

The Historical Depth of the Tiberian Reading Tradition of Biblical Hebrew

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Cover image: T-S AS 8.129. A leaf from a Cairo Geniza biblical codex containing Gen. 30.17–20 and showcasing Moshe Mohe's non-standard Tiberian pointing of the standard Tiberian pronunciation of *Issachar* (see within, ch. 4), courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

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10. NIFALISATION

A well-known example of ancient Hebrew historical development involves the realignment of verbal stems. Over time, many G-stem (*qal*) verbs were replaced by synonymous cognates in other stems (*binyanim*). The present chapter focuses specifically on the shift from G- to N-stem (*nif^cal*). This process, which is here termed *nifalisation*, was neither wholesale nor haphazard. Rather, it was limited chiefly to originally *qal* verbs with stative, medio-passive, reflexive, or more broadly intransitive semantics, including *qal* internal passive forms. The process often resulted in suppletive paradigms, sometimes with only vestigial *qal* representation.

The phenomenon of nifalisation is especially characteristic of Second Temple chronolects—such as LBH, DSS Hebrew, SH, the Hebrew of BS, and RH—though the extent and specific manifestations in each varies. Since a large portion of the Tiberian biblical reading tradition’s crystallisation took place in the Second Temple Period, it is not surprising that nifalisation is also detectable in the Tiberian vocalisation of classical biblical material, specifically in deviations of the Tiberian reading tradition from the consonantal text. Even so, it must be emphasised that Tiberian vocalisation also preserves evidence of resistance to nifalisation and that shifts from *qal* to *nif^cal* are not exclusively late, but extend back into presumably early Tiberian consonantal biblical material.

1.0. Second Temple Evidence

1.1. Tiberian Late Biblical Hebrew

The shift away from medio-passive *qal* and *qal* internal passive is seen in developments that characterise Tiberian LBH as contrasted with Tiberian CBH.

1.1.1. כש"ל 'stumble'

Consider the example of apparent suppletion involving *qal* כָּשַׁל and *nif'al* יָכַשַׁל 'stumble'. On the surface, BH seems to exhibit an indiscriminate mixture of *qal* and *nif'al*, e.g.,

- (1) וַיִּשְׁרָאֵל וְאֶפְרַיִם יָכַשְׁלוּ בְּעוֹנָם כָּשַׁל גַּם־יְהוּדָה עִמָּם:
'...Israel and Ephraim **stumble** in their guilt; Judah **has** also **stumbled** with them.' (Hos. 5.5)
- (2) בְּעֵת־פְּקֻדָּתָם יָכַשְׁלוּ אָמַר יְהוָה: ...לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הִנְנִי נֹתֵן אֶל־הֵעָם
הַזֶּה מְכַשְׁלִים וְכַשְׁלוּ בָם...
“...at the time that I punish them, **they will stumble**,” says the LORD. ...“Behold, I will lay before this people stumbling blocks **and they will stumble** against them...” (Jer. 6.15, 21)

Upon closer inspection, however, a situation of suppletion emerges in CBH. Forms are vocalised as *nif'al* unless the consonantal spelling is not amenable, in which case *qal* forms are preserved. It is only in LBH that the written tradition ‘catches up with’ the vocalisation and one encounters a comparative proliferation of consonantally unambiguous *nif'al* forms, e.g., וְנָכְשְׁלוּ ‘and they will fail’ (Dan. 11.14; see also Dan. 11.19, 33) and וְכִבְּשָׁשׁוּ ‘and when they stumble’ (Dan. 11.34). This trend continues in QH and RH (see below, §2.1.1; see further Khan 2020, I:58).

1.1.2. *Qal* Internal Passive > *Nif^cal*

Another LBH manifestation of nifalisation is replacement of *qal* internal passive with *nif^cal*.¹ A useful example involves forms of the *qal* internal passive יָלַד 'be born'. These appear throughout the Bible—Torah, Prophets, Writings²—but are rare in LBH (where the sole case, in 1 Chron. 1.19, was likely imported from Gen. 10.25). Conversely, consonantly unambiguous *nif^cal* alter-

¹ A succinct account of the disappearance of the *qal* internal passive is given by Fassberg (2001, 254):

One finds in the literature two related explanations for the disappearance of the *Qal* internal passive. The first is phonetic: at a certain stage, Hebrew phonology no longer tolerated a short vowel (in this case *u* in **qutal*) in an open pretonic syllable. The *u*-vowel, which was the marker of the passive, could be maintained only in a closed syllable; the closing of the syllable was accomplished by secondarily geminating the following consonant. The resulting form with geminated second radical became identical to the *Pu^cal* and hereafter was interpreted as *Pu^cal*. In the case of the imperfect, forms like יִלְדוּ and יִלְדֻּן were reanalyzed as *Hof^cal* forms with regressive assimilation of the first radical: **yuntan* > *yuttan* and **yulqah* > **yuqqah*.

The second reason is morpho-semantic: *Nif^cal*, which may have been originally reflexive in Hebrew, began to take on a passive meaning as well, thus rendering the *Qal* internal passive redundant.

See Fassberg (2001, 254) for bibliographical references.

² Gen. 4.26; 6.1; 10.21, 25; 24.15; 35.26; 36.5; 41.50; 46.22, 27; 50.23; Judg. 18.29; 2 Sam. 3.5; 21.20, 22; Isa. 9.5; Jer. 20.14–15; 22.26; Ps. 87.4–6; 90.2; Job. 5.7; Ruth 4.17; 1 Chron. 1.19.

natives, like *qatal* נולד and infinitival הולד, preponderate conspicuously in LBH.³ Consider the parallels:

(3a) אלה ילדי לדוד בחברון...

‘**These were born** to David in Hebron’ (2 Sam. 3.5)

(3b) ששה נולד-לו בחברון...

‘**Six were born** to him in Hebron’ (1 Chron. 3.4)

and

(4a) וגם-הוא ילד להרפה...

