

The Passive *Qal* Theme in Hebrew

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The presence of a passive of the *Qal* theme in biblical Hebrew was recognized by Böttcher a century ago,¹ subsequently discussed by Barth,² referred to by Bergsträsser in his revision of the monumental grammar of Gesenius,³ and treated at some length by Bauer and Leander.⁴ However, despite the apparent acceptance of their findings, it is more than a little puzzling to note the reluctance with which later scholars have treated the passive *Qal*. The standard Hebrew lexicon in English⁵ accepts the form without question only in the case of the root ŠGL, and merely mentions its possibility for the roots HRY, NTN, NTŞ, SYK, 'ZB, ŠDD, and ŠYT. The most recent revision of Davidson's Hebrew grammar refers only to forms of the roots LQH and NTN as "probably ... the old passive *Qal*."⁶ This is the more surprising in view of the fact that more than fifty Hebrew roots preserve forms which may properly be classed as passive *Qal*. Perhaps it will not be amiss, then, for us to assemble the evidence with respect to this form.

It is well known that literary Arabic alone of the Semitic languages has retained the passive of the *Qal* theme as a living form, with the perfect aspect assuming the pattern /qutila/, "he was

¹ F. Böttcher, *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1868), vol. II, §§ 904-6, 1022.

² J. Barth, "Das passive *Qal* und seine Participien," *Jubelschrift zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. Israel Hildesheimer* (Berlin, 1890), pp. 145ff.

³ F. H. W. Gesenius, *Hebräische Grammatik*, 29th ed. rev. by G. Bergsträsser (Leipzig, 1918-29), vol. II, § 15.

⁴ H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache* (Halle, 1922), § 38 l'-r'.

⁵ F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1906).

⁶ A. B. Davidson, *An Introductory Hebrew Grammar*, 25th ed. rev. by J. Mauchline (Edinburgh, 1962), p. 159.

killed," complemented by the imperfect /yuqtalu/. In Aramaic the perfect aspect alone remains, e.g. /y^ohīb/, "it was given." This displays a secondary lengthening of the vowel on the analogy of the passive participle (originally an adjectival pattern). For other evidence we must turn to the remains of early Northwest Semitic.

As Böhl⁷ and Ebeling⁸ demonstrated independently, the cuneiform tablets from the fourteenth century B.C. Egyptian royal archives at Tell el-Amarna are especially instructive for this purpose.⁹ Many of these letters from the rulers of the city states in Palestine and Syria to their Egyptian suzerain contain glosses and grammatical forms which betray the native Canaanite speech of their writers. Happily the syllabic nature of the cuneiform script, unlike most Semitic writing systems, provides us with evidence for the vocalization. In the missives from Rib-Addi of Byblos we encounter verbal forms with passive meaning such as the following: *yū-ul-qī*, "it will be taken" (EA 105/82); *tu-ul-qū*, "it (f.) will be taken" (EA 132/15); *tu-ša-bat*, "it (f.) will be captured" (EA 85/46); *yū-da-na*, "it is to be given" (EA 86/32, 47); *tu-da-nu-na*, "they (f.) were given" (EA 83/23); *tu-uš-mu-na*, "they (f.) were heard" (EA 89/37, 122/55). Other letters from Byblos and from Milkili of Gezer contain the form *yū-pa-šu*, "it will be done" (EA 114/42, 138/74 f., 271/21, 272/21), written *yū-up-pa-šu* in a document from Acco (EA 232/20).

We turn next to the extensive body of Ugaritic texts from the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C.¹⁰ In these North Syrian mythological poems and other documents we are faced with the ambiguity of an unvocalized script. Fortunately the use of three different signs to represent the glottal stop, intended to indicate the accompanying vowel, makes it possible for us to determine the vocalization of passive forms of verbs which have this phoneme as the first or second radical. Thus we find the form *yūḥd*, "it was kindled" (51.iv.16), to be read /yuḥad/,¹¹ contrasting with the active form *yīḥd*, "he seized" (49.v.1), probably to be vocalized

7 F. M. T. Böhl, "Die Sprache der Amarnabriefe," *LSS* v, 2 (1909), § 30.

8 E. Ebeling, "Das Verbum der El-Amarna Briefe," *BA* 8/2 (1910), § 11.

9 J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln* (VAB, vol. 11; Leipzig, 1907-15).

10 Cited in accordance with C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (*Analecta Orientalia*, 38; Rome, 1965).

