New Perspectives in Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew

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III-*Y* IMPERATIVES IN
ANCIENT HEBREW

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1.0. Introduction

The final vowel of the masculine singular (ms) imperative of
strong verbs in the *qal* and derived stems alternates between a
zero morpheme and -*ā*, e.g., זְכֹר 'remember!' (Exod. 32.13) vs.
זָכְרָה (Neh. 13.29), פַּלֵּט 'deliver!' (Ps. 32.7) vs. פַּלְּטָה (Ps. 17.13),
הִתְיַצֵּב 'station yourself!' (2 Sam. 18.30) vs. הִתְיַצְּבָה (Job 33.5).
Most weak verbal classes also show this alternation, e.g., שֵׁב 'sit!'
(Gen. 20.15) vs. שְׁבָה (Gen. 27.19), קוּם 'arise!' (Gen. 13.7) vs. קוּמָה
(Judg. 18.9), הַבִּיטָה 'look!' (Lam. 3.63) vs. הַבֵּט (1 Kgs 18.43). III-
y verbs in the derived stems, however, show a different alterna-
tion in the final vowel of the ms imperative, namely, a zero mor-
pheme and -*ē*.

Some III-*y* verbal roots appear in the derived stems with
short forms, some appear with long forms, and yet others show
up with both short and long, e.g., צַו 'command!' (Lev. 6.2) vs. צַוֵּה
(Josh. 4.16), or הַט 'stretch forth!' (Ps. 17.6) vs. הַטֵּה (Ps. 71.2).
Are there conditioning factors responsible for the choice of the
III-*y* forms or are short and long merely stylistic variants? In the
light of the conditioning factors that have been argued for the
employment of short and long imperative forms in the strong and

weak (non-III-*y*) verbs (see below §3), I propose to re-examine the distribution of the short and long imperative forms in III-*y* verbs in Biblical Hebrew and the other ancient Hebrew corpora in order to see what factors, if any, regulate their use.

2.0. History of Scholarship

Medieval and modern grammarians have noted the existence of two forms of the III-*y* ms imperative, but, with few exceptions, have not attempted (e.g., GKC, 214) to explain the difference in use and distribution. Ibn Janaḥ (Bacher 1896, 465) explained the lengthened form רַבֶּה 'multiply!' (Judg. 9.29) as צווי ליחיד והוא מצוה במאמר הזה על הנדיבות והחסד 'a singular imperative that indicates generosity and grace'. Elijah Levita wrote in his commentary to Moses Qimḥi's מהלך שבילי הדעת (1563, 74) on the inflection of III-*y* verbs:

> הצווי גלה כמו קוה אל יי' ותמהתי למה לא אמר או בחסרון ה"א גל כמו
> גל עיני ואביטה צו את בני ישראל 'the imperative גלה 'reveal' like
> קוה 'hope in the Lord' and I wonder why it is not defective
> without a *he* גל like the verse גל עיני ואביטה ('open my eyes
> that I may behold!' [Ps. 119.18]) or צו את בני ישראל 'com-
> mand the children of Israel!'

The Karaite grammarians, who considered the imperative to be the base of most verbal and some nominal forms (Khan 2000, 39), also noted that some verbs had two forms, of which the shorter one was apocopated from the longer (Skoss 1936–1945, II:503; Khan 2000, 188, 278, 352, 370; Vidro 2013, 276). They did not, however, address the question of whether there

was a difference in meaning or in use between the III-*y* ms imperatives.

In the modern period Ewald (1870, 588) thought that the vocalisation with *ṣere* was more poetic and Aramaic. Brockelmann (*GvG*, I:628) viewed the short forms as older inherited imperatives and those with final -*ē* as new formations on the analogy of the imperfect. Bauer and Leander (1922, 414) attributed the existence of long and short forms of צַו/צַוֵּה and הֶרֶב/הַרְבֵּה to the merging of the III-*y* and III-*w* classes and considered the final *ṣere* (for expected *ḥireq*) in the derived conjugations to be the result of analogy to the *qal* imperative. Lambert (1931–1938, 371–72, 374) was of the opinion that there was no clear distinction in use between צַו/צַוֵּה and הֶרֶף/הַרְפֵּה, but wondered if the long forms צַוֵּה, קַוֵּה, and רַבֶּה (Judg. 9.29) were for marking entreaty, as he believed was the case with the lengthened imperative צֵאָה 'go out!', which followed רַבֶּה in the verse. Lipiński (2001, 357) commented that צַו/צַוֵּה as well as יְצַו/יְצַוֶּה represent graphic and dialectal differences, but did not offer an explanation. According to Qimron (2018, 173, 235 n. 234, 252) the short forms found in Ben-Sira and the Dead Sea Scrolls reflect spoken speech during the Second Temple Period. In the most recent treatment of the subject, Suchard (2020, 135–36) concurs with Brockelmann and the consensus that the short imperatives are the historically inherited forms. Suchard views the long forms in the derived verbal stems as the result of analogy with *qal* forms.[1]

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[1] See also Suchard (2017, 213–17).

