2): 191–99.

Yeh, Wenchi, and Lawrence W. Barsalou. 2006. "The Situated Nature of Concepts." *American Journal of Psychology* 119(3): 349–84.

Young, Ian. 2013. "Collectives: Biblical Hebrew." Pages 477–79 in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 1. Edited by Geoffrey Khan. Leiden: Brill.

Abbreviations

BDB — Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, eds. 1907. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 1966 reprint. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BHRG — Van der Merwe, Christo H. J., Jacobus A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze. 2017. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*. 2nd edition. London: Bloomsbury.

CEV — Contemporary English Version (1995)

ESV — English Standard Version (2001, 2016)

GKC — Gesenius, Wilhelm, and Emil Kautzsch. 1910. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. 2nd English edition. Translated by A. E. Cowley. Oxford: Clarendon.

HALOT — Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm. 2000. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill.

JM — Joüon, Paul, and T. Muraoka. 2006. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. 2nd ed. Subsidia Biblica 27. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute.

LXX — Septuagint (Old Greek) translation

MT — Masoretic Text

NJPS — New Jewish Publication Society translation (1962–1982; 1985; 1999)

RJPS — *THE JPS TANAKH: Gender-Sensitive Edition* (2023)

OED — *Oxford English Dictionary*

pl. — plural

sg. — singular

UBS — United Bible Societies

Appendix. Tabulation of Instances, by Type of Situation, in Jewish Canonical Order

▼ Type of situation							
	Location	Passage	Genitive	Collect. evid.	Ground = situation	Denoted group (extension)	RJPS
▼ Hostilities							
	Josh 10:24	וַיִּקְרָ֨א יְהוֹשֻׁ֜עַ אֶֽל־כָּל־אִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל וַיֹּ֨אמֶר אֶל־קְצִינֵ֞י אַנְשֵׁ֤י הַמִּלְחָמָה֙ הֶהָ֣לְכ֣וּא אִתּ֔וֹ קִרְב֣וּ שִׂ֚ימוּ אֶת־רַגְלֵיכֶ֔ם עַל־צַוְּארֵ֖י הַמְּלָכִ֣ים הָאֵ֑לֶּה	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Representing the nation	Aftermath of battle	Totality of Israelite militia	everyone on Israel's side
	Judg 7:8	וְאֵ֤ת כָּל־אִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ שִׁלַּ֔ח אִ֖ישׁ לְאֹהָלָ֑יו	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Representing the nation	Prep for battle	Totality of Israelite militia {individuated via manner phrase}	everyone else on Israel's side
	Judg 7:23	וַיִּצָּעֵ֧ק אִֽישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵ֛ל מִנַּפְתָּלִ֥י וּמִן־אָשֵׁ֖ר וּמִן־כָּל־מְנַשֶּׁ֑ה וַֽיִּרְדְּפ֖וּ אַחֲרֵ֥י מִדְיָֽן׃	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Group action; pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	Israelite militia	Israel's side
	Judg 8:22	וַיֹּאמְר֥וּ אִֽישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל אֶל־גִּדְע֑וֹן מְשָׁל־בָּ֣נוּ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. verb; pl. pronoun	Aftermath of battle	Israelite militia (cf. vv. 24–25 = recipients of booty) (regarded as a unit)	those [who fought] on Israel's side
	Judg 9:55	וַיִּרְא֣וּ אִֽישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל כִּ֥י מֵ֖ת אֲבִימֶ֑לֶךְ וַיֵּלְכ֖וּ אִ֥ישׁ לִמְקֹמֽוֹ׃	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. verbs	Denouement of battle	Israelite militia {individuated via manner phrase}	those on Israel's side
	Judg 20:11	וַיֵּאָסֵ֞ף כָּל־אִ֤ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ אֶל־הָעִ֔יר כְּאִ֖ישׁ אֶחָ֥ד חֲבֵרִֽים׃	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Group action; pl. adj.	Prep for battle	Totality of Israelite militia (singular verb)	Israel's entire force
	Judg 20:17	וְאִ֨ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֜ל הִתְפָּֽקְד֗וּ לְבַד֙ מִבִּנְיָמִ֔ן אַרְבַּ֨ע מֵא֥וֹת אֶ֛לֶף אִ֥ישׁ שֹׁ֖לֵף חָֽרֶב	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. verb; multiple count	Prep for battle	Israelite militia	Those on Israel's side
	Judg 20:20	וַיֵּצֵא֙ אִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל לַמִּלְחָמָ֖ה עִם־בִּנְיָמִ֑ן	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. co-ref.	Start of battle	Israelite militia, regarded first as a unit (singular verb)	Israel's side
	Judg 20:20	וַיַּעַרְכ֨וּ אִתָּ֜ם אִֽישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵ֧ל מִלְחָמָ֛ה אֶל־הַגִּבְעָֽה׃	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. verb	Start of battle	Israelite militia	those on Israel's side
	Judg 20:22	וַיִּתְחַזֵּ֥ק הָעָ֖ם אִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל וַיֹּסִ֨פוּ֙ לַעֲרֹ֣ךְ מִלְחָמָ֔ה	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Apposition w/ collective; pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	Israelite militia (singular verb)	Israel's side
	Judg 20:33	וְכֹ֣ל ׀ אִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל קָ֚מוּ מִמְּקוֹמ֔וֹ וַיַּעַרְכ֖וּ בְּבַ֥עַל תָּמָ֑ר	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. verbs	Midst of battle	Totality of the body of the Israelite militia	everyone else on Israel's side

