Negating the Infinitive in Biblical Hebrew

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I. Introduction[1]

One of the more interesting combinations of a negative with the infinitive construct in BH is אֵין + infinitive.[2] This construction has long been regarded as a trait of LBH syntax. It is described in several grammars and articles,[3] but to my knowledge it has not been the object of any exhaustive treatment. None of the grammars and articles even come close to citing all the instances, let alone analyze them. This has led to two conclusions that are wrong in my opinion, 1) that it is LBH and can be used to late-date texts and 2) that all occurrences of אֵין negating an infinitive can be analyzed as one construction. In the following, I will show why.

II. The double status of אֵין

It is essential to realize that אֵין is used in two different ways in BH:[4] 1) to indicate non-existence or absence and 2) as a simple negative. The syntactic properties of the two uses are quite different and for my purpose here I have chosen examples involving infinitives to illustrate this. (1) and (2) are examples of the first use:

1. וְאָדָם אַיִן לַעֲבֹד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה
And there was no man to till the ground. (Gen 2:5)
2. כִּי אֵין זוּלָתְךָ לִגְאוֹל.
For there is no-one besides you to redeem it. (Ruth 4:4)

In both cases, the infinitive phrases serve as complements, and the sentences would be grammatical without them, אָדָם אַיִן 'man was non-existent' and אֵין זוּלָתְךָ, 'there is no-one besides you.' אֵין indicates non-existence or absence and in no way does it negate the infinitives. The following two examples show how BH can use אֵין to negate infinitives.

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1. Many thanks to W.Th. van Peursen, Leiden, for helpful suggestions.
2. Abbreviations: BH: Biblical Hebrew; BHS: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia; MH: Mishnaic Hebrew; LBH: Late Biblical Hebrew; SBH: Standard Biblical Hebrew; QH: Qumran Hebrew.
3. E.g. Ewald, *Hebräische Sprachlehre*, §321c (for full references, see bibliography); Driver, *Tenses*, §202; Gesenius/Kautzsch/Cowley, *Grammar*, §1141, Soisalon-Soininen, 'Der Infinitivus constructus mit ל; Carmignac, 'Emploi de la negation אֵין'; Qimron, *Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, §400.12; Joüon/Muraoka, *Grammar*, §1241, 160j; van Peursen, 'Negation'; Hurvitz, 'Further Comments'.
4. See Joüon/Muraoka, *Grammar*, §160g, and Muraoka, *Emphatic*, 109.

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3. הִנֵּה אֲשֶׁר־אֵין מִשְׁפָּטָם לִשְׁתּוֹת הַכּוֹס שָׁתוֹ יִשְׁתּוּ

If those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it. (Jer 49:12)

4. כִּי אֵין לָבוֹא אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּלְבוּשׁ שָׂק

For there was no entering the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. (Est 4:2)

Here אֵין is a pure negative. As I see it, the infinitive phrase is the subject of each clause and in (4), אֵין is the sole predicate whereas in (3), אֵין מִשְׁפָּטָם is the predicate.[5]

III. The impersonal אֵין + infinitive construction

(4) is almost always cited as an example of the use of אֵין to negate infinitives. It is an example that exactly matches most of the QH instances of אֵין associated with infinitives, and further, it matches modern Hebrew usage.[6] It is important to note that it is an impersonal construction, not to be confused with the personal אֵין + infinitive construction, see (12)-(17) below. It can be rendered literally into English as 'there is no ...ing...'(as in 'there is no entering the king's gate') and it can carry slightly different modal values of lack of permission and possibility. Note also that אֵין negates the whole clause as opposed to (18)-(21) below. The presence or absence of ל in this and other uses of אֵין + infinitive does not seem significant. This is in accordance with the fact that the presence or absence of ל with infinitives in BH sometimes seems to have no significance, especially when the infinitive, as in the אֵין + infinitive constructions, is the subject of a clause.[7] The use without ל in (9), (15), (16), and (18) certainly seems to be the same as in the parallel instances with ל, and ל when found with the infinitive in the אֵין + infinitive constructions is probably part of the non-semantic, external 'wrapping' of speach.[8] The same goes for ל in the parallel construction of לֹא + infinitive, see (75) below.

As the instances show, surface word order is not significant either as it is the constituent structure that is decisive. Compare, e.g., (7) with (8) where the con-

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[5] When I use the terms 'subject' and 'predicate' in this article, I use them in the sense of logical subject and predicate. Therefore, I see the negation, be it אֵין or לֹא, as the predicate since this is the more universal and the infinitive clause is the more specific. See Baasten, 'Nominal clauses', 1-2, for the distinction between grammatical, logical, and psychological subject.

Alternatively, one could analyze (4) and similar constructions as if a dummy subject 'there' was implicit in אֵין. אֵין would then also function as the head of the predicate, the complement of which in this case is the whole clause (this is the view of Swiggers, 'Nominal Sentence Negation', 178, if I understand him correctly). But the difference in that case between the infinitival complement here and in instances such as (1) would be that it is here grammatically indispensible since the אֵין here is the negating אֵין and not the אֵין indicating non-existence or absence.

