Common Ellipses
In Biblical Hebrew

And Idiomatic Words And Phrases
In Biblical Hebrew And Greek

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Contents

Select Bibliography

For this project, I have made extensive use of the following reference works:

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Ellipses

In Biblical Hebrew

An ellipsis is the omission of a word or words that are superfluous in that they can be understood from contextual clues. In antiquity, due to the limited space on clay tablets, the difficulty of engraving stone, and then the expense of parchment and paper, scribes avoided redundancy and the inclusion of words that would express the contextually obvious. Therefore, much to the puzzlement of beginners in reading biblical Hebrew, we must often mentally supply words that do not appear in the Hebrew text but that we must insert to make our English translation easily intelligible.

Ellipsis	Typical Context	Examples	References
A, An (Indefinite Article)	An **indefinite article** is usually implied by an anarthrous substantive that is singular in number, though sometimes a **definite article** is better.	"*a* man walking" vs "*he who walks*"; "*a* true witness" vs "__ true witness"	Pro 14.2,5
Am	Wherever someone identifies themselves, and drops the verb from the phrase, "I am."	"I am" vs simply "I," although sometimes the emphatic, "I myself am" is justified.	Jdg 13.11
Is, Was, Will Be	Wherever any form of the verb "to be" is required but context makes it superfluous.	"a foolish son *is* a grief to his mother" vs. "a foolish son ____ grief to his mother"	Pro 10.1
Man, Men, Woman, Women, Person (s), One	Often more precise when the number and gender imply one of these terms.	"the head of the righteous *man*" vs "the head of the righteous ____"; "the *man* walking" vs "he who walks"	Pro 10.1,9
(Parallel Verb)	The same or a synonymous verb must sometimes be supplied in the second colon of a poetic couplet; sometimes the intensive *Even* will suffice.	"*They called* to the LORD …" vs " _____ to the LORD …"	Psa 18.41
The (Definite Article)	When context makes a substantive definite, the translator may supply the **definite article** if it is lacking in the original language.	"*the* two of them" vs "two of them"; "blessings on *the* head of the righteous" vs "blessings on ____ head …"	Gen 22.8; Pro 10.6

Ellipsis	Typical Context	Examples	References
With	Wherever context requires this preposition but context makes it superfluous.	"they will fill the world *with* fruit" vs "they will fill the world ___ fruit"	Isa 27.6

Idiomatic Words And Phrases

In Biblical Hebrew

An idiom (from ἴδιος, "one's own") is a verbal expression with a meaning peculiar to a particular language, social group, or semantic context. An idiomatic phrase expresses a meaning other than that normally signified by its constituent parts. Thus, in American English, the phrase "black and blue," in a non-idiomatic context signifies the combination of two colors, but in the statement, "I came home from that touch-football game black and blue," the phrase signifies *bruised*.

Idiom gives language a delightful texture, but can confuse and frustrate the person endeavoring to learn a language a foreign tongue. Biblical Hebrew and Greek are rich in idiomatic phrases, many of which will open new vistas to the imagination, but which are also apt to trip the learner when first encountered. So, for my own sake, as well as that of my fellow students of the Bible, I have begun this ongoing project of cataloging idiomatic phrases of the Scriptures as I come upon them, listing of them here in alphabetical order.

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
אַחֲרוֹן	adj.: coming after, behind	**western**	Zec 14.8
אַחֲרֵי־כֵן	after-thus	**afterward(s), after this**	Jdg 16.4; Joel 3.1
אִם	if	**[BDB: Sometimes used as an interrogative particle in rhetorical speech, indicating an expected answer of No.]**	Mic 4.9b: "has your Counselor perished?"; "will I take revenge among you and afterward refrain?" Jdg 15.7
אֱנוֹשׁ מִזְעָר	a man of a few	**few men**	Only in Isa 24.6
אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם	long of nostrils	**slow to anger; long-suffering;**	Ex 34.6; Num 14.18; Pro 14.29; Jon 4.2.
אֲשֶׁר	which, that, who	**concerning, about which**	Deu 27.4

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
בִּי	in me, by me	**particle of entreaty: I pray, excuse me, a prayer to, a petition**	Jdg 13.8
בַּמֶּה	in what[?]	**where, how**	Jdg 16.5
בֶּן־מֵאָה שָׁנָ	son of a hundred years	**age of one hundred**	Isa 65.20
בֶּן־מֶשֶׁק	son of acquisition	**heir**	Gen 15.2
דּוֹר וָדוֹר	generation and generation	**generations; many generations; from generation to generation;**	Deu 32.7; Est 9.28; Psa145.13; Isa 13.20; 58.12; 60.15; 61.4; Jer 50.39; Joe 2.2
הֲלֹא	not?	***has** not **ocurred?** or **is** not _____ **the case?***	1Ki 18.13; Pro 8.1; 22.20 Jdg 14.15?