And he, too, **was born** to the Rapha (2 Sam. 21.20)

(4b) וגם-הוא נולד להרפא...

And he, too, **was born** to the Rapha (1 Chron. 20.6)

Likewise, while unambiguous spellings of both *qal* internal passive יתן and *nif'al* ינתן ‘will be given (3MS)’ come in CBH texts, LBH texts have only *nif'al* forms, the *qal* internal passive forms having fallen away. Indeed, more generally in the late corpus consisting of Qohelet, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, Hughes (1994, 76, fn. 20) counts just four cases of the *qal* internal passive, יקשיט ‘are snared’ (Qoh. 9.12), אכלו ‘have been consumed’ (Neh. 2.3, 13), and the aforementioned inherited ילד ‘were born’ (1 Chron. 1.19 || Gen. 10.25). See further Reymond (2016, 1138); Qimron (2018, 221).

³ Beyond the infinitival forms in Gen. 21.5 and Hos. 2.5, occurrences of finite and infinitive forms are limited to LBH: Qoh. 4.14; 7.1; 1 Chron. 2.3, 9; 3.1, 4; 20.6; 26.6. Not unrelated are the *nuf'al* forms parallel to more classical alternatives in 1 Chron. 3.5 || 2 Sam. 5.14 and 1 Chron. 20.8 || 2 Sam. 21.22.

1.2. Dead Sea Scrolls Hebrew

1.2.1. Late Nifalisation

DSS Hebrew shows continuity of the LBH features listed above, most notably, consonantally unambiguous forms, such as נכשלו 'stumbled (3MP)' (CD 2.17; 4Q266 f2ii.17) and נולדה 'she was born' (4Q215 f13.4; see also 11Q19 40.6). It also furnishes the earliest unequivocal consonantal evidence of the *nif^cal* morphology for the Tiberian suppletive verb יָגֵשׁ-נָגַשׁ 'approach', in the form בהגגשו 'when he approaches' (4Q512 f40–41.2) (see below, §§1.3.6; 2.1.2).

1.2.2. *Qal* Internal Passive > *Nif^cal*

Additionally, *nif^cal* יתן 'will be given (3MS)' is employed to the exclusion of *qal* internal passive יתן. Indeed, the NBDSS present no clear-cut cases of the *qal* internal passive.⁴ Reymond (2016, 1139–40) lists many DSS Hebrew alternatives for MT *qal* internal passive forms. Qimron (2018, 222) observes that DSS Hebrew develops a *nif^cal* נשלם* 'be fulfilled, completed' (infinitival forms at 1QS 10.6; 4Q256 19.5; 4Q270 f3ii.21; 4Q385 f11i.3) corresponding to MT stative *qal* שָׁלַם*.

⁴ According to the tagging in Abegg's (1999–2009) QUMRAN Accordance module, תִּגַּע (4Q417 f1i.23) is *qal* internal passive, but Qimron (2020, II:148) reads the form as תִּיַּע 'do (not) touch'.

1.3. Samaritan Hebrew⁵

As a biblical tradition characterised by pervasive Second Temple linguistic evolution, it is no surprise that SH also documents the shift in question. Indeed, though transmitting a literary tradition likely rooted in the Iron Age, SH presents a relatively advanced stage of nifalisation compared to other ancient Hebrew traditions. Yet, the Samaritan picture is complicated by several factors. First, like the Tiberian biblical tradition, the linguistic testimony of the SP is composite. It comprises related, but partially independent written and reading components. Crucially, as regards both nifalisation and other linguistic developments, the two components of the tradition present historically distinct stages. Second, while SH both confirms and exceeds the nifalisation seen in several other Second Temple Hebrew traditions, it also evinces *qal* forms reminiscent of pre-Tiberian Hebrew.

Brushing aside cases of local divergence in which SH *nif^cal* forms differ from Tiberian *qal* counterparts due to textual and/or interpretive factors not representative of broader trends, more pervasive Samaritan nifalisation manifests in several ways.

1.3.1. Comprehensive Nifalisation

First, there are Tiberian *qal* verbs with forms amenable to *nif^cal* recasting that are consistently read as *nif^cal* in SH. These are the broadly stative, reflexive, intransitive, and weakly transitive verbs in the following list.

⁵ For a study focused on nifalisation in the Samaritan biblical tradition, see Hornkohl (2022).

דָּבַק 'cling', דָּגָה 'multiply', חָגַר 'gird', חָזַק 'be/become strong', כָּבֵד 'be/become heavy', כָּבָה 'go out, be extinguished (of fire)', *מָעֵט 'be small', סָחַר 'travel about, engage in trade', סָרַח 'hang over (of a covering)', *עָבַט 'give/take collateral (for a loan)', צָנַף 'wrap one's head (with a turban)', קָצַר 'be/become short', רָעַב 'be hungry', שָׁכַח 'forget', שָׁכַר 'become drunk', שָׁקַע 'die down, be extinguished (of fire)'

Many such verbs are rarely attested, but a few of the more frequent have conspicuously suppletive paradigms in SH. These include the parallels to Tiberian חָזַק 'be/become strong', סָחַר 'traffic, travel about, engage in trade', and שָׁכַח 'forget'. Forms amenable to reinterpretation—especially in the prefix conjugation—are realised as *nif'al*, whereas other forms—in the suffix conjugation, participles, imperatives, infinitives—remain *qal*. In these cases, no perceptible semantic shift accompanies the morphological shift. Such realignments often tally with late Aramaic use of Dt-stem forms, as seen in the Targums and/or Syriac.

