Diachronic Diversity in Classical Biblical Hebrew

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5. *QAL* INTERNAL PASSIVE VERSUS *NIFʿAL* MORPHOLOGY

Over the course of its history, ancient Hebrew underwent many morphological developments. One such development was a long, gradual, and increasingly pervasive process of reorganisation of derivational verbal morphology involving stem (*binyan*) movement, whereby many formerly G-stem (*qal*) verbs were transferred by language users to alternative stems, primarily N-stem (*nifʿal*), D-stem (*piʿʿel*), and C-stem (*hifʿil*), with no accompanying semantic change.[1] Among the affected early stem patterns was the apophonic passive of the G-stem, commonly known as the *qal* internal passive.

The fate of the *qal* internal passive in BH is an oft-recounted tale.[2] Beyond acknowledging its existence in BH, scholars have noted several important features relevant to the diachronic evolution of Hebrew. As early as the Iron Age, the form seems to have been in the process of being replaced by alternative forms.

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[1] For extensive discussion of such shifts, along with additional bibliography, see Hornkohl (2023, 183–318). On nifalisation specifically, see Hornkohl (2021b; 2023, 183–208).

[2] Important scholarly discussions include Böttcher (1866–1868, I:98–105); Barth (1890); Lambert (1900); Blake (1901, 53–54); GKC (§52e); Ginsburg (1929; 1934; 1936); Williams (1977); WO (373–76); Hughes (1994, 71–76); JM (§58); Sivan (2009, 50–51); Blau (2010, 217–18); Reymond (2016); cf. Garbini (1960, 130 fn. 5). See Chomsky (1959, xvii–xix, 103 fn. 146) for opinions on the *qal* internal passive among medieval Jewish grammarians.

This process later accelerated and expanded, resulting in many cases of suppletion due to secondary replacement, reinterpretation of original morphology, and the eventual disuse of the form in favour of alternative morphology. After summarising these developments, the present chapter will consider an additional topic: whether distinct, diachronically meaningful patterns of *qal* internal passive use and non-use can be discerned within CBH.

1.0. The *qal* Internal Passive in the Tiberian Masoretic Tradition

1.1. Secondary Developments and Suppletion

Investigation of the *qal* internal passive is complicated by the fact that, in many cases, the original *qal* passive pronunciation of forms has been eclipsed by secondary realisations. In some instances, the new pronunciation differed only slightly from the expected *qal* passive realisation.

For example, in the suffix conjugation of the strong verb, where expected *quṭal* > *quṭṭal*, the gemination was probably due to a spontaneous phonological process that allowed for preservation of the *u*-vowel iconically associated with passive voice (Suchard 2019, 110, fn. 31). Because in this case the *u*-vowel was short, without gemination, it would likely otherwise have shortened to *shewa*; but the gemination also resulted in a form identical to that of the D-stem passive *puꜥꜥal*.

In other cases, like that of the prefix conjugation of the strong verb, where expected *yuqṭal* > *yiqqåṭēl*, consonantal forms amenable to reinterpretation were simply read with alternative passive morphology, i.e., as the more dominant *nifꜥal*.

In both of the above situations, it is important to note that the secondary developments brought the morphology into line with Second Temple linguistic conventions.

In still other cases, e.g., the prefix conjugation of I-*n* forms, the expected *yuṭṭal* form underwent no change, but, due to similarity to the C-stem internal passive form, was readily analysable as *hofʿal* (*hufʿal*).

Finally, there are cases, such as that of the participle of strong verbs and I-*y* verbs—expected, respectively, to yield *qal* passive *quṭāl* and *yūṭāl*, but resulting in *quṭṭāl* and *yuṭṭāl*—where the gemination created resemblance to D-stem passive *puʿʿal*, with the lack of the characteristic D-stem prefix -מ betraying the original *qal* passive morphology. The treatment of several of the most common verb classes is summarised in the following table.

Table 1: Expected *qal* passive and received suppletive passive paradigms of common verb classes

Verb class	Form	Expected paradigm	Received paradigm	Description
Strong	SC	*quṭal*	*quṭṭal*	> *puʿʿal*
	PART	*quṭāl*	*quṭṭāl*	> *puʿʿal* (w/o -מ)
	PC	*yuqtal*	*yiqqåṭēl*	> *nifʿal*
I-y	SC	*yūṭal*	*yuṭṭal*	> *puʿʿal*
	PART	*yūṭāl*	*yuṭṭāl*	> *puʿʿal* (w/o -מ)
	PC	*yūṭal*	*yiwwåṭēl*	> *nifʿal*
I-n	SC	*nuṭal*	*niṭṭal*	> *nifʿal*
	PART	*nuṭāl*	*niṭṭāl*	> *nifʿal*
	PC	*yuṭṭal*	*yuṭṭal*	*qal* passive (= *hufʿal*) vocalism

The specific constellation of forms, characterised by suppletion involving predictable revocalisation, reinterpretation, and irregularity is readily explained as a result of secondary processes.