11 We must record the baffling forms *tūḥd* (137/40), for which the context demands the meaning "let her take," *yūḥb*, "he loved" (67. v. 18), and *yūkl*, "he will have the usufruct of" (1081/16); cf. the normal form *tīkl* (51.vi.24, 29). Gordon compares the anomalous Hebrew *Qal* forms /yūkal/ and /nō'ōb'qēm/ (Deut. 13:3); cf. also /tō'ōb'qēm/ (Exod. 20:5, 23:24; Deut. 5:9).

/yeḥud/.¹² A second verb occurs in the form *tlākn* (51.v.104), indicating the pronunciation /tul'akūna/, which is to be rendered "they were sent." In the preceding line of the same text *yākl* is commonly agreed to be a metathesis for *ylāk*, i.e. /yul'ak/, "he was sent."

The passive is sometimes expressed in Ugaritic by the *Niph'al* theme. Where the N-prefix has been assimilated to a following consonant, it is impossible to distinguish these forms from those of the passive *Qal*. However, in the case of roots having N as the first radical, the theme with prefixed N is excluded. Such are *td*, "it (f.) was extinguished" (51.vi.32, from NDY); *tdr*, "it (f.) was vowed" (128.iii.23, from NDR); *ysk*, "it will be poured out" (2 Aq vi.36, from NSK); *tšb*, "it (f.) is set" (2 Aq vi. 13, from NŠB).¹³ Other clear cases of the passive *Qal* are found with roots beginning with W/Y. Such are *ytn*, "let it be given" (52/3, from YTN), probably to be read /yūtan/ and *ybl*, "it is brought" (52/52, 59, from YBL), most likely pronounced /yūbal/.

All these examples have been of the preformative conjugation. The affirmative conjugation is rare with fientive verbs, but instances of the passive *Qal* may be cited. Such are *yld*, "he was born" (2 Aq ii.14; this might also be interpreted as a preformative conjugation); *hry*, "he was conceived" (132/5); *gly*, "it was lowered" (1 Aq 160); and *št*, "they have been put" (2106/3, from ŠYT), distinguished in meaning but not in written form from *št*, "he placed" (51.v.107).¹⁴

The limitations imposed by a consonantal script make the identification of passive *Qal* forms in Phoenician well-nigh impossible. The only likely example is found in two Punic inscriptions of the third or early second century B.C., viz. *št*, "it was put" (*KAI* 69/17 f., 20, 74/11).

The evidence thus marshalled is clearly in favour of the existence of a passive of the *Qal* theme in the West Semitic languages exhibiting the pattern *CuCiCa/yaCCaCu* which contrasts with the active pattern *CaCaCa/yaCCuCu*. The assumption that such a passive form was also a feature of Hebrew is natural enough. However, just as in Ugaritic and Phoenician, the *Niph'al* theme, origi-

12 The unique *yāhd* (93/11) might be an instance of the disputed present-future /ya'aḥadu/ postulated by Goetze and Harris.