חז"ק

Consider the suppletive relationship of SH G-stem חָזַק $\bar{a}z\bar{a}q$ (5) and N-stem וַיְחַזֵּק $wiyy\bar{a}z\bar{a}q$ (6), which occur in successive verses:

- (5) וכל הארצות באו מצרימה לשבר אל יוסף כי חזק (MT || $\bar{a}z\bar{a}q$) חזק
הרעב בכל הארץ:

‘And all the nations came to Egypt to buy food from Joseph, because the famine **was severe** in all the land.’ (Gen. 41.57; see also Gen. 47.20; Exod. 19.19; Deut. 12.23; 31.6, 7, 23)

- (6) והרעב היה על פני כל הארץ ויפתח יוסף את כל אשר בהם בר וישביר
למצרים ויחזק (MT || $wiyy\bar{a}z\bar{a}q$) הרעב בארץ מצרים:

‘And the famine had spread over all the land and Joseph opened everything in which there was grain and he sold to Egypt and the famine **was severe** in the land of Egypt.’ (Gen. 41.56; see also Exod. 7.13, 22; 8.15; 9.35; 12.33; Deut. 11.8)

1.3.2. Partial Formal Nifalisation

In the case of the verb מאן ‘refuse’, SH presents a suppletive paradigm composed of *nif'al* prefix conjugation and *pi'el B* suffix conjugation, participle, and infinitive (see below, ch. 12, §2.1).

1.3.3. Partial Nifalisation for Grammatical/Semantic Disambiguation

In other cases where the Tiberian tradition makes do with *qal* forms with varying valency and/or semantics, SH seems to exploit nifalisation for purposes of grammatical and/or semantic disambiguation. Consider the case of the SH counterpart to Tiberian דבק ‘cling’ in examples (7)–(9) (see Hornkohl 2021a, 6–7).

- (7) (על כן יעזוב איש את אביו ואת אמו וירבק MT || *wdābāq*)
באשתו והיה משניהם לבשר אחד:

‘Therefore a man will leave is father and his mother **and cling** to his wife and it will become from them one flesh.’
(Gen. 2.24; Deut. 28.60/61⁶)

- (8) ותדבק (וּתִדְבֶּק MT || *wtiddābāq*) נפשו בדינה בת יעקב ויאהב את
הנערה וידבר אל לב הנערה:

‘And his soul **was drawn** to Dina the daughter of Jacob and he loved the girl and he spoke tenderly to her.’ (Gen. 34.2; see also Num. 36.7, 9; Deut. 10.20; 11.22; 13.5, 18)

The passages cited in examples (7) and (8) represent suppletion similar to that discussed above: morphologically ambiguous *yiqṭol* forms originally in *qal* could be recast as *nif^{al}*, while *qaṭal* forms preserve *qal* morphology, because their orthography leaves no room for *nif^{al}* analysis.

- (9) MT || *wlēddābēqa* ולדבקה לקדבקה) בו...
‘loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice **and holding fast** to him,...’ (Deut. 30.20a)

Example (9) demonstrates that nifalisation could affect even forms ill-suited to *nif^{al}* analysis, such as the infinitive ולדבקה *wlēddābēqa*, whose original *qal* form is preserved in MT ולדבקה.

⁶ The distinction in number between the verb form in the two traditions entails different subject referents. The SP’s singular verb refers across the verse boundary to the singular subject כל חלי ‘every illness’ in the previous verse.

- (10) הנה נא מצא עבדך חן בעיניך ותגדל חסדך אשר עשית עמדי לחיות את נפשי ואנכי לא אוכל להמלט ההרה פן תִּדְבָּקִינִי (MT || *tidbāqinni*) תִּדְבָּקִינִי (הרעה ומתי:
 ‘Behold, your servant has found favour in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster **overtake me** and I die.’ (Gen. 19.19)

Finally, example (10) testifies to the fact that the shift from G- to N-stem in the case of this verb is not one of mere formal suppletion, but was also evidently exploited for morphosemantic disambiguation. Here, the sole prefix conjugation form of דבק that retains *qal* morphology is strongly transitive (taking an object suffix) and semantically dynamic (‘to overtake’ rather than just ‘cling to’). The rest of the SH prefix conjugation forms of this verb, i.e., those mentioned in (8) and (9), all take objects with ב- and have stative semantics.

Similar morphosemantic disambiguation obtains in the cases of the SH equivalents of Tiberian *qal* עָבַט ‘take collateral/lend, give collateral/borrow’, כָּבַד ‘be/become heavy’, חָגַר ‘gird’, and קָצַר ‘be/become short’ (see Hornkohl 2021, 5–6).

1.3.4. Nifalisation Resulting in *Nif^{al} B*

Alongside its standard *nif^{al}*, SH has a second N-stem (Ben-Hayyim 2000, 117–18). The so-called *nif^{al} B* is a hybrid that incorporates components of the N- and Dt-stems. It has both *nif^{al}* orthography and the middle radical gemination characteristic of *hitpa^{al}*, thus partially resembling RH *nitpa^{al}* (see below, §1.5). The resemblance is not total, because crucial to the reinterpretation of *qal* forms as *nif^{al} B* was the routine assimilation of the -t-

infix in some Second Temple Aramaic and Hebrew dialects, such as SA, Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, and RH, according to which *hitpa*^{‘el}/*nitpa*^{‘el} > *hippa*^{‘el}/*nippa*^{‘el} (Ben-Hayyim 2000, 117–18; Bar-Asher 2016, 209–10). An original *qal* form was not amenable to reinterpretation as a *hitpa*^{‘el}/*nitpa*^{‘el} due to the mismatch involving the absence or presence of infix *-t-*. Conversely, the *nif*^{‘al} *B* realisation of original *qal* forms faced no such obstacle, as the *-t-* infix had assimilated, resulting in a form with geminated first and second radicals. Originally *qal* prefix forms and the like could easily be pronounced as *Nif*^{‘al} *B* forms.