Another indication of the secondary character of the suppletion is the occurrence of morphologically distinct cases of

passives in proximity. Consider the instances of passives of נָתַן 'give'—first *qal* internal passive, then *nif‘al*—in the following:

(1) לָרֹב תַּרְבֶּה נַחֲלָתוֹ וְלִמְעַט תַּמְעִיט נַחֲלָתוֹ אִישׁ לְפִי פְקֻדָיו יֻתַּן נַחֲלָתוֹ:... וַיִּהְיוּ פְקֻדֵיהֶם שְׁלֹשָׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף כָּל־זָכָר מִבֶּן־חֹדֶשׁ וָמָעְלָה כִּי | לֹא הָתְפָּקְדוּ בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי לֹא־נִתַּן לָהֶם נַחֲלָה בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

'To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance; to every tribe shall its inheritance be given (*qal* internal passive) in proportion to its list…. And those listed were 23,000, every male from a month old and upward. For they were not listed among the people of Israel, because no inheritance was given (*nif‘al*) to them among the people of Israel.' (Num. 26.54, 62)

1.2. Late Disappearance of the *qal* Internal Passive

Related to the secondary replacement or reinterpretation of original *qal* internal passive forms is the conspicuous infrequency of the *qal* internal passive in Second Temple Hebrew sources, including LBH, SH, Ben Sira, QH, and the Tiberian reading tradition of CBH texts (Hughes 1994, 76, fn. 20; Reymond 2016, 1138–40; Qimron 2018, 221–22; Hornkohl 2023, 185–87, 194, 196–97, 199, 202, 203–7). Indeed, the *qal* internal passive is completely unproductive in RH (Sharvit 2004, 45; Reymond 2016, 1141, fn. 37; Hornkohl 2023, 198).

1.3. Late Expansion of Morphological Alternatives for the *qal* Internal Passive

A further confirmation of the secondary and late character of the morphological shifts under discussion is the disproportionately

late incidence of purely consonantal *nifʿal* evidence for certain common verbs with both *qal* internal and *nifʿal* passive morphology. Thus, in the case of נת"ן, 15 of the 31 cases of unambiguous consonantal *nifʿal* forms come in the very restricted range of LBH, while for יל"ד the proportion is 11 of 17 (13 of 19, if the two cases of *nufʿal* are included). In the same LBH material, there is no instance of the *qal* internal passive of נת"ן and just one of the *qal* internal passive יל"ד.[3] Note the replacement of *qal* passive forms in Samuel (even-numbered examples) with *nifʿal* forms in Chronicles (odd-numbered examples) in the following pairs of contrasting examples:

(2)   אֵ֥לֶּה יֻלְּד֛וּ לְדָוִ֖ד בְּחֶבְר֑וֹן
'These were born (*qal* passive) to David in Hebron.' (2 Sam. 3.5)

(3)   שִׁשָּׁה֙ נֽוֹלַד־ל֣וֹ בְחֶבְר֔וֹן
'six were born (*nifʿal*) to him in Hebron' (1 Chron. 3.4)

(4)   וְגַם־ה֖וּא יֻלַּ֥ד לְהָרָפָֽה
'He too was born (*qal* passive) to the Raphaites' (2 Sam. 21.20)

(5)   וְגַם־ה֖וּא נוֹלַ֥ד לְהָרָפָֽא
'He too was born (*nifʿal*) to the Raphaites' (1 Chron. 20.6)

Significantly, the late reinterpretation of *qal* passive forms as D- and C-stem passive forms is also in line with Second Temple linguistic trends, as the broader processes of both pielisation and

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[3] נת"ן: *nifʿal*—Est. 2.13; 3.14; 5.3, 6; 7.2, 3; 8.13; 9.12, 13, 14; Dan. 8.12; 11.6; 1 Chron. 5.20; 2 Chron. 2.13; 18.14; יל"ד: *qal* passive—1 Chron. 1.19; *nifʿal*—Qoh. 4.14; 7.1; Ezra 10.3; 1 Chron 2.3, 9; 3.1, 4, 5 (*nufʿal*); 7.21; 20.6, 8 (*nufʿal*); 22.9; 26.6.

hifilisation are acknowledged phenomena associated with later forms of ancient Hebrew (Hornkohl 2023, 209–88).

1.4. The Antiquity of *Nifʿal* Morphology

Given the tenor of the discussion above, focusing on examples of late and secondary movement from *qal* passive to *nifʿal* morphology,[4] one might be tempted to conclude that *nifʿal* forms are universally late. Such would be a misreading of the evidence. The use of *nifʿal* and, therefore, the potential for nifalisation were not restricted to post-exilic times. Though there is a meaningful association between nifalisation and the Second Temple period, the relationship is not exclusive.