[6] Glinert, *Modern Hebrew*, §28.4.

[7] See Joüon/Muraoka, *Grammar* §124 l, m and note the fluctuation within a single sentence cited there: הִנֵּה שְׁמֹעַ מִזֶּבַח טוֹב לְהַקְשִׁיב מֵחֵלֶב אֵילִים Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. (1 Sam 15:22)

[8] Moshe Azar has coined this term in Hebrew, ה'עטיפה' החיצונית, הלא־סמנטית, של הדבור, 'The Definite Article', 27.

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stituent structure is the same though the surface word order is different. Compare also (12) with (13) and with (15) - all three instances have identical constituent structure as far as the negation, the prepositional phrase, and the infinitive is concerned though the surface word order in all three is different.

I have found ten more (possible) instances of the impersonal אֵין + infinitive construction, (5)-(11):

5. כִּי־כְתָב אֲשֶׁר־נִכְתָּב בְּשֵׁם־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנַחְתּוֹם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין לְהָשִׁיב
For there is no taking back an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring. (Esth 8:8)

6. זְרַעְתֶּם הַרְבֵּה וְהָבֵא מְעָט אָכוֹל וְאֵין־לְשָׂבְעָה שָׁתוֹ וְאֵין־לְשָׁכְרָה לָבוֹשׁ וְאֵין־לְחֹם לוֹ
You have sown much, but bring in little; eating, but there is no being satisfied; drinking, but there is no getting drunk; putting on clothes, but there is no being warm for anyone. (Hag 1:6)

In the four instances in (5) and (6), as in (4), אֵין negates the whole clause. Proposing the אֵין indicating non-existence or absence would not make sense in these instances, because it would result in preposterous translations, like:

5′. *There exists no-one to take back an edict...

In the following five instances, (7) - (10), it is not clear whether the אֵין associated with the infinitive is the negating אֵין or the אֵין indicating non-existence or absence:

7. הִנְנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּאַשְׁמָתֵינוּ כִּי אֵין לַעֲמוֹד לְפָנֶיךָ עַל־זֹאת
Here we are before you in our guilt, for there is no standing before you because of this/for there is no-one [here] to stand before you because of this. (Ezr 9:15)

8. וְאֵין עִמְּךָ לְהִתְיַצֵּב
And there is no standing against you/and there is [=exists] no-one to stand against you. (2 Chr 20:6)

9. אֵין עֲרֹךְ אֵלֶיךָ
There is no comparing with you/there is [=exists] no-one to compare with you. (Ps 40:6)

10. עָלָיו אֵין לְהוֹסִיף וּמִמֶּנּוּ אֵין לִגְרֹעַ
To it there is no adding and from it there is no taking/to it there is nothing to add and from it there is nothing to take. (Qoh 3:14)

The difference in meaning between the two options is in each case very slight, and this makes it hard to decide which one is the more likely. So all we can say is that (7) - (10) are possible candidates to the construction.

Prov 17:16 is another instance where the status of אֵין is unclear:

11. לָמָּה־זֶּה מְחִיר בְּיַד־כְּסִיל לִקְנוֹת חָכְמָה וְלֶב־אָיִן
Why should a fool have a price in his hand to buy wisdom, when he has no mind? (Prov 17:16)

All modern translations and commentaries available to me understand the verse according to the constituent analysis apparent in the translation above, but both the Septuagint and the Vulgate translate according to a different analysis:

11´. Quid prodest habere divitias stultum cum sapientiam emere non possit.
What good is it for a fool to have wealth when he cannot buy wisdom.[9]

11´´. ἵνα τί ὑπῆρξεν χρήματα ἄφρονι κτήσασθαι γὰρ σοφίαν ἀκάρδιος οὐ δυνήσεται
Why has the fool wealth? For a senseless man will not be able to purchase wisdom.

None of the commentaries available to me note that this alternative analysis is possible, but three linguistic authorities analyze אֵין as negating the infinitive.[10] This analysis, yielding a translation like (11´) may be correct and it makes quite good sense in the context, maybe even better sense than the usual analysis. This may then be another instance of the impersonal אֵין + infinitive construction.