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
חָרָה אַפּוֹ	his nose burned	**he became very angry**	Job 32.2
יִחַר אַף	[his] nose was becoming hot/burning; Job 32.2	**he was becoming very angry**	Job 32.2
יַטּוּ	stretch out (from נָטָה)	**engage in sex**	Amo 1.8
יַעַן אֲשֶׁר	on account of which	**because**	Gen 22.16
כְּאַחַד הָאָדָם	as one of the man	**like one of the sons of man; like one of humankind; like any other man**	Jdg 16.7, 11: the only occurrences in the OT.
כַּאֲשֶׁר	as which	**just as; as though;** temporal: **when, after**	temporal: Jdg 16.22

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
כִּי	for, because, so, therefore	*as emphatic particle:* **surely, indeed, now, then**	Gen 22.17; Ex 4.25; Jdg 15.7
כִּי־אִם	for/because if	**(but) rather**	Isa 66.18
כָּל־לִבּוֹ	all to heart his	**Adverbial,** *whole heartedly***, especially with** בְּכָל	Jdg 16.17,18; cf. Jer 3.10; 24.7; 32.41; Zep 3.14; 2Ch 6.14,38; Psa 9.2; 119.2,34,58,145; 138.1; Pro 3.5
כְּמוֹ	the like of what	**like, as, when**	Isa 26.17
כְּפַעַם בְּפַעַם	like a time in time, OR like a step in time, OR like a beat in time	**as usual, like at any other time, as at other times**	Num 24.1; Jdg 16.20; 20.30-31; 1Sa 3.10; 20.25
לְבַד	to/for (a separate) part	**alone, [yours] alone, only, against [you] only, besides, apart from**	Psa 51.6; 71.16; Isa 2613

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
לָכֵן	to/for thus	**thus, therefore, in the same manner, there-upon, in that case**	Isa 26.14; Zep 3.8
לָמָּה	to/for what? **Not to be confused with poetic** לָמוֹ, to/for him/them, as in Isa 26.14.16.	**why?**	Mic 4.9
לָמָּה זֶּה	to/for what this?	**why?**	Num 11.20.
לָעַד	to a lasting time	**permanently**	Amo 1.11
לִפְנֵי	to face of	**before; in front of**	Gen 18.22; Joel 2.3
לִרְגָעִים	to a moment; to a short time	**every moment**	Job 7.18; Isa 27.3; Eze 26.16; 32.10

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
מִדֵּי שָׁנָה֙ בְּשָׁנָֽה	from sufficiency of a year in/on a year	**yearly, annually**	1Sa 7.16
מִדֵּי־חֹ֙דֶשׁ֙ בְּחָדְשׁ֔וֹ	from sufficiency of a new moon (month) to/in his new moon (month)	**monthly**	Isa 66.23
מִדֵּי שַׁבָּ֖ת בְּשַׁבַּתּ֑וֹ	from sufficiency of sab-bath in/to his sabbath	**weekly**	Isa 66.23
מ֥וֹת נָמֽוּת	to die we will die	**we will surely die**	Jdg 13.22
מִכְּנַ֣ף	from wing of	**from the edge of, from the extremity of**	Isa 24.16
מִפָּנֶ֑יךָ	from your face	**from before you** **from your presence** **before you**	Ex 23.29-30; Deu 33.27; 2Sa 7.9; Job 13.20 Psa 139.7 Deu 2.25; Isa 26.17

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
נָשָׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ	lift the head	**take a census**	Ex 30.12
עֲדֵי־עַד	until until, *or* unto until	**forever**	Psa 83.18; 92.8; 132.12,14; Isa 26.4; 65.18.
עַז־פָּנִים	strong faces	**insolent, of fierce/bold countenance, stern-faced, fierce looking, ruthless**	Deu 28.50; Dan 8.23
עַל־דְּבַר	upon a word/thing; to *the* word; cf. 1Ch 10.13; Pro 16.20; 29.12.	**because of; for the sake of; on account of; in the matter of; for the cause of; concerning**	Gen 12.17; 20.11,18; 43.18; Ex 8.8(12); Num 17.14 (16.49); 31.16; Deu 22.24; 23.4; 2Sa 13.22; 18.5; Psa 45.5; 79.9.
עַל־כֵּן	upon thus; upon such; upon this way; against/about such	**thus, therefore, for this reason**	Gen 2.24; Deu 24.18; 1Sa 10.12; Job 42.6; Psa 45.3; Ecc 5.2; Sol 1.3; Isa 50.7; Lam 3.24.
עַל־פְּנֵי	upon face of [this is sometimes the correct translation, as in 2Ki 4.29]	**on the surface of; in front of; before; toward; facing; beside**	Ex 20.3; Jdg 16.3; Hos 10.7

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
עֵקֶב אֲשֶׁר	as-a-consequence of-which	**because**	Gen 22.18
שָׁבַר שֶׁבֶר	buy/sell grain grain	**an example of the Heb cognate accusative, with the sing. acc. often serving as a collective noun: buy/sell much grain**	Amo 8.5.
שׁוֹק עַל־יָרֵךְ	calf to loin	**utterly, ruthlessly**	cutting their legs out from under them? Jdg 15.8
שְׁכֶם אֶחָד	one shoulder	**of/in one accord**	Zep 3.9
שָׁפַת שָׁלוֹם	set down peace (as a pot is set on the fire)	**establish peace, accomplish deliverance**	Isa 26.12
שְׁכֶם אֶחָד	shoulder one	**shoulder to shoulder *or* with one accord**	Zep 3.9