 Especially important in this connection is early unambiguous *nifʿal* evidence from sources unaffected by the vagaries of scribal transmission or secondary development of the reading tradition, such as *nifʿal* forms in Iron Age Hebrew inscriptions, e.g., the imperative השמר 'take care!' (Lachish 3.21), the infinitive לֵהנ[קֵב 'to be he[wn]' (Siloam 1.2), and the prefix conjugation form ילקח 'be taken' (Arad 111.4).[5]

 Turning to the Hebrew Bible, many intransitive verbs are commonly represented by unequivocal *nifʿal* consonantal forms in CBH texts, with little to no evidence of *qal* synonymy. Thus, נִפְרַד 'separate (intr.)' has consistent *nifʿal* spelling and vocalisation

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[4] Additional cases of secondary nifalisation involve *qal* verbs with stative, medio-passive, intransitive, and weakly transitive semantics that shift to *nifʿal* (see Hornkohl 2023, 183–208).

[5] N-stem נאנח 'groan' occurs in the 8th-century Deir ʿAlla inscription (*KAI* 312 B.12).

throughout BH. Likewise, though a vestige of *qal* שָׁאַר 'remain' is attested once in CBH (1 Sam. 16.11), the synonymous *nifʿal* נִשְׁאַר is unambiguously represented in all biblical chronolects.[6]

Since *nifʿal* morphology was available at an early date, it is only logical that classical texts might show evidence of *qal–nifʿal* synonymy as a result of early nifalisation. And, indeed, this is precisely what one finds. Consider the combination of apparently synonymous *qal* passive and *nifʿal* patterns used in close in proximity in:

(6) וְכִי־יַכֶּה֩ אִ֨ישׁ אֶת־עַבְדּ֜וֹ א֤וֹ אֶת־אֲמָתוֹ֙ בַּשֵּׁ֔בֶט וּמֵ֖ת תַּ֣חַת יָד֑וֹ נָקֹ֖ם יִנָּקֵֽם׃ אַ֥ךְ אִם־י֛וֹם א֥וֹ יוֹמַ֖יִם יַעֲמֹ֑ד לֹ֣א יֻקַּ֔ם כִּ֥י כַסְפּ֖וֹ הֽוּא׃

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

(7) וַיְהִ֣י כְעָבְרָ֗ם וְאֵ֨לִיָּ֜הוּ אָמַ֣ר אֶל־אֱלִישָׁ֗ע שְׁאַל֙ מָ֣ה אֶֽעֱשֶׂה־לָּ֔ךְ בְּטֶ֖רֶם אֶלָּקַ֣ח מֵעִמָּ֑ךְ וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אֱלִישָׁ֔ע וִֽיהִי־נָ֛א פִּֽי־שְׁנַ֥יִם בְּרוּחֲךָ֖ אֵלָֽי׃ וַיֹּ֖אמֶר הִקְשִׁ֣יתָ לִשְׁא֑וֹל אִם־תִּרְאֶ֨ה אֹתִ֜י לֻקָּ֤ח מֵֽאִתָּךְ֙ יְהִֽי־לְךָ֣ כֵ֔ן וְאִם־אַ֖יִן לֹ֥א יִהְיֶֽה׃

'When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken (*nifʿal*) 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 (*qal* internal passive) 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)

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[6] See Hornkohl (2023, 203, fn. 16) for further unambiguous consonantal evidence of *nifʿal* morphology in CBH.

Also relevant in this connection is the instance of *qere–ketiv* in the following example:

(8)   ינתן [K] יֻתַּן־לָ֣נוּ שִׁבְעָ֣ה אֲנָשִׁים֮ מִבָּנָיו֒ וְהוֹקַֽעֲנוּם֙ לַֽיהוָֹ֔ה בְּגִבְעַ֖ת שָׁא֣וּל בְּחִ֣יר יְהוָ֑ה ס וַיֹּ֥אמֶר הַמֶּ֖לֶךְ אֲנִ֥י אֶתֵּֽן׃

'Let seven of his sons be given (*ketiv nifʿal, qere qal* internal passive) to us, so that we may hang them before the LORD at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD.' (2 Sam. 21.6)

Given the historical depth of passive encoding via *nifʿal* morphology in BH, there seems no reason to doubt the antiquity of either component of the tradition here. If so, this is simply "a genuine instance of early textual fluctuation" (Hornkohl 2023, 206; cf. Hughes 1994, 76).