	Judg 20:36	וַיִּתְּנ֤וּ אִֽישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ מָק֔וֹם לְבִנְיָמִ֔ן	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. verb	Midst of battle	Israelite militia	the rest of Israel's side
	Judg 20:38	וְהַמּוֹעֵ֗ד הָיָ֛ה לְאִ֥ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל עִם־הָאֹרֵ֑ב	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	{Presumably same as previous}	the rest of Israel's side
	Judg 20:39	וַיַּהֲפֹ֥ךְ אִֽישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל בַּמִּלְחָמָ֑ה	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	Israelite militia	the rest of Israel's side
	Judg 20:39	וּבִנְיָמִ֡ן הֵחֵל֩ לְהַכּ֨וֹת חֲלָלִ֤ים בְּאִֽישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	{Presumably same as previous}	Israel's side
	Judg 20:41	וַיִּבָּהֵ֖ל אִ֥ישׁ בִּנְיָמִ֑ן	בִּנְיָמִן	Repr. nation; pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	Tribe's militia (singular verb)	Benjamin's side
	Judg 20:41	וְאִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל֮ הָפַךְ֒	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	Israelite militia (singular verb)	Israel's side
	Judg 20:42	וַיִּפְנ֞וּ לִפְנֵ֨י אִ֤ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ אֶל־דֶּ֣רֶךְ הַמִּדְבָּ֔ר	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	{Presumably same as previous}	Israel's force
	Judg 20:48	וְאִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל שָׁ֤בוּ אֶל־בְּנֵ֣י בִנְיָמִ֔ן וַיַּכּ֥וּם לְפִי־חֶ֑רֶב	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	Israelite militia	Those on Israel's side
	Judg 21:1	וְאִ֥ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל נִשְׁבַּ֣ע בַּמִּצְפָּ֑ה	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Group action; pl. co-ref.	Aftermath of battle	Israelite militia (singular verb)	Israel's side
	1 Sam 13:6	וְאִ֨ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֤ל רָאוּ֙ כִּ֣י צַר־ל֔וֹ כִּ֥י נִגַּ֖שׂ הָעָ֑ם	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. verb	Midst of battle	Israelite militia (sing. pronoun)	Israel's side
	1 Sam 14:22	וְכֹל֩ אִ֨ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֜ל הַמִּֽתְחַבְּאִ֣ים בְּהַר־אֶפְרַ֗יִם שָֽׁמְעוּ֙ כִּי־נָ֣סוּ פְלִשְׁתִּ֔ים	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. co-ref., verb, dem.	Midst of battle	Israelite militia who was in hiding	all of the others on Israel's side
	1 Sam 14:24	וְאִֽישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵ֥ל נִגַּ֖שׂ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֑וּא	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	Israelite militia (singular verb)	Israel's force
	1 Sam 17:2	וְשָׁא֤וּל וְאִֽישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ נֶאֶסְפ֔וּ וַֽיַּחֲנ֖וּ בְּעֵ֣מֶק הָאֵלָ֑ה	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. co-refs.	Prep for battle	Israelite militia	the rest of Israel's side
	1 Sam 17:19	וְשָׁא֤וּל וְהֵ֨מָּה֙ וְכָל־אִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל בְּעֵ֖מֶק הָאֵלָ֑ה נִלְחָמִ֖ים עִם־פְּלִשְׁתִּֽים׃	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. co-refs.	Prep for battle	Totality of Israelite militia	everyone else on Israel's side
	1 Sam 17:24	וְכֹל֙ אִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל בִּרְאוֹתָ֖ם אֶת־הָאִ֑ישׁ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. co-ref.	Prep for battle	Totality of Israelite militia	everyone on Israel's side
	1 Sam 17:25	וַיֹּ֣אמֶר ׀ אִ֣ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל הַרְּאִיתֶם֙ הָאִ֤ישׁ הָֽעֹלֶ֣ה הַזֶּ֔ה	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation; internal talk; pl. co-ref.	Prep for battle	Israelite militia (singular verb)	on Israel's side they were saying