13 Driver, however, derives this from a root ŠBW, and translates "she coveted."

14 The twice-repeated expression *ūhd b'lm* (1001/6, 14) might preserve another instance of the affirmative conjugation of the passive *Qal*. If so, the vowel accompanying the initial consonant would be a welcome confirmation of the vocalization. However, the context is damaged and too obscure for certainty.

nally with reflexive or middle and reciprocal force, came to be used also to express the passive idea. Consequently, the passive *Qal* became increasingly less common, until by the time of biblical Hebrew it was obsolescent. Many traces still survived in the masoretic text, which may now be listed :

- (1) 'KL, "eat": Perf. /'ukk^olū/ (Neh. 2:3, 13; Nah. 1:10); Imperf. /'u^okk^olū/ (Isa. 1:20); Partic. /'ukkōl/ (Exod. 3:2).
- (2) 'SR, "bind": Perf. /'uss^orū/ (Isa. 22:3, *bis*).
- (3) 'RR, "curse": Imperf. /yū^or/ (pausal, Num. 22:6).
- (4) BZZ, "plunder": Perf. /buzzōzū/ (pausal, Jer. 50:37).
- (5) DWŠ, "thresh": Imperf. /yū^odaš/ (Isa. 28:27).
- (6) DĤW, "thrust down": Perf. /dōhū/ (Ps. 36:13).
- (7) HGW, "utter": Absol. Inf. /hōgō/ (Isa. 59:13).
- (8) HGY/W, "remove": Perf. /hōgō/ (11 Sam. 20:13).¹⁵
- (9) HRG, "kill": Perf. /hōrōg/ (pausal, Isa. 27:7); /hōraġnū/ (Ps. 44:23).
- (10) HRY, "conceive": Perf. /hōrō/ (Job 3:3); Absol. Inf. /hōrō/ (Isa. 59:13).
- (11) ZWR, "squeeze": Perf. /zōrū/ (Isa. 1:6).
- (12) ZNY, "fornicate": Perf. /zunnō/ (Ezek. 16:34).
- (13) ZRW, "winnow": Partic. /zōrē/ (Isa. 30:24).
- (14) ZR', "sow": Perf. /zōrō'ū/ (pausal, Isa. 40:24).
- (15) ZRQ, "sprinkle": Perf. /zōraq/ (Num. 19:13, 20).
- (16) ĤWL, "give birth": Imperf. /yūhal/ (Isa. 66:8).
- (17) ĤNN, "show favour": Imperf. /yūhan/ (Isa. 26:10; Prov. 21:10).
- (18) ĤSB, "hew": Perf. /ħuššabtem/ (Isa. 51:1).
- (19) ĤQQ, "incise": Imperf. /yūhōqū/ (pausal, Job 19:23); Partic. /m^oħuqqōq/ (Prov. 31:5).
- (20) TRP, "tear": Perf. /tōrap/ (Gen. 37:33, 44:28).
- (21) YLD, "give birth": Perf. /yullad/ (Gen. 4:26; Judg. 18:29, etc.); /yullōdū/ (Gen. 6:1, 36:5, etc.); Partic. /yullōd/ (Judg. 13:8).
- (22) YŠR, "form": Perf. /yuššōrū/ (pausal, Ps. 139:16); Imperf. /yūšar/ (Isa. 54:17).
- (23) YQŠ, "snare": Partic. /yūqōšim/ (Eccles. 9:12).
- (24) YŠB, "inhabit": Imperf. /tūšōb/ (pausal, Isa. 44:26).
- (25) KRT, "cut": Perf. /kōrrat/ (with *daghesh* abnormally in the R, Ezek. 16:4); /kōrōtō/ (pausal, Judg. 6:28).
- (26) LQĤ, "take": Perf. /luqqah/ (Gen. 3:23; Judg. 17:2, etc.); /luqqōhū/ (Jer. 48:46); Imperf. /yuqqah/ (Gen. 18:4; Job 28:2, etc.); /tuqqah/ (Gen. 12:15); Partic. /luqqōh/ (11 Kings 2:10).
- (27) MRT, "polish": Perf. /mōrōtō/ (pausal, with an unexpected doubling of the T in both cases, Ezek. 21:15f.); Partic. /mōrōt/ (Isa. 18:2, 7); /m^omōrōt/ (11 Kings 7:45).

¹⁵ Regarded as a *Hiph'il* perfect from an assumed root YGW by Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew Lexicon*.