The Tiberian counterparts of these SH *nif*^{‘al} *B* forms consistently show *qal* morphology, whereas in SH their paradigms are suppletive: *qal* is read where necessary, *nif*^{‘al} *B* where possible. Again, the Targums also sometimes resort to dedicated middle Dt morphology. Relevant Tiberian verbs with Samaritan *nif*^{‘al} *B* parallels include *qal* גָּבַר ‘prevail’ and קָשָׁה ‘be hard, severe’, and both *qal* בָּלָה ‘finish (intr.)’ and *pu*^{‘al} בָּלָה ‘be finished’, in which all prefix conjugation forms were levelled to *nif*^{‘al} *B* (Hornkohl 2022, 7–9). Consider the Samaritan equivalents to *qal* suffix conjugation גָּבְרוּ and prefix conjugation וַיִּגְבְּרוּ in examples (11) and (12).

(11) חמש עשרה אמה מלמעלה גָּבְרוּ MT || *gēbēru* (גָּבְרוּ) המים יכסו וההרים:

‘The waters **prevailed** above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep.’ (Gen. 7.20; see also Gen. 7.19; 49.26)

(12) וַיִּגְבְּרוּ MT || *wyiggābbāru* (וַיִּגְבְּרוּ) המים על הארץ חמשים ומאת יום:

‘**And** the waters **prevailed** on the earth 150 days.’ (Gen. 7.24; see also Gen. 7.18)

In contrast to the G-stem paradigmatic consistency in the Tiberian tradition, the SH verb has a suppletive paradigm. *Nif^{al}* is read where possible, *qal* where consonantal form precludes *nif^{al}* analysis. TO resorts to dedicated medio-passive Dt-stem verbs in select cases, e.g., MT גָּבַרְוּ (Gen. 49.26) || TO יִתְּסַפֵּן; MT וְגָבַר... וְגָבַר (Exod. 17.11) || TO מִתְּגַבְרִין... מִתְּגַבְרִין.

1.3.5. *Qal* Internal Passive > *Nif^{al}*

A phenomenon partially related to nifalisation is the well-known replacement of the *qal* internal passive with alternatives, a process more pronounced in SH than in Tiberian Hebrew. Tiberian *qal* passive גָּנַב is twice paralleled by orthographic *nif^{al}* alternatives, not just in the reading component of the Samaritan tradition, but in the written component, as well (Gen. 40.15; Exod. 22.6).⁷ Nifalisation, however, is not the usual SH alternative to Tiberian *qal* internal passive. Among the more common strategies are the *qal* passive participle (parallel to Tiberian *pa^{ul}*), the 3MPL *qal* impersonal, and active interpretation.

1.3.6. Conditioned *Qal* Preservations

Despite the comparatively advanced stage of nifalisation it displays, SH also exhibits conditioned, and possibly secondary, *qal* forms parallel to Tiberian *nif^{al}* forms. These are suggestive of pre-Tiberian Hebrew. For example, the Tiberian verb נָשַׁב is fa-

⁷ Interestingly, while the Samaritan written tradition has apparently *nif^{al}* נִגְבַּחְתִּי (Gen. 40.15) and וְנִגְבַּח (Exod. 22.6) against the Tiberian *qal* internal passives גָּנַבְתִּי and וְנִגְבַּח, respectively, the Samaritan reading tradition differentiates between *nif^{al}* *niggānābtī* and *nif^{al}* *B wniggānāb*.

mously suppletive: *nif^{al}* wherever the consonantal text allows, i.e., suffix conjugation (שָׁנָה) and participle (שֹׁנֶה); *qal* where consonantal form precluded *nif^{al}* recasting, i.e., prefix conjugation (שָׁנָה), infinitive construct (שֹׁנֶה), imperative (שָׁנָה/שֹׁנֶה) (see below, §2.1.2). For its part, the Samaritan verb is uniformly *qal*, including suffix conjugation (*nāḡāš*) and participle (*nēḡāš*).

On the one hand, a unified שָׁנָה*-שֹׁנֶה *qal* paradigm, as in SH, is precisely what has been hypothesised for pre-Tiberian Hebrew. On the other, it must be emphasised that the apparent Samaritan preservation of *qal* is conditioned, since Samaritan I-*n* consonantal forms are not amenable to *nif^{al}* phonology. This is true not just of the prefix conjugation, where—as in Tiberian Hebrew—only those I-*n* forms that preserve a first radical *nun* are eligible for *nif^{al}* realisation, but also of the suffix conjugation and certain forms of the participle.⁸ This is because—unlike in Tiberian Hebrew—1st-radical gemination applies throughout the Samaritan *nif^{al}* paradigm, which would yield such forms as prefix conjugation **yinnāḡāš*, suffix conjugation **ninnāḡāš*, and verbal participle **ninnāḡāš*, none of which suit their respective consonantal spellings, i.e., שָׁנָה, שֹׁנֶה, and שֹׁנֶה.⁹

⁸ In SH this secondary gemination applies only to participles with verbal semantics; participles with nominal semantics preserve the inherited morphology without gemination (Ben-Hayyim 2000, 193).

⁹ Other weak roots for which SH regularly has *qal* against Tiberian *nif^{al}* include נָמַל/מָל 'circumcise'; נָפַץ/פָּץ 'scatter'; נָסַב/סָבַב 'surround'; נָבַד/דָּבַד 'be confused'; נָמַל/מָל 'melt'; נָמַס/מָסַס 'melt'; נָמַק/מָקַק 'rot'; נָחַת/חָתַת 'be dismayed'.

1.4. Ben Sira

Despite unmistakable indications of the late linguistic milieu that it represents, the language of BS is remarkably classical. In terms of the phenomenon of nifalisation here under discussion, however, BS shows unmistakable affinities with other late Hebrew corpora.