	2 Sam 15:13	וַיָּבֹא הַמַּגִּיד אֶל־דָּוִד לֵאמֹר הָיָה לֶב־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרֵי אַבְשָׁלוֹם:	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Capable of prompting David to flee	Divided loyalty, given competing claimants to the throne	Israelite militia (singular head noun)	Israel's force
	2 Sam 16:15	וְאַבְשָׁלוֹם וְכָל־הָעָם אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּאוּ יְרוּשָׁלָ͏ִם וַאֲחִיתֹפֶל אִתּוֹ:	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Apposed collective; pl. verb	Divided loyalty, given competing claimants to the throne	Israelite militia (singular head noun)	Israel's force
	2 Sam 16:18	אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר יְיָ וְהָעָם הַזֶּה וְכָל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֶהְיֶה	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. co-refs. (elsewhere)	Divided loyalty, given competing claimants to the throne	Totality of the Israelite militia	all the rest of Israel's force
	2 Sam 17:14	וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְשָׁלוֹם וְכָל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל טוֹבָה עֲצַת חוּשַׁי הָאַרְכִּי מֵעֲצַת אֲחִיתֹפֶל	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. co-refs. (elsewhere)	Divided loyalty, given competing claimants to the throne	Totality of the Israelite militia	all of Israel's force
	2 Sam 17:24	וְאַבְשָׁלֹם עָבַר אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הוּא וְכָל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמּוֹ:	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. co-refs. (elsewhere)	Divided loyalty, given competing claimants to the throne	Totality of the Israelite militia	Israel's entire force
	2 Sam 23:9	וַיַּעֲלוּ אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. verb	Midst of battle	Israelite militia	Those on Israel's side
	1 Chr 10:1	וּפְלִשְׁתִּים נִלְחֲמוּ בְיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּנָס אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִפְּנֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Group action	Midst of battle	Israelite militia	Israel's side
	1 Chr 10:7	וַיִּרְאוּ כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר־בָּעֵמֶק כִּי נָסוּ וְכִי־מֵתוּ שָׁאוּל וּבָנָיו	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. verb	Aftermath of battle	Totality, as a collective	everyone on Israel's side
	2 Chr 13:15	וַיָּרִיעוּ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וַיְהִי בְּהָרִיעַ אִישׁ	יְהוּדָה	Pl. verb	Midst of battle	As a collective	Judah's side
	2 Chr 13:15	וַיָּרִיעוּ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וַיְהִי בְּהָרִיעַ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה	יְהוּדָה	Pl. co-ref.	Midst of battle	Tribe's militia	Judah's side
▼ **Multi-party hostilities**							
	Judg 7:24	וַיִּצָּעֵק כָּל־אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־הַמַּיִם	אֶפְרַיִם	Group action; pl. verb	Midst of battle; new entrant to the fighting	Tribe's militia	Ephraim's entire contingent
	Judg 8:1	וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם מָה־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה עָשִׂיתָ לָּנוּ	אֶפְרַיִם	Pl. verb; pl. pronoun	Dispute/parley, aftermath of battle	Tribe's contingent (cf. 7:24)	those in Ephraim's contingent
	Judg 12:1	וַיִּצָּעֵק אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם וַיַּעֲבֹר צָפוֹנָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְיִפְתָּח מַדּוּעַ ׀ עָבַרְתָּ ׀ לְהִלָּחֵם בִּבְנֵי־עַמּוֹן וְלָנוּ לֹא קָרָאתָ	אֶפְרַיִם	Repr. tribe; pl. verb; pl. pronoun	Aftermath of battle	Tribe's militia (singular verb)	Ephraim's contingent