- (28) MRQ, "scour": Perf. /mōraq/ (Lev. 6:21).
- (29) NŤŠ, "forsake": Perf. /nuŧŧōš/ (pausal, Isa. 32:14).
- (30) NPH, "blow on": Perf. /nuppōh/ (pausal, Job 20:26); /nōpāh/ (Num. 21:30).
- (31) NQM, "avenge": Imperf. /yuqqam/ (Gen. 4:15, 24; Exod. 21:21).
- (32) NTN, "give": Imperf. /yuttan/ (11 Kings 2:21; Lev. 11:38, etc.). /.
- (33) NŤŠ, "break": Imperf. /yuttōš/ (pausal, Lev. 11:35).
- (34) NŤŠ, "pluck": Imperf. /tuttaš/ (Ezek. 19:12).
- (35) SWK, "pour, anoint": Imperf. /yūsōk/ (pausal, Exod. 30:32, Sam. Pent.; MT has /yīsōk/!).
- (36) 'BD, "work": Perf. /'ubbad/ (Deut. 21:3; Isa. 14:3).
- (37) 'ZB, "forsake": Perf. /'uzzōb/ (pausal, Isa. 32:14); /'uzzōbō/ (Jer. 49:25).
- (38) 'MM, "darken": Imperf. /yū'am/ (Lam. 4:1).
- (39) 'ŠW/Y, "make": Perf. /'uššēti/ (Ps. 139:15).
- (40) QBR, "bury": Perf. /qubbar/ (Gen. 25:10).
- (41) QR', "call": Perf. /qōrō/ (Isa. 48:8; Ezek. 10:13, etc.); Partic. /m^oqōrō'i/ (Isa. 48:12).
- (42) QRŠ, "break off": Perf. /qōraštī/ (Job 33:6).
- (43) R'Y, "see": Perf. /ru'ū/ (Job 33:21).
- (44) R' , "break": Partic. /rō'ō/ (Prov. 25:19).
- (45) ŠYM, "put": Imperf. /yūšam/ (Gen. 24:33, *Q^orē*; Gen. 50:26, Sam. Pent.; MT has /yīšem/!).
- (46) ŠRP, "burn": Perf. /šōrōp/ (pausal, Lev. 10:16).
- (47) ŠGL, "lie with": Perf. /šuggalt/ (Jer. 3:2; *Q^orē* /šukkabt/).
- (48) ŠDD, "destroy": Perf. /šuddad/ (Isa. 15:1; Jer. 49:10, etc.); /šuddōdō/ (Jer. 4:20; Zech. 11:3); Imperf. /yuššad/ (Hos. 10:14); /tūšad/ (Isa. 33:1).¹⁶
- (49) ŠTP, "rinse": Perf. /šuttap/ (Lev. 6:21).
- (50) ŠYR, "sing": Imperf. /yūšar/ (Isa. 26:1).
- (51) ŠYT, "place": Imperf. /yūšat/ (Exod. 21:30).
- (52) ŠPK, "pour": Perf. /šuppak/ (Zeph. 1:17; Num. 35:33); /šuppōkō/ (Ps. 73:2; *Q^orē* /šuppōkū/).

The first fact that strikes our attention is that the verbs which have forms of the perfect aspect all exhibit a vocalization identical with the *Pu'al* theme. Occasionally this displays a *plene* writing with W for short /u/. The relevant examples are (12) /zunnō/, (21) /yullad/ (Judg. 18:29; Job 5:7), as likewise in the imperfect (48) /yuššad/ and /tūšad/. In two cases the middle radical, although neither a laryngeal, pharyngeal, nor /r/, is not doubled, but the vowel /u/ is lengthened: (8) /hōgō/ and (30) /nōpāh/.

¹⁶ So Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica*, 3rd ed. In some editions these forms are vocalized /yūšad/ and /tūšad/ respectively. It is apparent from the other geminating roots (3, 17, 19, 38) that the original forms were /yūšad/ and /tūšad/.