1.4.1. *Qal* > *Nif^{al}* in the Case of Medio-passive Semantics

First, several Tiberian medio-passive *qal* verbs find *nif^{al}* alternatives in BS. These include נדבק ‘cling’ (SirB 3v.14) (Dihi 2004, 162–65), נדעך ‘go out (of fire), be extinguished, uprooted’ (Mas1h 2.5; SirB 10r.7), and נחכם ‘be wise’ (SirB 7v.13; SirC 4v.3; SirD 1v.9; SirD 1v.10) (Dihi 2004, 162–65), though BS’s classical penchant is displayed in the continued use of *qal* דבק and חכם.¹⁰

1.4.2. *Qal* Internal Passive > *Nif^{al}*

Second, despite the classical mien of BS’s Hebrew, the corpus attests to only highly equivocal cases of potential *qal* internal passive forms (Reymond 2016, 1142–50). Moreover, some of the more common BH *qal* internal passive forms go unused in BS in favour of *nif^{al}* alternatives, such as נלקח ‘was taken (MS)’ (SirB 13v.18; 17v.13; 19r.4) and ינתן ‘will be given (MS)’ (SirA 6r.28 || SirB 2v.1 [margin]; SirC 6r.3).

¹⁰ In Tiberian BH the verbs in question are almost exclusively *qal*, the lone exception being נדעכו ‘they dry up, disappear’ (Job 6.17).

1.5. Rabbinic Hebrew

RH is well known for several processes subsumed in this study under the heading nifalisation.

1.5.1. *Qal* > *Nif'al* in the Case of Stative and Medio-passive Semantics

It has already been mentioned that RH joins LBH and DSS Hebrew in the attestation of consonantly unambiguous *nif'al* infinitive וְבִהְקֶשְׁלוֹ 'and when he stumbles' (m. ³Avot 4.19), matching the *nif'al* vocalisation of MT וּבִהְקֶשְׁלוֹ (Prov. 24.17), in opposition to its *qal* consonantal orthography.¹¹ Additional cases of RH *nif'al* || MT *qal* include אָבַד 'be/become lost, die', אָרַךְ 'be/become long', and חָסַר 'lack' (Bendavid 1967–1971, II:483).

1.5.2. *Qal* > *Nitpa'al*

Especially typical of RH is replacement of medio-passive *qal* with *nitpa'al* (often in conjunction with movement of active *qal* > *pi'el*; see below, ch. 12, §1.5). This is evident in such verbs as נִתְחַמֵּךְ 'become leavened' (m. Ṭevul Yom 3.4), נִתְמַלֵּא 'become full' (e.g., m. Yoma 5.1 || MT Isa. 6.4), נִתְרַחֵק 'be distant, avoid' (m. Sanhedrin 3.4; m. ³Avot 2.9), and נִשְׁתַּתֵּק 'be mute' (m. Giṭṭin 7.1). These contrast with the Tiberian consonantal tradition, which

¹¹ It is worth noting that such authentic nifalisations in reliable Mishna manuscripts are often, due to a biblicising tendency, replaced in printed editions with *qal* forms. For example, the Eshkol (2000) version of the Mishna reads וּבִהְקֶשְׁלוֹ in m. ³Avot 4.19 in agreement with MT Prov. 24.17 and against Kaufmann's וְבִהְקֶשְׁלוֹ. I am grateful to Geoffrey Khan for reminding me of this matter.

prefers *qal* forms for the relevant semantic values. Turning to the *qal* internal passive—aside from biblical allusions, it is generally absent from RH (Sharvit 2004, 45; Reymond 2016, 1141, fn. 37).¹²

2.0. The Tiberian Reading Tradition of Classical Biblical Hebrew Texts

Since the Tiberian reading tradition crystallised in the Second Temple Period, it is not surprising that nifalisation is also detectable in the oral realisation (vocalisation) of classical, i.e., ostensibly First Temple biblical material, specifically in secondary deviations in the Tiberian pronunciation tradition from the pronunciation implied by the written tradition.

2.1. Partial Nifalisation of Intransitive Verbs

2.1.1. כש"ל 'stumble'

A clear case involves the aforementioned shift of *qal* כָּשַׁל > *nif'al* נִכְשַׁל 'stumble' (§§1.1.1; 1.2.1). As noted above, consonantly unambiguous *nif'al* forms, especially in the suffix conjugation, have a conspicuously late distribution. Yet, *nif'al* vocalisation is not restricted to LBH, but is routine in CBH, too. This is because, unlike their suffix conjugation counterparts, the ambiguous conso-

¹² Biblical allusions include the phrase וְכִי יָתֵן (וְכִי) 'but if water is put' (Lev. 11.38) in m. Makhshirin (e.g., 1.1, 2 [4x], 3, etc.) and תִּנּוֹר וְכִירִים יִהְיֶה 'and oven or stove will be smashed' (Lev. 11.35) in m. 'Avoda Zara 3.9. Beyond such allusions, the sole possible case in MS Kaufmann is הִיזִיל (m. Bekhorot 1.2), but the reading is doubtful (see *Ma'agarim* s.v.).

nantal prefix conjugation form, initially *qal*—יִכְשֹׁל* or יִכְשֹׁל*—was amenable to reanalysis as *nif'al*—יִכְשֹׁל—in line with Second Temple linguistic trends, as manifested in the LBH written tradition, DSS Hebrew, and RH. It is noteworthy that the *nif'al* reanalysis extended even to consonantal forms ill-suited to reanalysis, e.g., the infinitive construct וּבְכַשְׁלוֹ ‘and when he stumbles’ (Prov. 24.17), which, despite lacking the consonantal *heh* characteristic of a *nif'al* infinitive construct, is vocalised as *nif'al* וּבְכַשְׁלוֹ rather than *qal* וּבְכַשְׁלוֹ*. The *nif'al* morphology matches not just the aforementioned LBH consonantal *nif'al* forms, including infinitival וּבְהִכָּשְׁלָם (Dan. 11.34), but also DSS Hebrew נִכְשֹׁל (CD 2.17; 4Q266 f2ii.17), and—pointedly—RH וּבְהִכָּשְׁלוֹ (m. 'Avot 4.19), which is a citation of MT וּבְכַשְׁלוֹ ‘and when he stumbles’ (Prov. 24.17), with orthography updated to match *nif'al* pronunciation.

