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The Verb in Classical Hebrew
The Linguistic Reality behind the Consecutive Tenses

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8. DID THIS BOOK ACHIEVE ITS AIM? A SUMMARY

The aim of this book was formulated in §1.1. The aim was to explain and clarify:

1. why *wa* has two formal variants (*wə-* and *way-*) in the Masoretic text;
2. the status of the short *yiqṭol* (with both past and jussive meanings) as a separate verbal morpheme distinct from long *yiqṭol*;
3. how long *yiqṭol* was distinguished from short *yiqṭol*;
4. why *qaṭal* came to alternate with the inherited *wayyiqṭol*;
5. why *wa-qaṭal* acquired imperfective meanings and came to alternate with the inherited long *yiqṭol* (< **yaqtulu*);
6. the linguistic reality behind *wa* in the 'consecutive tenses'.

(1) The origin of the two variants of *wa*, and the origin of the gemination of the prefix consonant in *wa(y)-yiqṭol*, was clarified already in Isaksson (2021a) and further treated in §1.2.5, §2, and §7.1 of this book. The distinction achieved by the gemination was introduced into the reading tradition probably as early as the Second Temple period. But in the living language of Classical Hebrew, the conjunction *wa* was pronounced *wa* in all positions, jussive *wa-yiqṭol* and indicative (perfective) *wa-yiqṭol* were homophonous, and *we-qaṭal* was pronounced *wa-qaṭal*.

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(2) The status of the short *yiqṭol* in CBH was treated in Isaksson (2021a) and §3 of this book. The short *yiqṭol*, both the jussive and the perfective past, was inherited from Proto-Semitic.

(3) The distinct identity of the short *yiqṭol(Ø)* was upheld by restrictions of word order in affirmative clauses. An imperfective *yiqṭol(u)* must have internal position in the clause (§3.4.3). The morphological contrast between *yiqṭol(Ø)* and *yiqṭol(u)* was upheld in CBH when applicable (§3.4.1).

(4) The verbal morpheme *qaṭal* in CBH was inherited from West Semitic, and partly took over the anterior and perfective functions of the Proto-Semitic perfective *yaqtul*. The only indicative use of the short *yiqṭol* that was retained in CBH was in the extremely frequent continuity clause-type *wa(y)-yiqṭol*. This resulted in a type of syntax where discourse-discontinuity *qaṭal* clauses 'alternate' with continuity *wa(y)-yiqṭol* clauses (§5.5). The linking patterns of this alternation were further treated in §7.

(5) Why and how *wa-qaṭal* acquired imperfective meanings was discussed in §6, where Geoffrey Khan's proposal that *wa-qaṭal* is a construction in Bybee's (2010; 2015) sense was adopted and developed. The *wa-qaṭal* clause-type came to fill an empty syntactic slot in CBH: the absence of the continuity clause-type *wa-yiqṭol(u)*, which had become obsolete in CBH because of its partial homonymy with *wa-yiqṭol(Ø)* and ensuing word order restrictions (§3.4.3). This is the reason why the imperfective discourse continuity *wa-qaṭal* came to alternate with discontinuity *(wa)-X-yiqṭol(u)* clauses. The linking patterns were further treated in §7.

(6) Finally, the linguistic reality behind *wa* in the 'consecutive tenses' was investigated in §7. The old theory of consecutive tenses is essentially a theory of the linking of clauses in CBH on the textual level. Foreground alternates with background and this alternation is coded by an alternation between discourse-continuity clauses and discontinuity clauses in patterns that create an intricate textual web. For the details of this web, see §7. I have shown that there is no special 'consecutive *waw*'; rather, there is one natural language connective *wa* in CBH. I have also shown that *wa(y)-yiqṭol* and *wa-qaṭal* are not 'tenses', but clause-types. Finally, I have shown—and this is in part based on the old theory—that a discourse-continuity clause in CBH is of the type *wa-V(X)*, where *wa* is a normal natural language connective (cf. §2.1 and §7.1), and *V* is a finite verb (a following clausal constituent *X* is optional).

After all this, as a corollary, we can conclude that the term 'consecutive' is uncalled for in the grammatical description of Classical Biblical Hebrew.