The second fact is that, with one exception, all imperfect forms are identical with those of the *Hoph'al* theme. The single anomaly is (1) /t^ə'ukk^əlū/, which has the form of a *Pu'al*, and may be a later, mistaken pronunciation. However, all other roots are initial W/Y, medial W/Y, initial N (L in the case of LQH), or geminating, and the initial consonant of 'KL may be responsible for the unusual vocalization (cf. the strange *Qal* form /t^ə'əklēhū/ in Job 20:26).

Six roots preserve participles which resemble those of the *Pu'al* without prefixed M (1, 13, 21, 26, 27, 44). A seventh, (23) /yūq^əšim/, is similar to a *Hoph'al* with initial Y in place of M. Contrasting with these are three exceptional forms identical with the *Pu'al*, viz. (19) /m^əħuqq^əq/, (27) /m^əmōr^ət/ (although the normal /mōr^ət/ occurs twice), and (41) /m^əqōr^ə'i/. The first might have acquired its prefix from an original enclitic M and the second by dittography, but the third is amenable to neither of these explanations. Perhaps the simplest solution is just to assume that scribes "corrected" the unusual forms to normal *Pu'al* participles. The lack of the prefix M is a characteristic of the *Qal* (and *Niph'al*) participle as distinct from those of the derived themes.¹⁷

The two forms identified as absolute infinitives (7, 10) resemble those of the *Pu'al* theme. The middle radical of the first example /hōgō/ is not doubled, but the preceding vowel is lengthened as in the case of the perfect forms /hōgō/ and /nōpāh/ discussed above.

It has been customary to regard most of the forms we have listed as either *Pu'al* or *Hoph'al*, but it would be strange indeed to find verbs exhibiting *Pu'al* perfects but *Hoph'al* imperfects, as the above evidence seems to indicate (22, 26, 48). Even more significant is the fact that twenty-nine of these verbs which have perfects resembling *Pu'al* forms (1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 36, 37, 39, 41, 42, 43, 47, 49, 52) do not possess a *Pi'el* theme. The few exceptions are: (21) YLD, which in the *Pi'el* has a causative meaning "act as midwife"; (40) QBR, the *Pi'el* of which has a plurative sense, unsuitable here; (46) ŠRP, which has a single instance of a doubtful *Pi'el* participle (spelled with S for Š! Amos 6:10); and (48) ŠDD, which exhibits *Pi'el* forms twice (Prov. 19:26, 24:15), but has a passive imperfect which cannot be *Pu'al*.

¹⁷ The form C^əCūC commonly regarded as the *Qal* passive participle is really an adjectival pattern pressed into service when the true participle was becoming obsolescent. Bergsträsser's claim (*Hebräische Grammatik*, vol. II, § 15) that the formation CiC.āC, e.g. /'ērōm/, "naked," and the unusually vocalized /zērū^ə*, "sown," is a rare alternative of the form C^əCūC is surely mistaken. It rather represents the Proto-Semitic nominal formation CaC.āC from which were derived such forms as /gibbōr/ and /šikkōr/.

The form (20) /tōraḫ/ might properly be regarded as the passive of a plurative *Pi'el*, even though such does not occur, but the use of a *Qal* absolute infinitive for emphasis before both of the examples quoted speaks against it. On the other hand, the form /ħupp^əšš/ (Lev. 19:20), which has been cited as a passive *Qal*, is surely *Pu'al*, the passive of an unrecorded factitive *Pi'el* meaning "free" from a stative root ḤPŠ, "be free."

Sixteen verbs with imperfects which resemble *Hoph'al* forms (1, 3, 5, 17, 19, 22, 26, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 48, 50, 51) lack the *Hiph'il* theme. The exceptions are: (16) ḤWL, the *Hiph'il* of which means "cause to be in anguish"; (24) YŠB, with a *Hiph'il* meaning "settle," and a corresponding *Hoph'al* with the sense "be made to dwell" (Isa. 5:8); and (45) ŠYM, which has doubtful *Hiph'il* forms in three passages (Ezek. 14:8, 21:21; Job 4:20).