2.0. Usage Patterns in Classical Biblical Hebrew

Based on the foregoing description, it is apparent that any diachronic account of the development of the *qal* internal passive in ancient Hebrew must take into account the intricacies of a complicated combination of facts, including, among other things, (a) early development of *nifʿal* forms with little to no evidence of *qal* competition, as seen in unambiguous biblical and extrabiblical consonantal evidence; (b) early synonymy of *qal* and *nifʿal* forms, as seen in unambiguous biblical and extrabiblical consonantal evidence; (c) late standardisation of *nifʿal* morphology at the expense of formerly dominant *qal* passive morphology, as seen in unambiguous biblical and extrabiblical consonantal evidence; (d) secondary subversion of early *qal* passive morphological dominance via the opportune reinterpretation of consonantal forms amenable to secondary *nifʿal* realisation, as seen in BH reading

traditions associated with the Second Temple period—i.e., the specific period associated with (c)—e.g., the Tiberian and Samaritan pronunciation traditions.

2.1. Classical Biblical Hebrew versus Late Biblical Hebrew

There is a marked distinction between CBH and LBH when it comes to usage of the *qal* internal passive. Despite the reality of authentic *nifʿal* forms and of blurring due to secondary nifalisation in CBH texts, the *qal* internal passive remains well represented in the relevant material. It was evidently still a productive element within CBH grammar, at least in the case of specific verbs, notwithstanding already pervasive *nifʿal* encroachment. By the time of LBH, by contrast, the *qal* internal passive had largely fallen into disuse, a situation confirmed by late extrabiblical sources and, to some extent, by non-Tiberian biblical material with late affinities.

2.2. Variations in Usage involving Classical Biblical Hebrew

Despite displaying a great deal of linguistic diversity, CBH is generally considered sufficiently homogenous to be regarded as a single chronolect. Based on affinities with Iron Age epigraphic Hebrew, CBH seems broadly to reflect the literary language practices of Iron Age II, approximately 1000–600 BCE, or, in terms of biblical historiography, the monarchic period. Yet, a large section of the CBH corpus deals with pre-monarchic times and, as such, may incorporate earlier traditions, including linguistic material.

While there is little reason to challenge the general correctness of the CBH label or its literary and historical associations, it is legitimate to wonder whether language change is discernible within CBH.

When it comes to the matter of the *qal* internal passive, several significant distributional patterns emerge.[7] These include comprehensive *nifʿal* dominance, i.e., the general absence of *qal* passive morphology from all strata of BH; CBH preference for *qal* passive versus LBH preference for *nifʿal* morphology; and inner-CBH differences in *qal* passive and *nifʿal* distributional patterns. In order properly to contextualise the discussions that follow, it is important to note that none of the relevant roots are represented by *qal* passive or *nifʿal* forms in Iron Age Hebrew epigraphic sources, that the relevant *qal* passive forms occur outside Tiberian BH only in non-Tiberian biblical traditions (BDSS, SP) or in extrabiblical allusions to Tiberian BH (e.g., m. Makhshirin 1.1–6, in reference to Lev. 11.38), and that the relevant *nifʿal* forms are frequent in post-biblical Hebrew, including material independent of BH (NBDSS, Ben Sira, RH).

2.2.1. Comprehensive *nifʿal* Dominance

Consider the respective *qal* internal passive and *nifʿal* data for the roots כר״ת 'be cut, cut off' and רא״י 'be seen, appear' in Tables 2 and 3 (facing page).

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[7] In the following sections, the discussion is limited to verbs with both *qal* internal passive and *nifʿal* representation. It is further restricted to verbs with more than just a handful of occurrences, as the rest are too rare to have statistical significant distributions. Possible semantic distinctions are dealt with on a case-by-case basis, as necessary.

Table 2: ת"כר—*Qal* internal passive versus *nifʿal*

	consonantal *qal* passive	*nifʿal*	
		consonantal	vocalisation (consonantally ambiguous)
Torah	0	23	5
Fmr Prophets	1	3	6
Lat. Prophets	1	9	13
Non-LBH Writings	0	3	8
LBH	0	0	3

qal passive—**consonantal**: Judg. 6.28; Ezek. 16.4; *nifʿal*—**consonantal**: Gen. 17.14 (P); Exod. 12.15 (P), 19 (P); 30.33 (P), 38 (P); 31.14 (P); Lev. 7.20 (P), 21 (P), 25 (P), 27 (P); 17.4 (P), 9 (P); 18.29 (P); 19.8 (P); 20.17 (P), 18 (P); 22.3 (P); 23.29 (P); Num. 9.13 (P); 15.30 (R), 31 (R); 19.13 (P), 20 (P); Josh. 3.16; 4.7, 7; Isa. 22.25; 29.20; Jer. 7.28; Joel 1.5, 16; Obad. 1.10; Nah. 2.1; Zeph. 1.11; Zech. 9.10; Ps. 37.28, 34, 38; **vocalisation (consonantally ambiguous)**: Gen. 9.11 (P); 41.36 (E); Lev. 17.14 (P); Num. 11.33 (E); 15.31 (R); Josh. 3.13; 9.23; 2 Sam. 3.29; 1 Kgs 2.4; 8.25; 9.5; Isa. 11.13; 48.19; 55.13; 56.5; Jer. 33.17, 18; 35.19; Hos. 8.4; Obad. 1.9; Mic. 5.8; Zeph. 3.7; Zech. 13.8; 14.2; Ps. 37.9, 22; Job 14.7; Prov. 2.22; 10.31; 23.18; 24.14; Ruth 4.10; Dan. 9.26; 2 Chron. 6.16; 7.18