	1 Sam 11:8	וַיִּהְיוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה שְׁלֹשִׁים אָלֶף:	יְהוּדָה	Multiple count	Prep for battle	Tribe's contingent	Judah's contingent
	1 Sam 15:4	וַיְשַׁמַּע שָׁאוּל אֶת־הָעָם וַיִּפְקְדֵם בַּטְּלָאִים מָאתַיִם אֶלֶף רַגְלִי וַעֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים אֶת־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה:	יְהוּדָה	Multiple count	Prep for multi-party battle	Tribe's contingent	as Judah's contingent
	2 Sam 10:6	וְאֶת־מֶלֶךְ מַעֲכָה אֶלֶף אִישׁ וְאִישׁ טוֹב שְׁנֵים־עָשָׂר אֶלֶף אִישׁ:	טוֹב	Multiple count	Prep for battle	Tob's military force	Tob's contingent
	2 Sam 10:8	וְאִישׁ־טוֹב וּמַעֲכָה לְבַדָּם בַּשָּׂדֶה:	טוֹב	Quant. co-ref.	Prep for battle	Tob's military force	Tob's contingent
	2 Sam 19:15	וַיַּט אֶת־לְבַב כָּל־אִישׁ־יְהוּדָה כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד	יְהוּדָה	Group action; quantif.	Negotiation after revolt	Totality of tribe's contingent	Judah's entire contingent
	2 Sam 19:17	וַיֵּרֵד עִם־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה לִקְרַאת הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד:	יְהוּדָה	Pl. co-refs. (elsewhere)	Reconciliation after revolt	Tribe's contingent	Judah's contingent
	2 Sam 19:42	וְהִנֵּה כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּאִים אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. participle	Reconciliation after revolt	Totality of multi-tribal contingent	Israel's entire contingent
	2 Sam 19:42	מַדּוּעַ גְּנָבוּךָ אַחֵינוּ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וַיַּעַבְרוּ אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ	יְהוּדָה	Pl. co-ref., verb	Competition after revolt	Tribe's militia	Judah's contingent
	2 Sam 20:2	וַיַּעַל כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאַחֲרֵי דָוִד אַחֲרֵי שֶׁבַע בֶּן־בִּכְרִי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation	New revolt	Totality of Israelite militia (singular verb)	Israel's entire contingent
	2 Sam 20:2	וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה דָּבְקוּ בְמַלְכָּם	יְהוּדָה	Pl. verb	New revolt	Tribe's militia	Judah's contingent
	2 Sam 20:4	הַזְעֶק־לִי אֶת־אִישׁ־יְהוּדָה שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים	יְהוּדָה	Repr. tribe; group action	New revolt	Tribe's militia	Judah's contingent
	2 Sam 24:9	וַתְּהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף אִישׁ־חַיִל שֹׁלֵף חֶרֶב וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה חֲמֵשׁ־מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף אִישׁ:	יְהוּדָה	Multiple count	Prep for battle	Tribe's contingent	Judah's contingent
	Jer 44:26	אִם־יִהְיֶה עוֹד שְׁמִי נִקְרָא בְּפִי כָּל־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה אֹמֵר חַי־אֲדֹנָי יֱהוִה בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:	יְהוּדָה	Quantif.	A portion of the populace heads for Egypt	Totality of emigré group	Judah's contingent
	Jer 44:27	וְתַמּוּ כָל־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם בַּחֶרֶב וּבָרָעָב עַד־כְּלוֹתָם:	יְהוּדָה	Pl. verb	A portion of the populace heads for Egypt	Totality of emigré group	Judah's contingent