IV. The personal אֵין + infinitive construction

As mentioned, of instances where אֵין negates the infinitive we can distinguish between an impersonal and a personal construction. One good reason for making such a distinction, apart from the fact that it can be done, is that it seems that native Hebrew speakers did it - the impersonal construction is in frequent use in Ben Sira and QH,[11] but the personal construction - as far as I can see - is only attested there twice, and instead QH uses לֹא/אַל + imperfect. In Tannaitic Hebrew[12], the impersonal construction is attested once while the personal construction is frequently used.[13] (12) is an example of the personal construction:

12. וְגַם לַלְוִיִּם אֵין־לָשֵׂאת אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְאֶת־כָּל־כֵּלָיו לַעֲבֹדָתוֹ
And so the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle or any of the things for its service. (1 Chr 23:26)

The two constructions differ in that the subject of the assumed underlying clause, the clause usually used for translation into English, is personal and overt, governed by a preposition. This prepositional phrase may then, together with אֵין, be analyzed as the predicate of the clause where in the other construction, אֵין is the sole predicate. So the predicate of (12) is אֵין לַלְוִיִּם (נַם) (with אֵין functioning as head) and the subject is לָשֵׂאת אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְאֶת־כָּל־כֵּלָיו לַעֲבֹדָתוֹ.

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9 Both the Vulgate and the LXX understand חָכְמָה וָלֵב as a hendiadys.
10 König, *Syntax*, §397f; Bergsträsser, *Grammatik*, vol. 2, §11m; Muraoka, *Emphatic*, 102.
11 See the instances below, (52) - (69).
12 I.e. the Hebrew of the Mishna and other early rabbinic sources.
13 See below, (83) - (86).

I have found 5 more (possible) instances of the personal אֵין + infinitive construction in BH:

13. אֵין לָהֶם לָסוּר מֵעַל עֲבֹדָתָם.
They did not need to depart from their service. (2 Chr 35:15)

14. וְאֵין־לָנוּ אִישׁ לְהָמִית בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.
And it is not for us to put any man to death in Israel. (2 Sam 21:4)

The syntactically most straightforward way of reading this is to take אִישׁ as the subject, אֵין לָנוּ as the predicate and the infinitive phrase as a complement, but the resulting translation is difficult:

14'. *We do not have a man to kill in Israel.

The only other possibility is to regard אִישׁ as the preposed object of the infinitive, as is common in Aramaic. This feature is not common in BH, but there are some occurrences[14] and among them this instance, because this analysis results in the contextually necessary translation in (14) and it is then an occurrence of the personal אֵין + infinitive construction.

With the preposition אֵת[15] and אֵין following the infinitive we have:

15. וְגַם־הֵיטֵיב אֵין אוֹתָם.
They cannot do good either (literally: and doing good is not with them/in them). (Jer 10:5)

As in the previous instances, the prepositional phrase associated with אֵין provides the subject of the underlying clause used in the English translation, and again the absence of ל does not seem to be significant.

Provided that מַשָּׂא can be regarded as an infinitive, there is another instance that belongs here:

16. אֵין־לָכֶם מַשָּׂא בַּכָּתֵף.
You need not carry it on your shoulders/you do not have (it as) a burden on your shoulders. (2 Chr 35:3)

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14 E.g.: לָבוֹא חֲמַס שִׁבְעִים בְּנֵי־יְרֻבַּעַל וְדָמָם לָשׂוּם עַל־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֲחִיהֶם
   That the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come and *to lay their blood* upon Abimelech their brother. (Jdg 9:24)
   See Gesenius/Kautzsch/Cowley, *Grammar* §142f n. 2 and Carmignac, 'Un aramaïsme biblique et qumrânien'. Carmignac claims to have been the first to discover this feature in BH, but he overlooked the passage in Gesenius/Kautzsch/Cowley, *Grammar* showing that Kautzsch discovered it before him. See also (51) for a parallel, unambiguous instance in Ben Sira.
   This word order is common in Aramaic, see Folmer, 'Aramaic Language', 536-42.

15 Note that it is the preposition and not the object marker, even though the preposition here has the form of the object marker.

There seems to be a few instances in BH of infinitives with a מ-prefix.[16] It would make sense here to regard מַשָּׂא as an infinitive seeing that the construction in that case is parallel to the other instances of the personal אֵין + infinitive construction, (12)-(15). The other option, regarding מַשָּׂא as a mere noun as expressed in the alternative translation, is also a possibility.

It is likewise unclear whether (17) belongs here:

וְאֵין לְבֵית אֲחַזְיָהוּ לַעְצֹר כֹּחַ לְמַמְלָכָה. 17.

The house of Ahaziah had no-one to assume power over the kingdom/The house of Ahaziah could not assume power over the kingdom. (2 Chr 22:9)

The difference in meaning between the two options is, as was the case in (7)-(10), very slight and again it is very hard to decide which option is the more likely.

V. אֵין as an internal negator

Apart from these two אֵין + infinitive constructions where אֵין negates whole clauses we find instances of אֵין negating an infinitive where אֵין functions as an 'internal negator in nominal compounds'[17], as (most probably) in (18) and (19):

אַל־תִּהְיוּ כְּסוּס כְּפֶרֶד אֵין הָבִין. 18.

Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding. (Ps 32:9)

כִּי כָל־הַכֹּהֲנִים הַנִּמְצָאִים הִתְקַדָּשׁוּ אֵין לִשְׁמוֹר לְמַחְלְקוֹת. 19.