Table 3: י"אר—*Qal* internal passive versus *nifʿal*

	consonantal *qal* passive	*nifʿal*	
		consonantal	vocalisation (consonantally ambiguous)
Torah	0	17	31
Fmr Prophets	0	14	9
Lat. Prophets	0	6	6
Non-LBH Writings	1	3	4
LBH	0	6	4

qal passive—**consonantal**: Job 33.21; *nifʿal*—**consonantal**: Gen. 8.5 (P); 9.14 (P); 12.7 (J); 35.1 (E); 48.3 (P); Exod. 3.16 (E); 4.1 (E), 5 (E); 16.10 (P); Lev. 9.4 (P); 13.7 (P), 7 (P), 14 (P), 19 (P); 14.35 (P); Num. 14.10 (P), 14 (J); Judg. 13.10, 21; 19.30; 1 Sam. 1.22; 3.21; 2 Sam 17.17; 1 Kgs 3.5; 6.18; 9.2; 10.12; 11.9; 18.1, 2; 2 Kgs 23.24; Isa. 16.12; Jer. 13.26; 31.3; Ezek. 10.1; 21.29; Mal. 3.2; Ps. 102.17; Prov. 27.25; Song 2.12; Dan. 1.15; 8.1, 1; 2 Chron. 1.7; 3.1;

9.11;[8] **vocalisation (consonantally ambiguous):** Gen. 1.9 (P); 12.7 (J); 17.1 (P); 18.1 (J); 22.14 (R); 26.2 (J), 24 (J); 35.9 (P); 46.29 (J); Exod. 3.2 (J); 6.3 (P); 13.7 (E), 7 (E); 23.15 (E), 17 (E); 33.23 (E); 34.3 (J), 12 (E), 20 (J), 23 (J); Lev. 9.6 (P), 23 (P); 13.57 (P); 16.2 (P); Num. 16.19 (P); 17.7 (P); 20.6 (P); Deut. 16.4 (Other), 16 (Other), 16 (Other); 31.15 (E); Judg. 5.8; 6.12; 13.3; 2 Sam. 22.11, 16; 1 Kgs 8.8, 8; 9.2; 18.15; Isa. 1.12; 47.3; 60.2; Ezek. 10.8; 19.11; Zech. 9.14; Ps. 18.16; 42.3; 84.8; 90.16; Dan. 1.13; 2 Chron. 5.9, 9; 7.12[9]

In both cases, unambiguous consonantal evidence for *nifʿal* morphology substantially outweighs that for *qal* internal passive.[10] This, in turn, makes it probable that some portion of the ambiguous consonantal forms are also authentically *nifʿal*—in agreement with their vocalisation. If these verbs ever had productive *qal* internal passive forms, the figures indicate that by the CBH period, they had been effectively eclipsed by *nifʿal*, which forms continued to serve in later Hebrew.[11]

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[8] Excluded from the count of consonantal *nifʿal* forms of רא"י is the form לֵרָאוֹת in phrases of the type אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֵרָאוֹת (Exod. 34.24; see also Deut. 31.11; Isa. 1.12). Though the pointing reflects *nifʿal* realisation, the consonantal form consistently reflects original *qal* morphology; see Hornkohl (2023, 55–66, esp. 56–57).

[9] Included in the list of ambiguous consonantal forms of רא"י with *nifʿal* vocalisation are the three cases of לֵרָאוֹת cited in the previous footnote.

[10] In terms of semantics: in the case of כר"ת, the *qal* passive form is used only with inanimate subjects; the *nifʿal* most commonly occurs with human subjects, but is also used for the cutting (off) of non-human subjects (e.g., Num. 11.33; Josh. 3.13; Job 14.7). For רא"י, the lone *qal* passive has an inanimate subject and the sense of 'be seen, visible', which features are also possible for the *nifʿal* (e.g., 1 Kgs 6.18). It would thus seem in all cases that, at the very least, the *nifʿal* could have been used wherever the *qal* passive was (though perhaps not vice-versa).

[11] *Nifʿal* כר"ת and רא"י are reflected in unequivocal consonantal evidence in QH, RH, and Ben Sira.