3.0. Biblical Hebrew

Qal III-*y* imperatives show no fluctuation: there are only long forms, all of which end in *ṣere*.[2] Attested imperatives include גְּלֵה 'uncover!' (Ezek. 12.3), הֱיֵה 'be!' (also וֶהְיֵה; 13x), וַחְיֵה 'live!' (Gen. 20.7; Prov. 4.4; 7.2), מְחֵה 'erase!' (Ps. 51.3, 11), מְנֵה 'count!' (2 Sam. 4.21), נְטֵה 'stretch out!' (11x), עֲלֵה 'ascend!' (39x), עֲנֵה 'answer!' (Mic. 6.3; Prov. 26.5), עֲשֵׂה 'do!' (62x), קְנֵה 'acquire!' (20x), רְאֵה 'see!' (84x), רְדֵה 'have dominion' (Ps. 110.2), וּשֲׁבֵה 'take captive!' (Judg. 5.12), שְׁתֵה 'drink!' (8x). Only one *nifʿal* verb is attested and it is also with -*ē*: הֵרָאֵה 'show yourself!' (1 Kgs 18.1). The two examples of *hitpaʿel* imperatives are both short and without a final vowel: הִתְחָל 'feign illness!' (2 Sam. 13.5), הִתְגָּר 'contend with!' (Deut. 2.24).

It is in *piʿel* and *hifʿil* verbs that one finds fluctuation. Both short and long forms are found with the following verbs:

הַט 'stretch forth!' (Ps. 17.6; 119.3; 144.5; Prov. 4.20; 5.1; 22.17) vs. הַטֵּה (2 Kgs 19.16; Isa. 37.37; Ps. 31.3; 71.2; 86.1; 88.3; 102.3; Dan. 9.18)

הַךְ 'strike!' (Exod. 8.12; 2 Kgs 6.18; 13.18; Ezek. 21.19; Amos 9.1; Zech. 13.7) vs. הַכֵּה (Ezek. 6.11)

צַו 'command!' (Lev. 6.2; 24.2; Num. 5.2; 28.2; 34.2; 35.2; Deut. 2.4; 3.28; 2 Kgs 20.1; Isa. 28.10, 13; 38.1) vs. צַוֵּה (Josh. 4.16; 1 Kgs 5.20; Ps. 44.5)

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[2] Richard Steiner (2020) has recently argued that אֶת־ in the notoriously difficult אֶת־וָהֵב בְּסוּפָה (Num 21.14) is a short ms imperative 'come!' from the root את״י.

הֶרֶב 'increase!' (Judg. 20.38; Ps. 51.4 *qere)* vs. הרבה (Ezek. 24.10; Ps. 51.4 *ketiv*)

הֶרֶף 'let go!', refrain!' (Deut. 9.14; 1 Sam. 11.3; 15.16; 2 Sam. 24.16; Ps. 37.8; 1 Chron. 21.15) vs. הַרְפֵּה (Judg. 11.37; 2 Kgs 4.27)

The *hifʿil* ms imperative of על"י is attested with a short form three times: הַעַל 'bring up!' (Exod. 8.1; 33.12; Num. 20.25). There is one possible example of the long form: הַעֲלֵה עֲלֵיהֶם קָהָל וְנָתֹן אֶתְהֶן לְזַעֲוָה וְלָבַז 'Bring up a mob against them and make them an object of horror and plunder!' (Ezek. 23.46), though some prefer to take the verb as an infinitive absolute (e.g., BDB, 749a).[3]

Only short forms are found with the following *piʿel* verbs: גַּל 'uncover!' (Ps. 119.18; 22); חַל 'entreat!' (1 Kgs 13.6); מַן 'appoint!' (Ps. 61.8); נַס 'test!' (Dan. 1.12). On the other hand, only long forms show up with the *piʿel* verbs חַכֵּה 'wait!' (Hab. 2.3), כַּלֵּה 'consume!' (Ps. 59.14 [2x]; 74.11); קַוֵּה 'hope!' (Jer. 8.15; 14.19; Hos. 12.7; Ps. 27.14 [2x]; 37.34; Prov. 20.22); רַבֶּה 'enlarge!' (Judg. 9.29; with *segol* for expected *ṣere*). Another possible example is רַוֵּה in תְּלָמֶיהָ רַוֵּה נַחֵת גְּדוּדֶיהָ 'Saturate its furrows, lower