For all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to their divisions. (2 Chr 5:11)

Unless the אֵין + infinitive constitutes a nominal clause of their own in (18) and (19), these instances do not belong with either the personal or the impersonal construction. There is no indication that they are separate clauses and I see no good reason why they should be considered as such. (20) and (21) are two more possible instances of אֵין negating an infinitive without negating the clause:

וַיַּצִּלוּ לָהֶם לְאֵין מַשָּׂא. 20.

And they took for themselves until they could carry no more. (2 Chr 20:25)

As in (16), this depends on whether or not we can regard מַשָּׂא as an infinitive. As opposed to the construction in (16) with אֵין לָהֶם, the construction with לְאֵין + infinitive is not attested anywhere else in BH. On the other hand, the verbal sense is here unquestionable and therefore I see it as (at least) parallel to an infinitive. The construction of לְאֵין + infinitive is in use in QH.[18]

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16 See Joüon/Muraoka, *Grammar* §49e.
17 This term is coined by Swiggers, see 'Nominal Sentence Negation', 176.
18 1QM 18.2, 1QHᵃ 3.27; 8.28. See Hurvitz, *Post-exilic Hebrew*, 39; Qimron, *Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, §400.09; Peursen, 'Negation', 237.

21. מֵאֵין עוֹד פְּנוֹת אֶל־הַמִּנְחָה

Because he does not turn to the sacrifice (Literally: out of no turning to the sacrifice). (Mal 2:13)

The editors of BHS believe that the text probably should read מֵאֵן, 'he refuses', and not מֵאֵין, but as the text stands, אֵין functions as an internal negator.

VI. Proposed instances of אֵין + infinitive where אֵין in fact does not negate the infinitive

Other instances that scholars have classified as אֵין + infinitive constructions are certainly not instances of the negating אֵין and should be treated separately. (1) is one instance, and here follow some more:

22. וּתְשׁוּרָה אֵין־לְהָבִיא לְאִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים

And there is no present to bring to the man of God. (1 Sam 9:7)

This is not the negating אֵין, אֵין here indicates the absence of a gift to bring. The infinitive phrase is a mere complement, just as in (1) and (2).

23. יְהֹוָה אֵין־עִמְּךָ לַעְזוֹר בֵּין רַב לְאֵין כֹּחַ עָזְרֵנוּ יְהֹוָה

O Lord, it is nothing for you to help/there is no-one besides you to help/there is no-one like you to help between the mighty and the weak. (2 Chr 14:10)

24. אִם־אֵין־לְךָ לְשַׁלֵּם

If you have nothing with which to pay. (Prov 22:27)

Again the infinitive phrases serve as complements.

VII. The impersonal לֹא + infinitive construction

Scholars have noted that אֵין + infinitive has a close parallel in לֹא + infinitive.[19] The following three instances seem to be impersonal and to match the impersonal אֵין + infinitive construction completely.

25. כִּי לֹא לְהוֹרִישׁ אֶת־יֹשְׁבֵי הָעֵמֶק

For there was no driving out the inhabitants of the plain. (Jud 1:19)

26. הָס כִּי לֹא לְהַזְכִּיר בְּשֵׁם יְהֹוָה

Hush! For there is no mentioning the name of the Lord. (Amos 6:10)

27. לֹא לָשֵׂאת אֶת־אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי אִם־הַלְוִיִּם

There is no carrying the ark of God except for the Levites. (1 Chr 15:2)

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19   Driver, *Tenses*, §202; Joüon/Muraoka, *Grammar* §160j; Hurvitz, 'Further Comments' 136.

Sometimes the infinitive continues a preceding verb and virtually has the value of a finite form.[20] I have found two such infinitives preceded by לֹא in BH:

28. וּבְחַלְּלוֹ יְצוּעֵי אָבִיו נִתְּנָה בְּכֹרָתוֹ לִבְנֵי יוֹסֵף בֶּן־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא לְהִתְיַחֵשׂ לַבְּכֹרָה

And because he polluted his father's couch his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, and he was not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. (1 Chr 5:1)

29. וּבְהִכָּנְעוֹ שָׁב מִמֶּנּוּ אַף־יְהוָה וְלֹא לְהַשְׁחִית לְכָלָה

And when he humbled himself the wrath of the Lord turned from him, and he did not destroy him completely. (2 Chr 12:12)

As opposed to (25) - (27), the infinitive phrase does not seem to be the subject but rather the predicate, together with לֹא. The subject is understood from the context. These two instances, then, are of a quite different character than any of the attested אֵין + infinitive constructions and are excluded from the comparison.[21]

VIII. The personal לֹא + infinitive construction

With a prepositional phrase between the infinitive and לֹא we have an exact syntactic match of the personal אֵין + infinitive construction. I have found four instances of the personal לֹא + infinitive construction in BH:[22]

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20 Joüon/Muraoka, *Grammar* §124p.