2.2.2. Classical Biblical Hebrew against Late Biblical Hebrew

In line with what was said above (§§1.2; 2.1), the distributional pattern of one root with common *qal* passive and *nifʿal* alternatives—namely, יל"ד 'be born'—shows consistent *qal* passive dominance in CBH consonantal evidence against *nifʿal* dominance in LBH, along with suspiciously common *nifʿal* vocalisation of morphologically ambiguous written forms in CBH texts. See Table 4.

Table 4: יל"ד—*Qal* internal passive versus *nifʿal*

		nifʿal	
	consonantal *qal* passive	consonantal	vocalisation (consonantally ambiguous)
Torah	11	3	8
Fmr Prophets	6	1	3
Lat. Prophets	4	1	1
Non-LBH Writings	6	1	7
LBH	1	11	0

qal **passive—consonantal**: Gen. 4.26 (J); 6.1 (J); 10.21 (J), 25 (J); 24.15 (J); 35.26 (P); 36.5 (P); 41.50 (E); 46.22 (P), 27 (P); 50.23 (E); Judg. 13.8; 18.29; 2 Sam. 3.2 [*ketiv*], 5; 21.20, 22; Isa. 9.5; Jer. 20.14, 15; 22.26; Ps. 87.4, 5, 6; 90.2; Job 5.7; Ruth 4.17; 1 Chron. 1.19; *nifʿal*—**consonantal**: Gen. 21.3 (P), 5 (P); 48.5 (P); 1 Kgs 13.2; Hos. 2.5; Ps. 22.32; Qoh. 4.14; 7.1; Ezra 10.3; 1 Chron. 2.3, 9; 3.1, 4, 5 (*nufʿal*); 7.21; 20.6, 8 (*nufʿal*); 22.9; 26.6;[12] **vocalisation (consonantally ambiguous)**: Gen. 4.18 (J); 10.1 (P); 17.17 (P); 46.20 (P); Lev. 22.27 (P); Num. 26.60 (P); Deut. 15.19 (Other); 23.9 (Other); 2 Sam. 3.2 [*qere*]; 5.13; 14.27; Isa. 66.8; Ps 78.6; Job 1.2; 3.3; 11.12; 15.7; 38.21; Prov. 17.17

Throughout CBH, the *qal* internal passive dominates over the *nifʿal* in unambiguous consonantal forms (by a margin of 27:6). In LBH, the trend is reversed (1:11). The forms tallied in the

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[12] This count excludes the two cases of *nufʿal* נוּלְּדוּ (1 Chron 3.5; 20.8).

'ambiguous' column are all prefix conjugation forms vocalised as *nifꜤal*. One might expect the proportions of *qal* passive and *nifꜤal* morphology among the consonantally ambiguous forms to resemble those of the consonantally unambiguous forms in each respective portion of the Hebrew Bible, but this cannot be confirmed.

2.2.3. Distinctive *qal* Internal Passive and *nifꜤal* Distributional Patterns within Classical Biblical Hebrew

Several verbs exhibiting both *qal* internal passive and *nifꜤal* forms show interesting distributions within the Hebrew Bible, in general, and within CBH, more specifically. All very clearly exhibit the aforementioned dichotomy between CBH and LBH (and other late forms of ancient Hebrew), with late disuse of the *qal* passive in favour of *nifꜤal*. Crucially, though, the significant shift—be it reduction in *qal* internal passive usage or increase in *nifꜤal* usage—coincides not with the onset of LBH, but within CBH, distinguishing the CBH of the Torah from the CBH of the relevant works in the Prophets and Writings. See Tables 5–7.

Table 5: לק"ח—*Qal* internal passive versus *nifꜤal*

		nifꜤal	
	consonantal *qal* passive	consonantal	vocalisation (consonantally ambiguous)
Torah	5	0	0
Fmr Prophets	2	7	0
Lat. Prophets	7	1	0
Non-LBH Writings	1	0	0
LBH	0	2	0

qal **passive—consonantal**: Gen. 2.23 (J); 3.19 (J), 23 (J); 12.15 (J); 18.4 (J); Jdg. 17.2; 2 Kgs 2.10; Isa. 49.24, 25; 52.5; 53.8; Jer. 29.22; 48.46; Ezek. 15.3; Job 28.2; *nif'al*—**consonantal**: 1 Sam. 4.11, 17, 19, 21, 22; 21.7; 2 Kgs 2.9; Ezek. 33.6; Esth. 2.8, 16

Passive semantics in the case of לק"ח are expressed exclusively via the *qal* internal passive in the CBH of the Torah. While use of the *qal* passive is also characteristic of CBH beyond the Torah—especially so in the high rhetoric and poetry of the Latter Prophets—clear-cut *nif'al* usage is found only outside the Torah—especially in the prose of the Former Prophets.