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
תַּחְתָּיו תַּחְתָּם תַּחְתֵּינוּ	under him(self); under them; under us, under our-selves	**in his place, on the spot;** **in their place, where they stand;** **in our place**	1Sa 14.9; 2Sa 2.23; Job 40.12; Isa 25.10; 46.7

IDIOMATIC WORDS AND PHRASES

In Biblical Greek

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
ἄλλος ... ἄλλος	another ... another	**an [then] another**	Rev 14.6-8
ἀνακείμενος ... ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ	reclining on the bosom	**taking, or dining in, the place of honor**	Joh 13.24 (see ESJ)
ἀνθ᾽ ὧν	against which	**because**	2Th 2.10
ἀπ᾽ ἄκρων ἕως τῶν ἄκρων	from end to the end	**from one end to the other**	Mat 24.31
αὐτὸ τοῦτο	it this	**this very thing; this very reason; this very purpose**	Rom 9.17; 13.6; 2Co 5.5; 7.11; Gal 2.20; Eph 6.22; Phil 1.6; Col 4.8; 2Pe 1.5
διὰ τοῦτο	through this	**therefore**	2Th 2.11

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
εἰ δὲ μή γε	if but not indeed	**otherwise**	Mat 6.1
εἰ μή	if not: Ex 33.15	**unless; except; so much as**	Gen 3.11; Wis 7.28; Isa 1.9; Mat 5.13; Joh 3.13; Rom 7.7; 1Ti 5.19; Rev 2.17
εἴ πως	if in a certain way, if how	**if perhaps; if by any means; if somehow; somehow**	Act 27.12; Rom 1.10; 11.14; Phil 3.11
εἴ τις	if anyone [usually translated literally]	**whoever** [translation occasionally warranted by context]	1Pe 4.11; Rev 14.11
εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας; εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων	unto the ages; unto the ages of the ages	**forever; forever and ever**	Luk 1.33; Rom 1.25; Heb 13.8; Rev 1.18
εἰς ὄνομα	in[to] *the* name [of]	**because he is**	Mat 10.41

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν	out of faith into faith	**by faith from first to last; by faith from start to finish; on the basis of nothing but faith; by faith alone**	Rom 1.17
ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ	unless if not	**unless, with this exception**	1Co 14.5; 15.2
ἐφ᾽ ᾧ	upon which; upon whom; for/about which: Gen 38.30; Jos 5.15; 2Ki 19.10; Pro 21.22; Isa 25.9; 62.8; Act 7.33; Phil 3.12; 4.10	**because**	Rom 5.12; 2Co 5.4.
ἕως ὅτου	up to that	**until, while**	1Sa 22.3; 30.4; 1Ki 10.7; 1Ki 11.16; 2Ki 2.17; Neh 4.11; 1Ma 14.10; Eze 39.15; Dan 2.34; 7.4,9; Mat 5.25; Luk 12.50; 13.8; 22.16; Joh 9.18
ἕως ὅτου μὴ	up to that not	**before**	Ecc 12.1,6
ἤδη ποτὲ	already sometime	**now at last**	Rom 1.10

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
ἵνα μή	[in order] that not; Lev 8.35; Deu 4.21; Jos 20.9; Isa 14.21; Act 2.25; Gal 5.17; 1Th 4.13; 1Joh	**lest**	Gen 3.3; Deu 7.22; Pro 31.5; Mat 7.1; Joh 3.20
ἴστε γινώσκοντες	[Imperative:] know O knowing ones	**Know with certainty; Be sure of this**	Only in Eph 5.5
καὶ ἐτελέσθη	and was accomplished/ finished	**With καὶ + Aorist acting as a Heb consecutive perfect:** *then will have been accomplished*	Rev 10.7 (See Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse*)
κατὰ τόπους	according to place	**in various places; from place to place**	Mat 24.7
μή πως	not in a certain manner	**otherwise, lest haply**	2Co 9.4
ὅπου ἐὰν	where if, when if	**wherever, whenever**	Rut 1.16; Mat 8.29; 24.28; 26.13; Mar 6.10; 9.18; 14.9,14; Luk 9.57

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
Ὅρα μή	See not!	**See that you not do it!**	Rev 19.10.
οὐ μή	not not	**certainly not, by no means**	Mat 24.2
οὐδὲν ... ἔτι	nothing yet, nothing still	**no longer**	Mat 5.13
πόσῳ μᾶλλον	how much rather	**how much more**	Mat 5.11
τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ περιποιέομαι	to do something regarding one's life	**to save one's soul**	Luk 17.33
τί πρὸς σέ;	what to you?	**what is that to you?; what concern is it of yours?**	Joh 21.22

Phrase	Literal	Idiomatic	References
ὡς	as, like	[As a comparitive particle it can indicate different kinds of perspectives, such as reason or relative time.] **because, when**	Joh 7.10