	2 Chr 20:27	וַיָּשֻׁבוּ כָּל־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַ֙ם וִיהוֹשָׁפָט בְּרֹאשָׁם לָשׁוּב אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַ֖ם בְּשִׂמְחָה	יְהוּדָה	Pl. verb; pl. pronoun; quantif.	Aftermath of battle	{Labeled simply as "Yehudah" in vv. 15, 17, 18, 20}	Judah's and Jerusalem's contingents
▼ Parley							
	Josh 9:6	וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו וְאֶל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Representing the nation	International negotiation	Israel's other negotiators (aside from Joshua)	[in a parley] … the rest of Israel's side
	Josh 9:7	וַיֹּאמְרוּ [וַיֹּאמֶר] אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הַחִוִּי אוּלַי בְּקִרְבִּי אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב וְאֵיךְ אכרות [אֶכְרָת]־לְךָ בְרִית:	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Representing the nation	International negotiation	Israel's negotiators	Israel's side
	Judg 15:10	וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה לָמָה עֲלִיתֶם עָלֵינוּ	יְהוּדָה	Repr. tribe; pl. verb; pl. pronoun	Facing an invader/ oppressor	Tribe's militia	Those on Judah's side
	1 Sam 11:9	כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן לְאִישׁ יָבֵישׁ גִּלְעָד	יָבֵישׁ גִּלְעָד	Repr. town; pl. pronoun	Conflict, with a parley	Negotiating team	Jabesh-gilead's side
	2 Sam 19:43	וַיַּעַן כָּל־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה עַל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־קָרוֹב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵלַי וְלָמָּה זֶּה חָרָה לְךָ עַל־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה	יְהוּדָה	Repr. tribe	Competition after revolt	Totality of tribal contingent	Judah's side
	2 Sam 19:43	וַיַּעַן כָּל־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה עַל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־קָרוֹב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵלַי וְלָמָּה זֶּה חָרָה לְךָ עַל־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation	Competition after revolt	Multi-tribal contingent	Israel's side
	2 Sam 19:44	וַיַּעַן אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר עֶשֶׂר־יָדוֹת לִי בַמֶּלֶךְ וְגַם־בְּדָוִד אֲנִי מִמְּךָ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation	Competition after revolt	Multi-tribal contingent	Israel's side
	2 Sam 19:44	וַיַּעַן אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר עֶשֶׂר־יָדוֹת לִי בַמֶּלֶךְ וְגַם־בְּדָוִד אֲנִי מִמְּךָ	יְהוּדָה	Repr. tribe	Competition after revolt	Tribe's militia	Judah's side
	2 Sam 19:44	וַיִּקֶשׁ דְּבַר־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה מִדְּבַר אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:	יְהוּדָה	Repr. tribe	Competition after revolt	Tribe's militia	Judah's side
	2 Sam 19:44	וַיִּקֶשׁ דְּבַר־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה מִדְּבַר אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Repr. nation	Competition after revolt	Totality of multi-tribal contingent	Israel's side
▼ Covenanting							
	Deut 27:14	וְעָנוּ הַלְוִיִּם וְאָמְרוּ אֶל־כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל קוֹל רָם:	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Collective action	Pronouncement of curses that enforce the covenant	Totality of the ratifying party	the entire body of Israel

	Deut 29:9	אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי יְיָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם רָאשֵׁיכֶם שִׁבְטֵיכֶם זִקְנֵיכֶם וְשֹׁטְרֵיכֶם כֹּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל: 10 טַפְּכֶם נְשֵׁיכֶם וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶרֶב מַחֲנֶיךָ מֵחֹטֵב עֵצֶיךָ עַד שֹׁאֵב מֵימֶיךָ:	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Collective action	Covenant ratification	Totality of the ratifying party	the entire body of Israel
	1 Kgs 8:2	וַיִּקָּהֲלוּ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיֶרַח הָאֵתָנִים בֶּחָג	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Group action; pl. verb; quantif.	Dedication of Temple	Totality of the ratifying party	The entire body of Israel
	1 Chr 16:3	וַיְחַלֵּק לְכָל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאִישׁ וְעַד־אִשָּׁה לְאִישׁ כִּכַּר־לֶחֶם וְאֶשְׁפָּר וַאֲשִׁישָׁה:	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Quantif.	Dedication of Ark's place	Totality of the ratifying party	the entire body of Israel
	2 Chr 5:3	וַיִּקָּהֲלוּ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל בֶּחָג	יִשְׂרָאֵל	Pl. verb; quantif.	Dedication of Temple	Totality of the ratifying party	The entire body of Israel

▼ Notes	
	Cardin. = Cardinal number; **co-ref.** = co-reference; **Collect. evid.** = Evidence for a collective construal of אִישׁ; **Quantif.** = Quantification presupposes a group;
	Repr. = Referent represents the specified group in the scene; **RJPS** = per Sefaria.org, including revisions to 1st printing.