

Diachronic Diversity in Classical Biblical Hebrew

AARON D. HORNKOHL





<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

©2024 Aaron D. Hornkohl



This work is licensed under an Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute, and transmit the text; to adapt the text for non-commercial purposes of the text providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Aaron D. Hornkohl, *Diachronic Diversity in Classical Biblical Hebrew*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0433>

Further details about CC BY-NC licenses are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Any digital material and resources associated with this volume will be available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0433#resources>

Semitic Languages and Cultures 29

ISSN (print): 2632-6906

ISSN (digital): 2632-6914

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80511-435-2

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80511-436-9

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80511-437-6

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0433

Cover image (clockwise from top left): Leningrad Codex (Firkovich B 19 A), f. 8r, Gen. 14.12b–15.13a, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Page_from_the_Leningrad_Codex_01.jpg; Cambridge University Library Mosseri IX.224, detail of Gen. 32.30b–32a (courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library); The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa), cols I–IV, Isa. 1.1–5.14a, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Great_Isaiah_Scroll_MS_A_\(1QIsa\)_-_Google_Art_Project-x4-y0.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Great_Isaiah_Scroll_MS_A_(1QIsa)_-_Google_Art_Project-x4-y0.jpg); 4QGeng (4Q7), Gen. 1.1–11a, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Genesis_1_Dead_Sea_Scroll_\(Cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Genesis_1_Dead_Sea_Scroll_(Cropped).jpg); Aleppo Codex fol. 130r, Isa. 66.20–Jer. 1.17, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aleppo-HighRes2-Neviim6-Jeremiah_\(page_1_crop\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aleppo-HighRes2-Neviim6-Jeremiah_(page_1_crop).jpg)

Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

The fonts used in this volume are Charis SIL, SBL Hebrew, SBL Greek, Estrangelo Edessa and Scheherazade New.

6. זע"ק VERSUS צע"ק

The distribution of the synonymous roots זע"ק and צע"ק in ancient Hebrew sources is not haphazard.¹ Rather, a diachronic trend is perceptible (Hornkohl 2014a, 78–82). Both roots are well represented throughout the Masoretic biblical tradition as well as in non-Masoretic biblical and late extrabiblical material; neither is attested in Iron Age Hebrew epigraphy.² On the basis of the evidence, an early minority form, זע"ק, appears to have supplanted its majority counterpart, צע"ק, in late sources. But the sources also seem to reveal a gradual process, with an intermediate period of mixed usage, albeit with certain interesting exceptions. Within this broad picture there is clear evidence of a distinction between CBH and LBH, but also, intriguingly, possible signs of diachronic development within CBH.

¹ The synonymy of lexemes with the roots זע"ק and צע"ק is seen in nouns and verbs, e.g., the nouns זַעֲקָה (20 ×) and זָעָה (18 ×) '(out)cry', the *qal* verbs צָעַק (48 ×) and זָעַק (61 ×) 'cry out', *nif'al* נִצְעַק (6 ×) and נִזְעַק (6 ×) 'be mustered', *hif'il* הִצְעִיק (1 ×) and הִזְעִיק (7 ×) 'muster'. It is also seen in the use of alternant forms in proximity, e.g., the nouns in Gen. 18.20–21; Jer. 48.3–5, 34; Neh. 5.1, 6; the *qal* forms in Judg. 10.10, 12, 14; Ps. 107.6, 13, 19, 28; Neh. 9.4, 27–28; noun and *qal* verb combinations in 1 Sam. 4.13–14; Isa. 65. 14, 19; Jer. 25.34, 36; 48.3–5, 20, 31, 34; Neh. 9.4, 9, 27–28.

Etymologically, the situation is unclear. For example, BDB (277a, 858a) paradoxically considers זע"ק a biform of צע"ק, but simultaneously cites distinct Arabic cognates in *صعق* and *زَعَق*.

² The reconstructed OA form [צע]קה 'outcry' in Sefire Treaty Text 1 (a.30; ca. 750 BCE) is, unfortunately, broken; see *CAL* s.v. צעקה.

1.0. The Hebrew of the Second Temple Period

In the standard Tiberian biblical tradition, both roots are common, with a זע"ק to צע"ק ratio of 76:91. See Table 1 for the frequency statistics of the relevant verbal and nominal forms.

Table 1: Tiberian biblical distribution of verbal and nominal forms with the roots זע"ק and צע"ק by book

	צע"ק	זע"ק	נצע"ק	הצע"ק	צע"קה	צע"ק	זע"ק	נזע"ק	הזע"ק	זע"קה	זע"ק
Genesis	3	0	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	1	1
Exodus	10	0	0	0	5	15	1	0	0	0	1
Numbers	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Deuteronomy	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Joshua	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Judges	2	0	4	0	0	6	7	4	2	0	13
Samuel	0	0	1	1	2	4	12	1	2	0	15
Kings	7	1	1	0	0	9	1	0	0	0	1
Isaiah	5	0	0	0	1	6	6	0	0	3	9
Jeremiah	3	0	0	0	4	7	8	0	0	6	14
Ezekiel	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	5
Hosea	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Joel	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Jonah	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Micah	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Habakkuk	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Zephaniah	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Zechariah	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Psalms	5	0	0	0	1	6	5	0	0	0	5
Proverbs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Job	2	0	0	0	3	5	1	0	1	1	3
Lamentations	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Qohelet	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Esther	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
Ezra	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nehemiah	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	2	4
Chronicles	1	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	4
Total	47	1	6	1	21	76	60	6	7	18	91

The most conspicuous tendency of obvious diachronic import is that of Second Temple material. Tiberian LBH shows a pronounced preference for זע"ק. Thus, the ratio of זע"ק to צע"ק in the LBH corpus consisting of Qohelet, Esther, Nehemiah, and Chronicles is 3:12.