2.1.2. נִגַּשׁ ‘approach’

Likewise, the aforementioned suppletion between *qal* prefix conjugation נִגַּשׁ (Exod. 24.14), infinitive construct מִנְּגִשֶׁת (Exod. 34.30), and imperative נִגַּשׁ/נִגְשׁ (2 Sam. 1.15; Gen. 19.9), on the one hand, and *nif'al* suffix conjugation נִגְשָׁה (Exod. 33.7) and participle הַנִּגְשָׁה (Exod. 19.22), on the other, is probably due to reanalysis where allowed by the written forms (see above, §§1.2.1; 1.3.6). Significantly, the earliest unambiguous consonantal evidence matching the *nif'al* vocalisation is found in Second Temple DSS Hebrew: בְּהִנְגָּשׁוֹ ‘when he approaches’ (4Q512 f40–41.2).

2.2. *Qal* Internal Passive > *Nif'al*

Similarly, in the Tiberian reading tradition, the replacement of *qal* internal passive with *nif'al* nearly always occurs except where

spelling precludes it (Böttcher 1866–1868, I:98–105; Barth 1890; Lambert 1900; Blake 1901, 53–54; Ginsburg 1929; 1934; 1936 Williams 1977; Hughes 1994, 71–76; Sivan 2009, 50–51; Raymond 2016).¹³ Consider the matter of *qal* infinitives absolute with cognate *nif'al* finite forms in the so-called tautological construction. In several cases of *qal-nif'al* mismatch, the consonantally ambiguous *nif'al* finite form possibly conceals a *qal* passive, e.g., סָקוּל יִסְקָל 'he/it will surely be stoned' (Exod. 19.13; 21.28); עָנָשׁ יֵעָנֵשׁ (Exod. 21.22); גָּנַב יִגָּנֵב (Exod. 22.11); טָרַף יִטָּרַף '(if) it is torn in pieces' (Exod. 22.12).

The special affinity concerning nifalisation between the Tiberian reading tradition and Second Temple consonantal traditions is borne out in the data. In Table 1, consider the earliest consonantal evidence for each of seven¹⁴ *qal* internal passive *qatal*

¹³ For the analysis of *qal* internal passive forms as *hof'al* and *pu'al* forms as part of the processes of hifilisation and pielisation, see below, chs 11 and 12.

¹⁴ Williams includes the *ketiv* verb שָׁגַל*, whose reconstructed oral realisation can only be conjecture. Rare in the Bible, the verb is even rarer in post-biblical material. On the relative antiquity of the *qere*, see above, ch. 3, §1.3.

Excluded from Williams's list is *nif'al* נִקְבַּר 'be buried'. This may be due to the D-stem passive classification of קָבַר 'was (were) buried' (Gen. 25.10). Since D-stem קָבַר* 'bury en masse' (Num. 33.4; 1 Kgs 11.15; Jer. 14.16; Ezek. 39.14–15; Hos. 9.6) has pluractional semantics, which are arguably lacking in the context in question, the form is more likely to be a *qal* internal passive (see below, ch. 12, §3.0, fn. 18). Moreover, the absence of any consonantally unambiguous biblical evidence for *nif'al* נִקְבַּר 'be buried'—for which all representative forms are in the prefix conjugation—coupled with the fact that unambiguous consonantal evidence of *nif'al* נִקְבַּר 'be buried' is not extant until RH (m. Mo'ed Qaṭan

forms with corresponding *nif^{al} yiqtol* forms as listed by Williams (1977, 49).

Table 1: Earliest unambiguous consonantal evidence of *nif^{al}* morphology of suppletive Tiberian verbs with *qal* internal passive *qaṭal* forms and *nif^{al} yiqtol* forms

Verb and Gloss	Second Temple Reference
דָּחָה 'push, drive'	BS 13.21
הָרַג 'kill'	43Q372 f3.12; Tannaitic Hebrew (Mishna)
הָעֵב 'hew'	Tannaitic Hebrew (Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael, Mekhilta Devarim)
סָרַף 'pluck'	Bar Kokhva (XHev/Se30 f1R.7), Tannaitic Hebrew (Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael, Mekhilta deRabbi Shimon ben Yokhai)
מָרַט 'polish'	Tannaitic Hebrew (Mishna, Sifra, Tosefta)
שָׂרַף 'burn'	Tannaitic Hebrew (Mishna, Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael, Sifra, Seder Olam Rabba, Sifre Bemidbar)
שָׁטַף 'rinse'	Tannaitic Hebrew (Sifra, Sifre Bemidbar, Sifre Devarim)

2.3. *Nippa^{al}/Hippa^{al}* (< *Nitpa^{al}/Hitpa^{al}*) < *Nif^{al}*

There is one further affinity between the Tiberian and Samaritan reading traditions worthy of emphasis in this connection: the occurrence of *nif^{al} B*, that is the N-stem pattern with geminated middle radical common in SH and late Aramaic dialects (see above, §1.3.4), which is not unrelated to RH's characteristic *nitpa^{al}* (above, §1.5.2). Tiberian vocalisations of this sort are relatively rare. In the case of some Masoretic forms, the vocalisa-

3.9; m. Bekhorot 1.6; m. Temura 7.4–6), entails the possibility that many, if not all, of the apparent *nif^{al}* forms conceal original *qal* internal passives.