Table 6: נת"ן—*Qal* internal passive versus *nif'al*

| | | *nif'al* | |
| | consonantal | | vocalisation |
	qal passive	consonantal	(consonantally ambiguous)
Torah	3	2	7
Fmr Prophets	4	3	5
Lat. Prophets	0	11	24
Non-LBH Writings	1	0	2
LBH	0	15	13

qal **passive—consonantal:** Lev. 11.38 (P); Num. 26.54 (P); 32.5 (P); 2 Sam. 21.6 [*qere*]; 1 Kgs 2.21; 2 Kgs 5.17; Job 28.15; *nif'al*—**consonantal:** Exod. 5.18 (E); Lev. 24.20 (P); 2 Sam 21.6 [*ketiv*]; 2 Kgs 18.30; 19.10; Isa. 36.15; 37.10; 51.12; Jer. 21.10; 32.4, 4; 34.3; 37.17; 38.3, 3; 39.17; Est. 2.13; 3.14; 5.3, 6; 7.2, 3; 8.13; 9.12, 13, 14; Dan. 8.12; 11.6; 1 Chron. 5.20; 2 Chron. 2.13; 18.14; **vocalisation (consonantally ambiguous):** Gen. 9.2 (P); 38.14 (J); Exod. 5.16 (E); Lev. 10.14 (P); 19.20 (P); 26.25 (P); Num. 26.62 (P); Josh. 24.33; 1 Sam. 18.19; 25.27; 2 Kgs 22.7; 25.30; Isa. 9.5; 29.12; 33.16; 35.2; Jer. 13.20; 32.24, 25, 36, 43; 38.18; 46.24; 51.55; 52.34; Ezek. 11.15; 15.4; 16.34; 31.14; 32.20, 23, 25, 29; 33.24; 35.12; 47.11; Job 9.24; 15.19; Qoh. 10.6; 12.11; Est. 3.15; 4.8; 6.8; 8.14; Dan. 11.11; Ezra 9.7; Neh. 10.30; 13.10; 1 Chron. 5.1; 2 Chron. 28.5; 34.16.

When it comes to passive semantics of נת"ן, the Torah shows mixed, nearly balanced usage. The CBH Prophets and LBH,

by contrast, show pronounced preference for *nifʿal*. This is espe-
cially true of the Latter Prophets and LBH, which corpora exhibit
nifʿal to the total exclusion of *qal* passive. This picture is based
on unequivocal consonantal evidence. The *nifʿal* vocalisations of
ambiguous consonantal forms may be assumed to be variously
authentic or secondary in line with the relevant consonantal evi-
dence of the respective corpus, though each assumption is unver-
ifiable conjecture which can be neither confirmed nor discon-
firmed.

Table 7: נק"ם—*Qal* internal passive versus *nifʿal*

		nifʿal	
	consonantal *qal* passive	consonantal	vocalisation (consonantally ambiguous)
Torah	3	1	0
Fmr Prophets	0	2	2
Lat. Prophets	0	5	1
Non-LBH Writings	0	0	0
LBH	0	1	0

qal **passive—consonantal:** Gen. 4.15 (E), 24 (J); Exod. 21.21 (E); *nifʿal***—con-
sonantal:** Exod. 21.20 (E); Judg. 16.28; 1 Sam. 18.25; Isa. 1.24; Jer. 15.15;
46.10; Jer. 50.15; Ezek. 25.15; Est. 8.13; **vocalisation (consonantally ambig-
uous):** Judg. 15.7; 1 Sam. 14.24; Ezek. 25.12

Involving admittedly few tokens, majority use of *qal* inter-
nal passive in the Pentateuch gives way to exclusive use of *nifʿal*
in the rest of the Hebrew Bible (with a few instances of *nifʿal*
vocalisations of ambiguous consonantal forms). Thus, the shift
from *qal* passive to *nifʿal* appears to be an inner-CBH develop-
ment.

3.0. Interpreting the Data

According to the foregoing investigation of passive morphological options, an unmistakable diachronic pattern of usage emerges. Generally speaking, the early typological situation was one of mixed *qal* passive and *nif'al* usage. From this there eventually evolved a situation of *nif'al* dominance. Some verbs show this very distribution of *qal* passive and *nif'al* forms (§§2.1; 2.2.2). In the case of other verbs, however, in agreement with broad evidence for early nifalisation, the ostensible substitution of *qal* passive with *nif'al* was largely complete by the age of the most ancient CBH texts, such that there is little to no evidence of *qal* passive usage (§2.2.2). Finally—and most intriguingly for the argument sustained in this volume—the passive morphology of some verbs exhibits an evident diachronic development that, rather than distinguishing CBH from LBH, distinguishes the CBH of the Torah from both the rest of CBH (Prophets and Writings) and LBH.