21 There are two instances of לֹא + infinitive that do not form clauses of their own but are complements to a verb:

a. כֹּל הֹבְאִישׁ וְהֹבִישׁ עַל־עַם לֹא־יוֹעִילוּ לָמוֹ לֹא לְעֵזֶר וְלֹא לְהוֹעִיל

Every one comes to shame through a people who cannot profit them, neither for help nor for profit. (Isa 30:5)

b. בָּעֵת הַהִיא יֵאָמֵר לָעָם־הַזֶּה וְלִירוּשָׁלַ͏ִם

רוּחַ צַח שְׁפָיִם בַּמִּדְבָּר דֶּרֶךְ בַּת־עַמִּי לוֹא לִזְרוֹת וְלוֹא לְהָבַר

At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, „A hot wind from the bare heights in the desert toward the daughter of my people, not to winnow or cleanse". (Jer 4:11)

None of the attested uses of אֵין + infinitive match these.

Further, there are two instances of בְּלֹא + infinitive:

c. אוֹ בְּכָל־אֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר־יָמוּת בָּהּ בְּלֹא רְאוֹת וַיַּפֵּל עָלָיו

Or used a stone, by which a man may die, and without seeing him cast it upon him. (Num 35:23)

d. לָמָּה תִשְׁקְלוּ־כֶסֶף בְּלוֹא־לֶחֶם וִיגִיעֲכֶם בְּלוֹא לְשָׂבְעָה

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy. (Isa 55:2)

In (c) and (d) the use of בְּלֹא + infinitive comes close to the use of אֵין + infinitive in (19) and (20) respectively.

22 And I have found three instances of לֹא negating a nominal clause with an infinitive as subject that show a similar surface syntax (cp. [3]):

a. לֹא נָכוֹן לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן

It is not right to do so. (Ex 8:22)

b. הֲלוֹא טוֹב לָנוּ שׁוּב מִצְרָיְמָה

Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt. (Num 14:3)

30. הֲלוֹא לָכֶם לָדַעַת אֶת־הַמִּשְׁפָּט
Is it not for you to know justice. (Mic 3:1)

31. הֲלֹא לָכֶם לָדַעַת
Is it not for you to know. (2 Chr 13:5)

32. לֹא לָכֶם לְהִלָּחֵם בָּזֹאת
It is not for you to fight in this battle. (2 Chr 20:17)

33. לֹא־לְךָ עֻזִּיָּהוּ לְהַקְטִיר לַיהוָה
It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord. (2 Chr 26:18)

IX. לְבִלְתִּי + infinitive

The most common negative with infinitives is לְבִלְתִּי.[23] This combination occurs 86 times in BH, almost exclusively in SBH texts, and it never constitutes a nominal clause, it is always a complement, and almost always of a preceding verb. An example:

34. וַיֵּאֹתוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים לְבִלְתִּי קְחַת־כֶּסֶף מֵאֵת הָעָם וּלְבִלְתִּי חַזֵּק אֶת־בֶּדֶק הַבָּיִת
So the priests agreed that they should take no more money from the people, and that they should not repair the house. (2 Kgs 12:9)

None of the attested uses of אֵין + infinitive are comparable to לְבִלְתִּי + infinitive, except perhaps (19).

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c. לֹא־לָכֶם וָלָנוּ לִבְנוֹת בַּיִת לֵאלֹהֵינוּ
You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God. (Ezra 4:3)

23 Other negatives used with infinitives in BH:
מִבְּלִי is used twice:

a. מִבְּלִי יְכֹלֶת יְהוָה לַהֲבִיאָם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר לָהֶם
Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them. (Deut 9:28)

b. מִבְּלִי הִשְׁאִיר־לוֹ כֹּל
Because he has nothing left. (Deut 28:55)

מִבִּלְתִּי is also used twice:

c. מִבִּלְתִּי יְכֹלֶת יְהוָה לְהָבִיא אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּע לָהֶם
Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore to give to them. (Num 14:16)

d. וַתִּזְנִי אֶל־בְּנֵי אַשּׁוּר מִבִּלְתִּי שָׂבְעָתֵךְ
You played the harlot with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable. (Ezek 16:28)
The use of מִבְּלִי and מִבִּלְתִּי with infinitives comes close to the use of מֵאֵין in (21).
Finally, עַד־בִּלְתִּי is used with an infinitive five times, all in the formula:

e. עַד־בִּלְתִּי הִשְׁאִיר־לוֹ שָׂרִיד
Until there was no survivor left to him.
(Num 21:35, Deut 3:3, Josh 8:22; 10:33, 2 Kgs 10:11)

XI. The evidence from Ben Sira

As far as I can see, the personal לא/אין + infinitive construction is not attested in Ben Sira, but the impersonal אֵין + infinitive construction is attested six or seven times:

46. אין לבזות דל משכיל ואין לכבד כל איש חמס

One should not despise a poor man who is wise, and one should not honour any man of violence (10:23 [A+]B).