Significantly, LBH is joined by several late extrabiblical and non-Masoretic biblical corpora in its preference for זע"ק over צע"ק. The root צע"ק is entirely absent from the non-biblical DSS, against 16 instances of זע"ק, in four of which זע"ק parallels Masoretic צע"ק:³

- (1) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה מִה-תִּצְעַק אֵלַי וַיִּזְאַמַּר יְהוָה [א] לְמוֹשֶׁה מִה תִּזְעַק אֵלַי
 “The LORD said to Moses, “Why **do you cry out** to me?” (MT Exod. 14.15 || 4Q365 f5ai.4)
- (2) וַיִּלְנוּ הָעָם עַל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר מִה-נִשְׁתָּה: וַיִּצְעַק אֶל-יְהוָה וַיִּלֹּן הָעָם עַל [לְמוֹשֶׁה לְ] אִמּוֹר מִה נִשְׁתָּה וַיִּזְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל [יְהוָה]
 “So the people murmured against Moses, saying, “What can we drink?” **And he/Moses cried out** to the LORD’ (MT Exod. 15.24–25 || 4Q365 f6aii + 6c.10)

³ In light of the ‘biblical’ character of these quotations/allusions, the suitability of the label ‘non-biblical’ for the texts in which they are embedded is debateable. Though arguably anachronistic, it is employed here for the sake of simplicity, reflecting the eventual distinction between what was canonised and what was not. It makes no claim as to how contemporary authors and scribes thought of the texts.

- (3) עַל־דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־צָעָקָה בְּעִיר
 עַל דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא זָעַק [ה] בְּעִיר
 ‘because she did not **cry out** in the city’ (MT Deut. 22.24 ||
 11Q19 66.2–3)
- (4) כִּי בַשָּׂדֶה מָצְאָה צָעָקָה הַנְּעִרָה [ketiv הַנְּעִרָה] הַמְּאֹרְשָׁה וְאִין מוֹשִׁיעַ לָּהּ
 כִּי בַשָּׂדֶה מָצְאָה זָעָקָה הַנְּעִרָה הַמְּאֹרְשָׁה וְאִין מוֹשִׁיעַ לָּהּ
 ‘for he met her in the field: the engaged woman **cried out**,
 but there was no one to rescue her.’ (MT Deut. 22.27 ||
 11Q19 66.7–8)

Cases of זע"ק outnumber those of צע"ק in the BDSS as well; in this material the ratio of צע"ק to זע"ק is 11:27, with five cases in which biblical צע"ק is paralleled by BDSS זע"ק, e.g.,⁴

- (5) לֹא יִצְעֹק וְלֹא יִשָּׂא וְלֹא־יִשְׁמִיעַ בַּחוּץ קוֹלוֹ
 לֹא יִזְעֹק וְלֹא יִשָּׂא וְלֹא יִשְׁמִיעַ בַּחוּץ קוֹלוֹ
 ‘He will not **cry out** or shout; he will not publicise himself
 in the streets.’ (MT Isa. 42.2 || 1QIsa^a 35.11)
- (6) וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה בְּצָר לָהֶם וַיִּמְצֹקֵתֵיהֶם יוֹצִיאֵם
 וַיִּזְעֲקוּ אֶל יְהוָה בְּ[צָר] לָהֶם מִמְצִיקוֹתֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁעֵם
 ‘They **cried out** to the LORD in their distress; he delivered
 them from their troubles.’ (MT Ps. 107.28 || 4Q88 3.19–21)

Likewise, in Aramaic sources the preference for זע"ק is very strong. The 5th-century BCE Egyptian Aramaic documents from Elephantine contain derivations of both roots, but nearly all later material, including BA, QA, and Syriac in general, employs זע"ק

⁴ The other three instances of interchange are MT Isa. 33.7 || 1QIsa^a 27.7; MT Isa. 46.7 || 1QIsa^a 39.12; and MT Isa. 65.14 || 1QIsa^a 52.21. The opposite interchange takes place in MT 2 Sam. 2.23 || 4Q11 f3–4.4.

to the exclusion of ק"ע"ז. Decisively, TA favours ק"ע"ז even where the MT has ק"צ"ע. Contact with Aramaic was likely a factor in the post-exilic Hebrew drift toward preference for ק"ע"ז over ק"צ"ע.