As in other such cases discussed in this monograph, two non-mutually exclusive explanations suggest themselves. According to one hypothesis, the CBH of all biblical corpora once showed rather more homogenous usage patterns of *qal* passive and *nif'al* morphology, but in the process of redaction, compilation, and transmission, scribes allowed greater influence of late linguistic conventions—in this case, *nif'al* encroachment—in the CBH of the Prophets and Writings than they did in the case of the Torah's CBH—this owing to the Pentateuch's relatively early crystallisation and to the high status it held among readers.

There is some evidence supporting this view, but it is far from unequivocal. Where possible, apparently original *qal* passive forms were reinterpreted as *nifʿal* or analysed as *hufʿal* (*hofʿal*) forms in the Tiberian reading tradition. Also, certain non-Tiberian biblical sources and traditions known for their Second Temple linguistic affinities, such as the contemporised BH of 1QIsaiah[a] and the SP, especially the latter's pronunciation tradition, tend to replace the *qal* internal passive with alternatives, be they passive, impersonal, or active (Kutscher 1974, 362; Ben-Ḥayyim 2000, 177; Reymond 2016, 1138–41; Hornkohl 2021b, 8–9; 2023, 194). By contrast, many *qal* passive forms in Tiberian BH are paralleled by forms amenable to *qal* passive analysis in the BDSS. Moreover, as noted above, the biblical *qal* passive morphological tradition seems quite stable in extrabiblical material that cites BH. Crucially lacking is any smoking-gun evidence of textual material representing the CBH Prophets and Writings exhibiting their presumed greater early use of *qal* passive morphology.

The alternative hypothesis is that the various Masoretic corpora by and large faithfully preserve typologically distinct usage patterns of passive morphology, especially in unambiguous consonantal forms. The Torah's typologically early affinity for *qal* passive forms in the case of several verbs contrasts with the typologically later preference for the *nifʿal* forms of such verbs in the CBH Prophets and Writings. This state of affairs does not necessarily imply the early composition of the Tiberian Torah in its extant form—though this well may be the case—but it does seem to indicate the preservation of a typologically early linguistic tradition, which tallies with the notion that the content of the

Pentateuch, whenever it achieved its ultimate form, incorporates genuinely ancient, i.e., pre-monarchic, material in a form that preserves pre-monarchic linguistic features.

At this juncture, it is opportune to consider the distribution of the relevant passive morphological alternatives in the sources that purportedly comprise the Pentateuch. Table 8 displays the figures for the verb forms above according to purported source (per Friedman 1989, 246–59).

Table 8: Statistics of *qal* internal passive and *nifʿal* forms of specific verbs per purported Pentateuchal source

כר"ת	J	E	P	R	Other	נת"ן	J	E	P	R	Other
qal pass.	0	0	0	0	0	*qal* pass.	0	0	3	0	0
nif.	0	0	21	2	0	*nif.*	0	1	1	0	0
ambig.	0	2	2	1	0	ambig.	1	1	5	0	0
רא"י						נק"ם					
qal pass.	0	0	0	0	0	*qal* pass.	1	2	0	0	0
nif.	2	4	11	0	0	*nif.*	0	1	0	0	0
ambig.	9	7	11	1	3	ambig.	0	0	0	0	0
יל"ד						TOTALS					
qal pass.	5	2	4	0	0	*qal* pass.	11	4	7	0	0
nif.	0	0	3	0	0	*nif.*	2	6	36	2	0
ambig.	1	0	5	0	2	ambig.	11	10	23	2	5
לק"ח						Totals w/o כר"ת and רא"י					
qal pass.	5	0	0	0	0	*qal* pass.	11	4	7	0	0
nif.	0	0	0	0	0	*nif.*	0	2	4	0	0
ambig.	0	0	0	0	0	ambig.	2	1	10	0	2

Focusing on the totals, the high number of unambiguous consonantal *nifʿal* forms (36) is conspicuous. This is misleading, though, as a large proportion of this figure (32) consists of forms of כר"ת and רא"י, neither of which show any cases of *qal* internal passive morphology. Narrowing the focus to roots represented by both

qal passive and *nifʿal* morphology, several important usage patterns emerge. J shows strong preference for *qal* internal passive morphology, while E and J are similar in terms of the relative frequencies of *qal* passive and *nifʿal* morphology. Significant here is the persistence of *qal* passive morphology in all relevant sources, with preference for *qal* passive forms in verbs showing a *nifʿal* alternative. This is in line with the general trend characteristic of the Torah observed above, i.e., its typological con-servatism in its rather common maintenance of *qal* passive morphology relative to synonymous *nifʿal* morphology. Notably, this distinguishes all putative Torah sources from the CBH of the Prophets and the Writings (see Tables 5–7, above, with the relevant discussions). It also reveals the affinity of P, which many regard as an exilic or post-exilic composition, to J and, especially, E regarding passive morphology, as well as its clear distinction from LBH, late non-Tiberian biblical sources, and late extrabiblical material.