47. כי אין בשאול לבקש תענוג

For in Sheol there is no seeking of joys. (14:16 A)

48. אין לאמר

One should not say... (39:21 B[1+2] and 39:34 Bmg)

49. אין לבקש עמה משען

And with it there is no need to seek (other) support. (40:26 B+M)

(50) is ambiguous:

50. אין חייו למנות חיים

One cannot consider his life a life[28]/ his life is not to be be considered a life. (40:29 B[+M])

This is either the impersonal אֵין + infinitive construction and then חייו is the preposed object, or alternatively, חייו is the subject of the verbal act contained in the infinitive. The infinitive is then either qal[29] or nif'al where the ה is elided.
The impersonal לא + infinitive construction is also attested in Ben Sira:

51. לא כל איש להביא אל בית

One should not bring every man home. (11:29 A)

The object precedes the infinitive as in (14). One could argue that this example stands out from the other examples since לא may belong to כל and is not negating

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27 I used as corpus Ahituv, *Handbook of Hebrew Inscriptions*. Negated infinitives are attested in one Punic and a couple of Aramaic inscriptions, see Hurvitz, 'Further Comments', examples *p* and *r*. There are also attestations in Biblical Aramaic (Dan 6:9; Ezra 6:8) and in Syriac (Nöldeke, *Syrische Grammatik*, §286).

28 In BH, there is no attestation of the qal of מנה in the sense of 'to consider something as something' but חשב in the nif'al is used this way. Usually the preposition כ is used, but there are examples comparable to this one where there is no כ:
a. הֲלוֹא נָכְרִיּוֹת נֶחְשַׁבְנוּ לוֹ
Are we not regarded by him as foreigners. (Gen 31:15)
b. כִּי נֶאֱמָנִים נֶחְשָׁבוּ
For they were considered faithful. (Neh 13:13)

29 The infinitive is neutral in respect of voice, as in:
וַיְהִי הַשַּׁעַר לִסְגּוֹר
And the gate was to be closed. (Josh 2:5)
See Joüon/Muraoka, *Grammar*, §124s.

the whole clause. I maintain, however, that this is the same construction as in the other instances of impersonal לא + infinitive where לא is the sole predicate negating the whole clause.

XII. The evidence from Qumran

In QH we also find the impersonal infinitive construction with both אֵין and לֹא. With אֵין:

52. ואין לצעוד על אחד מכול דבריו
And there is no infringing even one of his words. (1QS 3.10-11)

53. ואין להשנות
And there is no altering anything. (1QS 3.16)

54. ואין להשיב על תוכחתכה
And there is no replying to your reproach. (1QH^a 7.28-29)

55. ואין להניף יד
And it was not possible to wave the hand. (1QH^a 8.33)

56. ואין לשלוח פעם
And it was not possible to take a step. (1QH^a 8.34)

57. ואין לה[ר]ים קול
And it was not possible to raise the voice. (1QH^a 8.35-36)

58. ואין להשיב על תוכחתכה
And there is no replying to your reproach. (1QH^a 12.30)

59. ואין לעבור חוקיהם
And there is no transgressing their laws. (1Q34 bis 3.2.2)

60. אין עוד להשתפח לבית יהודה
There will no longer be any joining with the house of Juda. (CD 4.11)

61. ואין להרנ[יעה]
And there is no interrupting her. (4Q184 1.12)

62. [ו]אין לערב במ[
[And] there is no mixing with... [(4QOrd^b 10.23)

63. ואין להטן
And there is no... [(4QOrd^b 12.3)

64. ואין לעבור פיהו
And there is no transgressing his command. (4QapPs^b 14.3)

65. ואין להבי למחני הק[ו]דש כלבים
And there is no bringing dogs into the holy camp. (4QMMT B58)

66. אין להאכילם מהקו[ד]שים
And there is no feeding them from the sacred food. (4QMMT B71)

67. אי[ן] לקדם [ו]ל[א]חר ממועדה[ם /כי אין [להת]ק[ד]ם ולהתאחר ממועדהם
For they cannot come before or after their appointed times. (4Q266 2.1.2 / 4Q268 1.4)

68. אין להשיבה
There is no returning it. (4Q270 2.2.10)

69. עמו אור לאין חקר ואין לדעת[ו
With him there is a light that cannot be inspected nor can it be known. (4Q392 1.7)

Since we do not have the context in all instances, some of these are not certain. Some are also ambiguous in the same way as (7) - (10), but we can still safely say that the construction is quite frequently used in QH. The same goes for the impersonal לא + infinitive construction:

70. ולוא ללכת עוד בשרירות לב אשמה
And not to walk in the stubbornness of a guilty heart. (1QS 1.6)

71. ולוא לצעוד בכול אחד מכול דברי אל בקציהם ולוא לקדם עתיהם
ולוא להתאחר מכול מועדיהם ולוא לסור מחוקי אמתו
And there is no infringing any of God's orders concerning their appointed times, and there is no advancing their appointed times and no retarding anyone of their feasts, and there is no straying from his reliable precepts. (1QS 1.13-15)