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[3] No morphological difference between the infinitive absolute and long form of the ms imperative is expected in *hifʿil* III-*y* verbs: both end in -*ē*. One should also bear in mind that the infinitive absolute overlaps in function with the imperative at the beginning of a clause, e.g., זָכוֹר אֶת־יֹום הַשַּׁבָּת 'Remember the Sabbath day!' (Exod. 20.8). Those who prefer to analyse הַעֲלֵה as an infinitive absolute do so because of parallelism to the infinitive absolute וְנָתֹן in the continuation of the verse.

its ridges!' (Ps. 65.11), though it is generally interpreted as an infinitive absolute 'saturating' (and 'lowering'; e.g., BDB, 924a).[4]

Are there conditioning factors at play? Different possibilities come to mind. In the case of the two forms of the ms imperative of the strong verb, קְטֹל and קָטְלָה, I believe the longer ones are marked forms indicating that the action is directed towards the speaker or for his benefit, whereas the short forms are usually used when the action is directed towards someone else (Fassberg 1999), e.g., תְּנָה־לִּי 'give me!' (Josh. 14.12) but וְתֶן־לוֹ 'and give him!' (Josh. 7.19). This conditioned used is evident from the fact that the longer imperatives are more often than not followed by particles and nouns with the 1 s. and pl. suffix pronouns, e.g., הַגִּשָׁה לִּי 'serve me!' (Gen. 27.25), הַנִּיחָה אוֹתִי֫ 'let go of me!' (Judg. 16.26), מָלְכָה עָלֵינוּ 'rule over us!' (Judg. 9.8 *qere*), שִׂימָה־לָּנוּ 'give us!' (1 Sam. 8.5), מַלְּטָה נַפְשִׁי 'save my life!' (Ps. 116.4). Further proof is found in the use of the long imperatives לְכָה, הָבָה, and קוּמָה as exhortations before verbs in first-person cohortative forms, in which the speaker includes himself in the performance of the action (Mann 1954), e.g., הָבָה נִלְבְּנָה לְבֵנִים 'let us make bricks!' (Gen. 11.3), לְכָה נִכְרְתָה בְרִית 'let us make a covenant!' (Gen. 31.44), קוּמָה | וְנָשֻׁבָה 'let us return!' (Jer. 46.16). On the other hand, a pragmatic conditioning factor of respect and politeness on the part of inferiors when addressing superiors has been argued for the long forms by some scholars (Lambert 1931–

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[4] Like רְוֵה the form נַחֵת, can be taken as a *piʿel* imperative or infinitive absolute. See n. 2 above.

1938, 255–57; Kaufman 1991, 198),[5] and others have spoken of stylistic variants (GKC, 132; Joüon 1923, 108–9; Waltke-O'Connor 1990, 571) or emphasis (Ewald 1870, 583; Meyer 1992, 221).

Do any of these interpretations fit the data of verbs III-*y*? As for direction towards the speaker, all eight occurrences of הַטֵּה are found involving direction to the speaker (2 Kgs 19.16; Isa. 37.17; Ps. 31.3; 71.2; 86.1; 88.3; 102.3; Dan 9.18), but הַט is also attested in a similar context in five of the six occurrences (Ps. 17.6; 119.36; Prov. 4.20; 5.1; 22.17; but not in Ps. 144.5). There does not seem to be direction towards the speaker with the other verbs.

As for being a polite form, צַו is used when God addresses Moses (Lev. 6.2; 24.2; Num. 5.2; 28.2; 34.2; 35.2; Deut. 3.28) and when Isaiah turns to Hezekiah in the name of God (2 Kgs 20.1 = Isa. 38.1), whereas צַוֵּה is employed by God in speaking to Joshua (Josh. 4.16), Solomon to Hiram (1 Kgs 5.20), and man to God (Ps. 44.5). הַךְ is used when God speaks to Moses (Exod. 8.12), Ezekiel (Ezek. 21.19), Amos (Amos 9.1), and a prophet (Zech. 13.7), and it is also used when Elisha addresses Joash, king of Israel (2 Kgs 13.18); הַכֵּה is attested when God turns to Ezekiel (Ezek. 6.11). הֶרֶף is found in the speech of God when talking to Moses (Deut. 9.14), God turning to a messenger (2 Sam. 24.16 = 1 Chron. 21.15), the elders of Jabesh to Naḥash the Ammonite (1 Sam. 11.3), and Samuel to Saul (1 Sam. 15.16); הַרְפֵּה occurs when