tion reflects a *nitpa^{el}/nif^{al} B* analysis (with gemination in first and middle radical), though the spelling is amenable to simple *nif^{al}* interpretation, e.g., וְתִשָּׂא ‘and (his kingdom) will be exalted’ (Num. 24.7); וְנִבְכָּר ‘and (the blood guilt) will be atoned for’ (Deut. 21.8); וְנִסְרֹו ‘and (all women) should take warning’ (Ezek. 23.48); תִּכְסֶּה ‘(hatred) will be covered’ (Prov. 26.26); וְיִשָּׂאוּ ‘(and the sons of the violent of your people) will rise up’ (Dan. 11.14); וַיִּשָּׂא ‘so he was exalted’ (2 Chron. 32.23); several of these come in exilic or post-exilic material. In a few cases, however, suffix conjugation forms in texts from no earlier than the Exile cannot be read as *nif^{al}*, and are more plausibly interpreted as *hitpa^{el}* forms with assimilated *tav*: הִנְבִּיאוּ ‘they prophesied’ (Jer. 23.13); וְהִנְחֵמְתִּי ‘and I will be satisfied’ (Ezek. 5.13); וְהִנְבִּיאתִי ‘and I prophesied’ (Ezek. 37.10). Clearly, these probable consonantal *hitpa^{el}* forms with assimilated *tav* lend credence to the vocalisation of the preceding apparently *nitpa^{el}* forms (see below, ch. 13, §2.1).

3.0. Iron Age Epigraphy and the Tiberian Classical Biblical Hebrew Written Tradition

Though many *nif^{al}* readings of otherwise ambiguous consonantal forms are probably secondary, a crucial consideration is that the use of *nif^{al}* and, therefore, the potential for nifalisation, were not restricted to post-exilic times. In other words, while the association between nifalisation and Second Temple Hebrew is meaningful, it is not exclusive. There are also indications of early nifalisation, specifically in classical consonantal evidence.

3.1. Early *Nif'al* Usage

Especially important in this connection are early *nif'al* forms that are primary derivations rather than instances of secondary nifalisation of originally *qal* forms. From Iron Age inscriptions, consider the *nif'al* imperative השמר 'take care!' (Lachish 3.21) and the infinitive להנ[קב] 'to be he[wn]' (Siloam 1.2).¹⁵ While the former is analysable as semantically middle, the latter would seem to be medio-passive.

Turning to BH, in the case of many common orthographically unequivocal *nif'al* verbs, *qal* counterparts are rare or even non-existent. Thus, נָפַרַד 'separate (intr.)' has consistent *nif'al* spelling and vocalisation throughout BH. Likewise, though a vestige of *qal* שָׁאַר 'remain' (1 Sam. 16.11) is once attested in CBH, the synonymous *nif'al* נִשְׁאַר is unambiguously represented in all biblical chronolects.¹⁶

3.2. *Qal* Internal Passive > *Nif'al*

The same holds true for the *qal* internal passive's replacement by *nif'al*. There is ample early unambiguous consonantal evidence of

¹⁵ N-stem נאנח 'groan' occurs in the eighth-century Deir Alla inscription (see *KAI* 312 B.12).

¹⁶ It is worth noting that such distributions of medio-passive, reflexive, and/or intransitive *nif'al* forms with rare or unattested *qal* cognate synonyms are common. Limiting the discussion to verbs found in MT Genesis, cases of verbs with unambiguous *nif'al* consonantal forms in the Bible include יָאֹת 'be willing', נִבְהַל 'fear', נֹתַר 'remain', נִחְבֵּא 'hide', נִכְמַר 'be hot', נִכְסֵף 'yearn', נִלְוֶה 'join', נִמְלֹט 'take refuge', נִסְתַּר 'hide', נִפְלֵא 'be wonderful', נִשְׁבַּע 'swear', נִשְׁחַת 'be destroyed', נִשְׁמַד 'be destroyed', נִשְׁעַן 'lean'. In many of these cases, the corresponding transitive form is *hif'il*.

nif'al semantically equivalent to *qal* internal passive, e.g., גִּלְקָה (the Ark of God) has been taken' (1 Sam. 1.4, etc.; cf. לָקַח, יָנַח ' (straw) will (not) be given' (Exod. 5.18; 2 Sam. 21.6 *ketiv*; cf. יָנַח). In light of this evidence, the *nif'al*'s eclipsing of *qal* internal passive should be seen as a process that was already underway in the Iron Age, only reaching its conclusion in the Second Temple Period.

Given the antiquity of *nif'al*'s association with middle and medio-passive semantics, along with the gradual pace of language change, it stands to reason that cognate *qal* internal passive and *nif'al* forms might have coexisted over an extended period of time. Hughes (1994, 74–75) has sought to discern semantic and syntactic differences in CBH, before the *qal* internal passive fell out of use. He argues that in some cases the *nif'al* serves as an intransitive against the strictly passive force of the *qal* internal passive, but the pervasiveness of this distinction is questionable. As such, the possible co-occurrence of *qal* internal passive and passive *nif'al* forms, even in close proximity, should not be dismissed. Consider examples (13).

- (13) וְכִי־יִכֶּה אִישׁ אֶת־עַבְדּוֹ אוֹ אֶת־אִמָּתוֹ בַּשֶּׁבֶט וּמֵת תַּחַת יָדוֹ נָקָם יִנָּקֶם: אֵד
אִם־יוֹם אוֹ יוֹמִים יַעֲמֹד לֹא יִקָּם כִּי כֶסֶף הוּא:

'When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a rod and the slave dies under his hand, **he shall be avenged**. But if the slave survives a day or two, **he is not to be avenged**, for the slave is his money.' (Exod. 21.20–21)

There seems no reason to doubt the authenticity of the stem diversity between the *qal* infinitive absolute and *nif'al* finite cognate in the tautological construction נָקָם יִנָּקֶם 'he should surely be

avenged' (Exod. 21.20) or between the aforementioned *nif^cal* and the following verse's *qal* passive יָקַם 'he will (not) be avenged' (Exod. 21.21).

A similar consideration applies to the contrasting cognate forms in bold in example (14).