72. ולוא לשוב מאחרו
And there is no turning from him. (1QS 1.17)

73. ולוא לסור ימין ושמאול
And there is no straying to the left or to the right. (1QS 3.10)

74. ואשר לוא להוכיח ולוא להתרובב עם אנשי השחת
And there shall be no reproaching or arguing with the men of the pit. (1QS 9.16)

75. [30]ולוא הסר דרכו מכול עול
And there shall be no changing one's path because of any wickedness. (1QS 9.20)

76. לוא לעבור על דברכה
There is no transgressing your command. (1QH^a 12.24)

77. ולוא להשיב
And there is no replying. (1QH^a 2.1.12)

78. ולוא להפרד]
And there is no separating [... (1QH^a 5.1.14)

79. כתוב שלוא לרבעה כלאים
It is written that there is no letting it mate with another species. (4QMMT B 77)

80. שלוא לזרוע שדו וכ]
And there is no sowing of one's field and [... (4QMMT B 78)

As far as I can see from an examination of Charlesworth's Graphic Concordance, the personal לא + infinitive construction is not attested in the texts at the base of that (which is the large majority of QH texts). The Wacholder/Abegg concordance, however, revealed two examples of the personal אֵין + infinitive construction:

81. ואין לו להשב יגע
And he shall not give back the fruit of his toil. (4Q368 10.2.5)[31]

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30 Without ל and with the same meaning as corresponding instances with ל.

31 We would expect the infinitive hif'il to have a yod as a vowel letter, but this yod is sometimes not written by Qumran scribes (albeit usually when the infinitive is not prefixed by ל); see Qimron, *Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 310.14.

82. ‏ואין עמו להבדיל בין האור לחשך‎.
And it is not for him to separate light from darkness. (4Q392 1.5)

XIII. The evidence from Tannaitic Hebrew

There are no examples of the impersonal ‏אין‎ + infinitive construction in the Mishna, and in other Tannaitic Hebrew texts there is only one example:[32]

83. ‏אין להשיב על דברי מי שאמר והיה העולם‎.
There is no arguing against the words of him who spoke and the world came into being. (Mekhilta b-shallah 6)[33]

However, the personal ‏אין‎ + infinitive construction is well attested in MH in the common phrase:

84. ‏אין עליך לומר /לדון‎.
You should not say/argue... (e.g. Mekhilta Neziqin 15) [34]

And further:

85. ‏אין לי לפרש‎.
I cannot explain it. (Mishna Pesahim 9.6)
86. ‏אין לנו לעשות‎.
We should not do. (Mekhilta b-shallah 1)[35]

The Hebrew Bar Kochba letters have no negated infinitives.[36]

XIV. Summary and discussion

I have made two important distinctions in this paper: one is between the negating ‏אין‎ and the ‏אין‎ indicating absence or non-existence, and one is between the negating ‏אין‎ with infinitive, constructed impersonally and the one constructed personally.

I have shown that ‏אין‎ negating an infinitive in BH, even though sparsely attested, is not one but several constructions. Two of them were more interesting, the ones I have termed the personal and the impersonal construction. The argument to distinguish between them was partly that it can be done, there is a clear semantic and syntactic difference between them, and partly that native speakers of Hebrew seem to have done it: one of the constructions, the impersonal, is quite frequently attested

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32 See Sharvit, 'Modal Infinitive Sentences', 419-20; van Peursen, 'Negation', 228.
33 Ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 112.
34 Ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 299; Pérez Fernández, *Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*, 148.
35 Ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 86.
36 See Milik in Benoit et al. (eds.), *Les grottes de Murabba'at*; Kutscher, '*The Hebrew Letters of Bar Koseba*'; Naveh, *On Sherd and Papyrus* 106-17.

in the Hebrew of Ben Sira and of the Dead Sea Scrolls whereas the other, personal construction is attested there only twice. The opposite situation holds in Tannaitic Hebrew, one attestation of the impersonal construction and many of the personal. As for the matching constructions with לֹא - they are both attested in BH, but only the impersonal construction is attested in QH. Some authorities believe that the use of לֹא is stronger than the use of אֵין,[37] but I see no way of substantiating this. In addition, in 1QS 3.10 ([52] and [73]) the two are used in the same line giving the impression that they were (or at least could be) used indiscriminately, at least in QH. The most interesting question involved is whether the constructions with אֵין are useful in the linguistic dating of texts. As mentioned, scholars have long regarded what they saw as one construction as late and Hurvitz, Schoors, and Seow[38] all use the occurrences in Qoh 3:14 to date Qohelet late. This is very doubtful. Firstly, as mentioned in connection with (10), the occurrences are ambiguous. Secondly, if we grant that these are indeed occurrences of the *impersonal* construction, it is attested for sure in Esther and Haggai only, (4) - (6). These books are dated on clear internal evidence as post-exilic, but there is a very important difference between them: Whereas Esther shows many LBH features, Haggai shows none. On the contrary, Haggai is written in SBH,[39] and arguing that the author wrote his two chapters in perfect SBH except for the verse that contains the three instances of the impersonal אֵין + infinitive construction would be bad methodology. This is all the more so when the perspective is broadened: if we include the six ambiguous instances in (7) - (11) in the discussion as occurrences of the construction, we do get another two LBH instances (Ezra and Chronicles), but then we also get the two occurrences in Qohelet the dating of the Hebrew of which is disputed, and one in Proverbs the Hebrew of which is mostly SBH with few traits of LBH, and one in Psalm 40 which is SBH. All we can say on the basis of this distribution is that the construction seems slightly more frequent in LBH, but there is not nearly enough evidence for any kind of certainty. In addition, sound methodology requires that we can show that any word or construction that is presumed to be LBH has a counterpart in SBH that fulfills the same function,[40] a so-called linguistic contrast. Such contrasts have been proposed for this construction, לְבִלְתִּי + infinitive and אַל/לֹא + imperfect.[41] As for לְבִלְתִּי + infinitive, as mentioned in connection with (34), it is used as a complement mostly continuing a verb and never independently and does not provide a contrast. As for