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[5] For discussions of politeness strategies in Biblical Hebrew, see, e.g., Estelle (2012) and Morrison (2013). Jenni (2002) proposes a further twist to the politeness strategy and suggests that the speaker adopts the long form when acknowledging the right of the addressee to refuse.

Jephthah's daughter speaks with her father (Judg. 11.37), and Elisha with his servant (2 Kgs 4.27). הַטֵּה is spoken by man to God (2 Kgs 19.16; Isa. 37.17; Ps. 31.3; 71.2; 86.1; 88.3; 102.3; Dan. 9.18); הַט is also uttered by man to God (Ps. 17.6; 119.36; 144.5) as well as by a father to a son (Prov. 4.20; 5.1; 22.17). In short, it does not appear that either interpretation, direction to the speaker or politeness, applies to III-*y* imperatives.

Is the choice of form dependent upon the collocation? צַו אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל is common to Lev. 24.2; Num. 5.2; 28.2; 34.2; 35.2. There is no such collocation with צַוֵּה. הַט־אָזְנְךָ occurs in Ps. 17.6; Prov. 4.20; 5.1; and 22.17, yet הַטֵּה אָזְנְךָ (אֵלַי) can be seen in Ps. 31.3; 71.2; 88.3; 102.3; הַטֵּה ה' אָזְנְךָ is found in 2 Kgs 19.16; Isa. 37.17; and Ps. 86.1; and הַטֵּה אֱלֹהַי | אָזְנְךָ in Dan. 9.18. The short form is attested with another part of the body: הַט־לִבִּי (Ps. 119.36). Due to the limited number of III-*y* ms imperatives, it is difficult to say more about the possibility of other collocations.

Further analysis of the data, however, hints at possible chronological conditioning. In those cases where there is a short and long pair of the masculine singular, the long form is absent from the Pentateuch and is attested only in the Prophets and the Writings. This suggests that the long form became more frequent as time went by.[6] That is not to say, however, that the short form

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[6] According to most biblical scholars, the Pentateuch was the first section of the Hebrew Bible to have crystallized. Therefore one may generally assume that its language is also older than that found in the Prophets and the Writings. This is certainly true when looking at the language of the exilic and post-exilic books. See Fassberg (2012, 173–74).

is restricted to the Pentateuch. Prosodic factors probably played a role in the choice of form, particularly in poetic contexts.

4.0. Other Ancient Hebrew Corpora

4.1. Epigraphic Hebrew

Inscriptional material from the First Temple period yields no unequivocal examples of ms III-*y* imperatives. Although graphically interpretable as imperatives, the following forms have been taken contextually as 3 ms perfect forms: ועת.הטה[ע]בדכ [ל]בה 'and now your servant has inclined his heart' (Arad 40.4); ועת.הנ.עשה.אדני 'and now behold my lord has done' (Arad 21.3); כן.עשה.עבדככתבתיעלהדלת 'thus did your servant. I wrote on the door/sheet' (Lachish 4.3). Another example, עשדרככ 'make your way!', has been interpreted by Lemaire and Yardeni (2006, 197–98) and Aḥituv (2012, 201) as a defective spelling for the *qal* imperative עֲשֵׂה, but by Bloch (2014) as the *piʿel* imperative עַשׂ, which is unattested in the Hebrew Bible.

4.2. Ben Sira

The book of Ben Sira contains a number of III-*y* imperatives. All *qal* imperatives, as expected, are long: דמה 'be like!' (38.5 MS B), היה 'be!' (4.10 MS A + 9x), חזה 'see!' (37.7 MSS B and D), נהה 'yearn for!' (38.16 MS B), ענה 'answer!' (5.12 MSS A and C; 9.14 MS A), עשה 'do!' (14.16 MS A; 51.30 MS C), ראה 'see!' (6.36 MS A + 3x), רעה 'graze!' (34.15 MS B; 38.16 MSS B and D), שנה 'repeat!' (33.6 MS B). There is one *nifʿal*, which is long: היעצה 'seek counsel!' (4.28; < י"עצ). Three short forms of *piʿel* verbs are attested: כל 'finish!' (35.8 MS B; as opposed to MT כַּלֵּה Ps. 74.11),