When we examine the participles, six verbs (1, 19, 26, 27, 41, 44) have no *Pi'el*, and the seventh (23) lacks both *Pi'el* and *Hiph'il*. The two exceptions are (13) ZRW, which has both *Pi'el* and *Pu'al* in a plurative sense, with the normal participle /m^əzōr^ə/ (Prov. 1:17), and (21) YLD, which, as noted above, has a *Pi'el* with a special meaning. The first mentioned form /zōr^ə/ might be construed as an active *Qal* participle but for the fact that the meaning required is passive. The two verbs which furnish us with examples of the absolute infinitive (7, 10) likewise have no recorded instances of the *Pi'el* theme.

The preponderance of perfect over imperfect forms (32 to 19) would appear to be significant. Eight of the roots lacking passive *Qal* imperfects have *Niph'al* imperfects which differ from the passive *Qal* only in vocalization. These are the following: (6) DHW (Prov. 14:32; perhaps also the form /yiddāhū/ in Jer. 23:12); (9) HRG (Lam. 2:20; Ezek. 26:6);¹⁸ (18) ḤŠB (Job 19:24); (20) TRP (Exod. 22:12;¹⁹ Jer. 5:6); (27) MRT (Lev. 13:4of.); (46) ŠRP (Josh. 7:15; Prov. 6:27); (47) ŠGL (Isa. 13:16; Zech. 14:2); (49) ŠTP (Lev. 15:12; Dan. 11:22). Now, of those roots preserving *Qal* passive imperfect forms, all but 'KL are either geminating (3, 17, 19, 38, 48), with initial N (31, 32, 33, 34) or L (26), initial W/Y (22, 24), or medial W/Y (5, 16, 35, 45, 50, 51). Only in the case of 'KL or the initial W root YŠB could the consonantal skeletons of these forms be read as *Niph'al*. The conclusion is inescapable

¹⁸ The form /bēhōrēg/ (Ezek. 26:15), vocalized as a defectively written *Niph'al* construct infinitive, is generally regarded as a mispointed *Qal* infinitive, i.e. /bah^ərōg/.

¹⁹ Note that here too the emphasizing absolute infinitive appears in the *Qal* theme.

that the marked lack of *Qal* passive imperfect forms in strong roots is the result of their being read as *Niph'al* forms.

We may summarize the history of the passive *Qal* in Hebrew in the following way. The original perfect /*kutiba/ became /*kutaba/ on the analogy of the perfects of all other passive themes. The normal phonetic development of Hebrew would eventually have produced a form /*kōtab̄/, but such an evolution was arrested when the form ceased to be a living one and was "fossilized" at some period before the lengthening of pretonic vowels. The original short /u/ was retained by the Masoretes, as was the short /a/ of the *waw*-consecutive, in the only possible way, viz. by doubling the following consonant to produce /*kuttab̄/. This, of course, now meant that the form was indistinguishable from a *Pu'al*. The imperfect /*yuktabu/ by the same period had undergone the regular phonetic changes to become /*yuktab̄/ or even /*yoktab̄/, which presents the same pattern as a *Hoph'al*. The participle, originally /*kutabu/, also acquired a doubled consonant like the perfect, and after the usual sound changes became /*kuttōb̄/.

With the extension of the range of meaning of the *Niph'al* theme to include that of a passive for the *Qal* in place of the true *Qal* passive, the latter rapidly decreased in frequency. Leaving out of account the roots YLD, LQH, and NTN, which are relatively common, we observe that almost exactly twice as many of the passive *Qal* forms occur in poetry as in prose. This is to be expected in view of the well-known propensity of poetry to preserve archaic forms. It would be natural for readers of the unvocalized Hebrew text to interpret passive forms as *Niph'al* wherever possible. This was ruled out, of course, in the case of the perfect aspect (except with initial N roots), the participle, and the infinitive. The consonantal framework of the *Qal* passive imperfect, however, was indistinguishable from that of the *Niph'al* with the exception of roots having initial N or medial W/Y, or those which were geminating, and many original *Qal* passives are probably now concealed as *Niph'al* imperfects.