- (14) וַיְהִי כְעֵבְרִים וְאֶלְיָהוּ אָמַר אֶל-אֵלִישָׁע שְׂאֵל מִה אֶעֱשֶׂה-לָּךְ בְּטָרִם אֶלְקָח
מֵעַמְּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִישָׁע וַיְהִי-נָא פִּי-שְׁנַיִם בְּרוּחְךָ אֵלַי: וַיֹּאמֶר הַקְּשִׁיתָ לְשֹׂאֵל
אִם-תִּרְאֶה אֹתִי לִקְחָה מֵאִתְּךָ יְהִי-לָּךְ כֵּן וְאִם-אֵין לֹא יִהְיֶה:

'When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before **I am taken** from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me **being taken** from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so."' (2 Kgs 2.9–10)

The morphological diversity of the neighbouring *nif^cal* אֶלְקָח 'I am taken' (2 Kgs 2.9) and *qal* passive participle לָקַח 'being taken' (2 Kgs 2.10) indicates the chronological coexistence of the two forms.

Similar stem diversity may also be original in cases such as *qal* passive יָתַן (Num. 26.54) and nearby *nif^cal* נָתַן eight verses later (Num. 26.62)—though the total absence of *qatal* יָתַן* raises suspicions. While many cases of *qatal* נָתַן may not involve dissonance between the consonants and vocalisation, at least some probably reflect original יָתַן* reread as *nif^cal*.

Finally, consider the preservation of *qal* internal passive יָתַן 'let there be given' in the *qere* of 2 Sam. 21.6 against the apparently synonymous *nif^cal* יָתַן in the *ketiv*. Hughes (1994, 76) opines:

In this instance it seems likely that the Qere has preserved the original reading, providing an interesting contrast to the normal pattern of revocalisation. Here, the process of replacing *qal* passive forms by niph'al forms has affected the consonantal text, but has not affected the Masoretic reading tradition.

This may be correct. Yet, it bears emphasising that the shift to *nif'al* in the written tradition allegedly responsible for the *ketiv-qere* dissonance may well reflect truly ancient diversity in the combined Tiberian written and reading tradition. In other words, given evidence for the coexistence of the *qal* internal passive and *nif'al*, this may be a genuine instance of early textual fluctuation.

3.3. Early Nifalisation of Participial Forms

Returning to the previously discussed *qal* > *nif'al* shifts נולד > ילד 'be born' and נָפַשׁ > נָפַשׁ 'stumble'—while unambiguous consonantal evidence of N-stem finite and infinitival verbal forms is limited chiefly to late material, the relevant N-stem participles—with consonantally unambiguous forms—are attested in CBH sources. It may be relevant that forms such as הַנּוֹלְדִים 'the ones born' (Gen. 48.5; see also Gen. 21.3; 1 Kgs 13.2) and הַנֶּפְשִׁים 'feeble ones' (1 Sam. 2.4) have nominalised adjectival, rather than truly eventive semantics. Such substantival and descriptive participle functions, conveying characteristics rather than actions, perhaps proved fertile ground for the initial *nif'al* encroachment into semantic values formerly belonging to *qal*.¹⁷ Even so, the

¹⁷ I am grateful to my friend and colleague Geoffrey Khan for a helpful conversation on this point. Not unrelatedly, Khan (2020, I:80) raises the possibility that the *nuf'al* < *nif'al* shift in the realisation of Chronicles'

Iron Age epigraphic and CBH usage of unambiguous consonantal *nif^{al}* forms with eventive and actional semantics (see above, earlier in this section) confirms that the transparent middle marking of intransitive, medio-passive, and passive verbs via nifalisation is not exclusively late, but can legitimately be characterised as an Iron Age process the effects of which became most perceptible in Second Temple Hebrew.

4.0. Conclusion

It has often been claimed that secondary developments in the reading component of the Tiberian tradition that was wedded to the CBH written component are due to anachronistic, post-biblical impositions of RH onto BH (Lambert 1900; Ginsberg 1929; 1934; 1936; see also Blau 2010, 213–14), “[b]ut the discoveries of the Qumran texts and subsequent research on Second Temple Hebrew show that many of the later features underlying the vocalisation existed already in the Second Temple period” (Joosten 2015, 30). In the specific case of nifalisation, affinities between the Tiberian reading tradition, on the one hand, and the LBH written tradition, DSS Hebrew, SH, the Hebrew of BS, and RH, on the other, demonstrate that the linguistic development in question had taken place long before the Masoretes engaged in the preservation and transmission of the tradition in the Middle Ages.

Jeremy Hughes discussed the Tiberian secondary vocalisation shift from *qal* internal passive to *nif^{al}* in a study entitled

נִלְדָּו ‘were born’ (1 Chron. 3.5; 20.8) reflects an interpretive distinction according to which *nuf^{al}* was considered more eventive than *nif^{al}* in the case of the root ל"ד.

“Post-Biblical Features of Biblical Hebrew Vocalisation.” Notwithstanding the provocative title, Hughes (1994, 75–76) offers a remarkably nuanced summary on the relevant process of nifalisation:

First, it represents a continuation of a process which had begun in classical biblical Hebrew, where the niphāl conjugation replaced the *qal* passive conjugation as the normal syntactic passive of most verbs. Secondly, this process was also continued in late biblical Hebrew, where the niphāl conjugation replaced the *qal* passive conjugation as the normal syntactic passive of *all* verbs. [emphasis in the original]

The most revealing element in Hughes’s summary is the pronounced continuity between the Tiberian reading tradition and both CBH and LBH. Given the already advanced stage of the shift in LBH, there is arguably no reason to class the Tiberian reading tradition’s penchant for nifalisation a ‘post-biblical’ feature of vocalisation. Rather, this proclivity for *nifāl* seems very much in line with LBH conventions, though it also preserves features lost in more representative forms of Second Temple Hebrew, like LBH, DSS Hebrew, SH, BS’s Hebrew, and RH. This all points to the plausibility of a theory whereby the Tiberian reading tradition crystallised around the time that the LBH texts were being written. If so, it may be expected to preserve a great deal of authentic First Temple detail along with evidence of secondary development rooted in Second Temple linguistic drift.