נס 'test!' (37.27 [2x], cf. MT נַס Dan. 1.12) and פת 'entice!' (30.23 MS B; there are no biblical occurrences of the ms). There are also two long forms: קוה 'hope!' (6.19 MSS A and C + 2x) and שנה 'change!' (33.6 MS B). As for *hifʿil* verbs, the short form of נט"י is attested three times, all in collocations containing parts of the body: הט לעני אזנך (4.8 MS A), הט שכמך ושאה 'bend your shoulder and carry her' (6.25 MS A), and והט אזנך תוסר 'and if you incline your ear, you will be disciplined' (6.33 MS A). Qimron (2018, 173 n. 52) believes there is an additional example in הרב 'increase!' (30.38 MS E), though the reading is not certain. There might be one short *hitpaʿel* imperative, if the proposed reading and reconstruction by Ben-Ḥayyim are correct: הֹ[ת]רֹעֹ 'make friends!' (11.1 MS A; Ben-Ḥayyim 1973, 281; so, too, Qimron 2018, 173 n. 52).

4.3. Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran

One finds in the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran both short and long forms. In the biblical scrolls the imperatives correspond almost always to those attested in the Masoretic Text (Qimron, 2018, 173 n. 51). In the non-biblical manuscripts, the forms usually echo those found in biblical collocations. Here are the Qumran attestations:

> גל עיני :גל   (4QPs[h] [4Q90] 1–2, 18 = Ps. 119.18; 11QPsa[a] [11Q5] VII, 4 = Ps. 119.18)
>
> הטא ה' אוזנכה :הט/הטה (1QIsa[a] XXX, 22 = הַטֵּה Isa. 37.17); הטה אלי אוזנכה הט אוזנכה (4QPs[a] [4Q83] 9 II, 6 = Ps. 71.2); (11QPsa[a] [11Q5] XXIV, 4 = Ps. 144.3); הט שמיכה (11QPsa[a] [11Q5] XXIII, 15–16 = Ps. 144.5)

והתחל :התחל (4QSamª [4Q51] 102 I, 12 = 2 Sam. 13.5)

הך הכפ[תר] (CD XIX, 8 = Zech. 13.7); הך את הרעה :הך
(4QXIIᵍ [4Q82] 65–68, 6 = Amos 9.1); הך ארצה (PAM
43.682 l.2 = 2 Kgs 13.18)

חך אתי :חך (4QTobᶜ [4Q200] 4, 7; cf. חַכֵּה Hab. 2.3)

וה[על א]ת הצפרדעים :העל (4QExodʲ [4Q20] 1–2, 4 = Exod.
8.1)

צו את בני ישראל (4QJubᶠ [4Q221] 4, 3); צו את בני [ישראל] :צו
(4QRPᶜ [4Q365] 23, 4 = Lev. 24.2); צו את [בני ישראל
(4QLev–Numª [4Q23] 34 II, 47 = Num. 5.2); צוי לביתכה
(1QIsaª XXXI, 21 = צַו Isa. 38.1)

הרבה כבסני :הרבה (4QPsᶜ [4Q85] 15 II–16, 32 = Ps. 51.4
ketiv); הרבה [(4QPsʲ [4Q91] f8, 4–5 = Ps. 51.4)

הרף מאף ועזוב חמה :הרף (4QpPsª [4Q171] 1–2 II, 1 = Ps.
37.8)

Possible additional examples that occur in poorly preserved con-
texts include

הטה [ברוב שכל גלה אוזננו (4QPapRit Pur B [4Q512] 106, 1);
(4QMystª [4Q299] 8, 6; perfect?); והרבה רחמי[ו] (4QBarkhi
Nafshiª [4Q434] 1 I, 7; adverb הרבה?).

4.4. Other Sites in the Judean Desert

In the Judean Desert material from between the First and Second
Jewish Revolts, there are two poorly preserved examples from
biblical texts: הט[ה? אלי אוזנך] (5/6Ḥev 1b 13 II, 5 = Ps. 31.3) and
הך הכ[פ]ת[ר] (Mur 88 VIII, 7 = Amos 9.1). Other instances are

attested in the Bar Kosiba letters and only with the *qal* verb הו"י: הוא שלום 'be well!' (Mur 44.8); והוי שלום (Mur 46.11); אהוה שלום (Mur 42.7; the *ʾalef* is apparently an error); הוא שלום (Mur 48.6); הוא ש[ל]ם (Yadin 49.14). This imperative form is taken by many to be Aramaic and not Hebrew, as are the instances of הו"י in Biblical Hebrew, Samaritan Hebrew, and Tannaitic Hebrew (Mor 2016, 158 nn. 855–57).