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37 Driver, *Tenses*, §202; Hurvitz, 'Further Comments', n.16 p.136.

38 Hurvitz, Review of Fredericks, 145-47; Schoors, *The Preacher*, 183-84; Seow, 'Dating of Qoheleth', 663-64.

39 See Hurvitz, 'The Hebrew Language in the Persian Period', 215 and 'Early and Late', 20: The language of [Haggai and (proto-)Zechariah] has still not recognizably moved away from SBH ... It seems that the reason for this is rooted mainly in the character of the prophetic literature which tends to be formulated in a semi-poetic language, a language that differs from prose in its strong adherence to the classical style and in its avoidance of clear linguistic innovations... [my translation, M.E.].

40 See Hurvitz, 'Continuity and Innovation' for an excellent introduction to the methodology of distinguishing LBH from SBH.

41 See Bergey, The Book of Esther, 75-77 and Late Linguistic Features, 71; Hurvitz, 'Further Comments', passim; Seow, Dating of Qohelet, 663.

אַל/לֹא + imperfect, it is a personal construction and (naturally) it constitutes a verbal clause. Both these features are in opposition to our construction, so to posit this as a linguistic contrast is not straightforward. However אַל/לֹא + imperfect is sometimes used with an impersonal meaning as a general command/request and in that way does provide a contrast. A better match does exist in SBH texts, however, the impersonal לֹא + infinitive construction, but there are only two occurrences in SBH, (25) and (26). The positive counterpart to the impersonal constructions occurs more often, see (35) - (40), another indication that the impersonal לֹא and אֵין + infinitive constructions were in use in SBH, albeit not very frequently. So, with a distribution like this, it is not very helpful that the construction is frequent in Ben Sira and the DSS and it should not be used to date Qohelet or any other text late.

Similarly, the *personal* אֵין + infinitive construction is not of much help either. We have four unambiguous occurrences in BH, (12) - (15): two in Chronicles, one in Jeremiah and one in 2 Samuel. Now, the Hebrew of Jeremiah shows some signs of lateness, but it is mostly SBH, so in this case it sides with 2 Samuel which gives two SBH and two LBH occurrences. If we allow the ambiguous instances to count, (16) and (17), we get two more LBH occurrences, but since the construction is not attested in the Hebrew of Ben Sira and only twice in QH, though frequently in MH, this is by far not enough evidence to judge the construction as late even though we have a better linguistic contrast in אַל/לֹא + imperfect than before. As with the impersonal construction, we have a perfect match in the personal לֹא + infinitive construction, (30) - (33), but the evidence from the distribution of that is also inconclusive, one occurrence in Micah and three in Chronicles: it is possibly more frequent in LBH but again, there is not nearly enough evidence to substantiate this.

Even if one does not divide and conquer as I have attempted, and considers the personal and the impersonal אֵין + infinitive constructions together, there does not emerge a picture of LBH distribution. The slight overweight of ambiguous LBH instances cannot in any way be used to label the constructions as late.

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Abstract:

אֵין combined with an infinitive is commonly regarded as a single construction and a trait of Late Biblical Hebrew Syntax used to date biblical texts late. However, a close analysis shows that אֵין + infinitive is not one but several constructions: firstly, there is a clear syntactic difference between the negating אֵין and אֵין indicating absence or non-existence, and secondly, there is a clear semantic and syntactic difference between negating אֵין + infinitive used in personal and impersonal constructions, a difference that is also reflected in the distribution of the constructions in post-biblical Hebrew. A subsequent examination of the distribution of the negating אֵין + infinitive constructions in the Hebrew Bible shows that both constructions are attested in texts written in Standard Biblical Hebrew, and they occur only slightly more frequently in Late Biblical Hebrew texts. Therefore, occurrences of negating אֵין + infinitive can not be used to argue that a given text is late.

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