4.5. Samaritan Pentateuch

There are no short imperatives in the oral tradition of the Samaritan Pentateuch. All forms in all stems end in a final *-i*, e.g., *ēli* 'ascend!' (Samaritan Pentateuchal written tradition עלה Gen. 35.1 = MT עֲלֵה), *ʿalli* העל (העל Exod. 33.12 = MT הַעַל). MT צַו 'order!' (e.g., Deut. 2.4) is realized as *ṣābi* (in the written tradition צוי), and MT הַךְ 'strike!' (Exod. 8.12) as *wakki* (written tradition והכה; Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 186–87). The III-ʾ verbs מל"א 'fill' and קר"א 'call' follow the inflection of III-*y* verbs:[7] *mēli* (מלא Gen. 44.1 = MT מַלֵּא), *målli* (מלא Gen. 29.27 = MT מַלֵּא), *qēri* (קרא Deut. 31.14 = MT קְרָא). The originally III-*y* verb *nēṭå* (נטה 'stretch forth!' נטה Exod. 7.19 = MT נְטֵה) always (11x) ends with an *a*-vowel, for it appears to have been treated as if from the root נט"ע or נת"ח, the Samaritan Targum equivalent of נט"י (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 146).

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[7] Signs of the merger of verbs III-ʾ and III-*y* can be found already in Classical Biblical Hebrew (GKC, 206). The phenomenon increases in the Second Temple period, as seen in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Kutscher 1974, 343) and particularly Tannaitic Hebrew (Segal 1927, 90). The merger of III-ʾ and III-*y* is a salient feature of Aramaic.

arrəf (הרף Deut. 9.14 = MT הֶ֫רֶף) is derived in the Samaritan tradition from רפ"פ (Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 186 n. 139).

4.6. Secunda

Two imperatival forms are attested in the Secunda of the Hexapla, both of which correspond to the Masoretic Text (Brønno 1943, 100): αίη (הֱיֵה Ps. 30.11; 31.3); εττη (הַטֵּה) Ps. 31.3).

4.7. Tannaitic Hebrew

Tannaitic Hebrew evidences the long forms in all stems (Segal 1927, 92; Haneman 1980, 385–87), e.g., צוה (t. Ber. 6.13). Examples of short forms usually occur only in biblical quotes, e.g., הרף ממני ואשמידם 'let me alone so that I will destroy them' (Sifre 27, citing Deut. 9.14), הט אזנך ושמע 'incline your ear to hear!' (Seder Olam Rabba, citing Prov. 22.17). An exception is הַעַל 'bring up!', which is attested in הַעַל את הפירות האלו לירושלם לחלק 'bring up these fruits to Jerusalem to distribute!' (m. Maʿaser Sheni 3.1; t. Shev. 6.23).

5.0. Conclusion

The distribution of long and short forms of the ms imperative of III-*y* verbs does not correspond to the conditioning factors that have been suggested for the short and long forms of the ms imperative of strong verbs and most weak verbs. The data from ancient Hebrew sources seem to indicate that the later the text, the greater the chance that one will find in it long ms III-*y* imperative forms in the derived conjugations. This is the case in the later books of the Hebrew Bible, in the oral tradition of the Samaritan

Pentateuch, and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In Ben Sira one finds two short forms unattested in Biblical Hebrew as well as an unattested long form.

It has been suggested by Qimron that the existence of short ms III-*y* imperative forms in Ben Sira and the Dead Sea Scrolls is proof that the short forms were used in speech in the Second Temple period. This interpretation of the data should be viewed in the light of Qimron's general approach that the orthography of the Dead Sea Scrolls should often be taken at face value and may represent the *ipsissima verba* of the Qumran community. Such an explanation of the written data, I believe, underestimates the role of written classicisms in the Hebrew of the Second Temple period, a period when writers tried and, on the whole, succeeded in imitating the Hebrew of the First Temple period (Kutscher 1974, 31). Scribes knew the classical biblical system and generated new forms that were unattested in writings from the First Temple period. At times they were guilty of pseudo-classicisms (Joosten 1999). The existence of III-*y* short forms in Second Temple Period texts does not prove that Hebrew speakers continued to generate short forms in speech. It does prove, however, that they continued to write them.

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