Rounding out the picture, the use of ק"ע"ז persists in other late biblical and extrabiblical material—Ben Sira, SH, and RH—in the face of the encroachment of ק"ע"ז. This is to be expected for Ben Sira, known for his archaizing penchant, as well as for the SP, which in this instance outstrips even the Tiberian Torah in antiquarian fervour—apparently levelling the minority ק"ע"ז cases safeguarded in the Masoretic Pentateuch to harmonise with majority ק"צ"ע. For its part, RH is an unexpected outlier among Second Temple Hebrew traditions, anomalously preferring ק"צ"ע over ק"ע"ז (see Hornkohl 2014a, 81, fn. 28). For considerations on the potential methodological difficulty occasioned by RH's preservation of ק"צ"ע against the late encroachment of ק"ע"ז, see below, §2.0.

2.0. Classical Biblical Hebrew

CBH differs from LBH and other late material in terms of the relative distributions of ק"ע"ז and ק"צ"ע. Contrasting appreciably with LBH's strong predilection for ק"ע"ז over ק"צ"ע (12:3), the Tiberian Torah displays a more decisive reverse preference for ק"צ"ע over ק"ע"ז (27:2). Based on this information alone, it is reasonable to argue for a diachronic difference. One might also posit a post-exilic shift. However, the story is more complicated than this. See Table 2 (overleaf).

Table 2: Tiberian biblical distribution of verbal and nominal forms with the roots ק"צע and ק"זע by section

	ק"צע	ק"זע	ק"זע	ק"זע	ק"זע	ק"זע	ק"זע	ק"זע	ק"זע	ק"זע	ק"זע
Pentateuch	19	0	0	0	8	27	1	0	0	1	2
Prophets	18	1	6	1	8	34	45	6	6	10	67
Former	10	1	6	1	2	20	20	6	4	0	30
Latter	8	0	0	0	6	14	25	0	2	10	37
the Twelve	0	0	0	0	1	1	7	0	2	0	9
Writings	10	0	0	0	5	15	14	0	1	7	22
non-LBH	8	0	0	0	4	12	7	0	1	2	10
LBH	2	0	0	0	1	3	7	0	0	5	12

While exhibiting persistence of ק"צע, the CBH Prophets and non-LBH Writings are also characterised by significant ק"זע usage. According to these statistics, then, the precise nature of the late development at issue lies not in the increased usage of ק"זע *per se*, since its derivatives are common in many CBH texts, but in the non-use of ק"צע, non-use that is characteristic exclusively of LBH and other late sources.

Having precisely defined the nature of the diachronic development in question, we are equipped to return briefly to the aforementioned ‘problem’ of late material, such as RH, that does not partake therein. Methodologically, a late source’s preservation—even consistent preservation—of a single characteristically classical feature in no way contradicts its overall late linguistic periodisation. This is because early features remained available to late writers. The regnant diachronic approach permits the persistence of early features; it excludes the possibility of consistently thorough classical style on the part of late writers. More problematic in the present context would be the regular occurrence of a late feature in early material, but since no CBH text

with more than a single potential case is entirely free of instances of צע"ק, there are no grounds for methodological concern.

The figures in Table 2, above, highlight the contrast between the clearcut dominance of זע"ק in LBH and the still-significant incidence of צע"ק in CBH, but this broad characterisation obscures a degree of distributional variation at a more granular level. As such, it is worth making a few observations on specific books and larger corpora in the Tiberian tradition.

First, though the corpus-centric statistics in Table 2 are generally representative of the figures associated with their constituent works, as depicted in Table 1, above, the book of Kings is an exception. With a 9:1 ratio of צע"ק to זע"ק, Kings is a definite outlier among the books of the Prophets and in this regard is more reminiscent of the books of the Torah.

Second, given the probable pre-exilic origin of several of the constituent works in the Twelve (Minor Prophets), their 1:9 ratio of צע"ק to זע"ק is somewhat unexpected. One wonders whether the current preference for זע"ק might be partially artificial, a result of secondary levelling in favour of the more prevalent Second Temple form.⁵ This is mere conjecture, though, as there is no tangible textual evidence to support the theory.

Third, on the basis of the difference between the CBH Prophets, with pronounced dominance of זע"ק, and the non-LBH Writings, with nearly balanced use of צע"ק and זע"ק, it would be

⁵ See Hornkohl (2014a, 88) for a similar explanation of corpus-wide harmonisation behind the otherwise anomalous dominance in the Twelve of names ending in the short theophoric suffix יה- rather than long יהו-.

reasonable to speculate as to the possible influence of genre—perhaps the archaic or archaizing style of poetry prolonged the use of the perceived old ק"צ, when contemporary prose style would more regularly opt for ק"ז.

3.0. Interpreting the Data

While the widely accepted CBH–LBH dichotomy of ancient Hebrew periodisation is consistent with a great deal of diachronic variety in BH and has largely withstood scholarly scrutiny, finer gradations—such as early poetic ABH and late pre-exilic, exilic, and early post-exilic TBH—have been suggested, with mixed reviews. None of the diachronic paradigms reflected by these chronolects seems a good fit for the biblical distribution of ק"צ and ק"ז.

Recapping the pertinent statistics from above, the ק"צ to ק"ז ratio in the principal biblical sections according to the Tiberian tradition are reproduced in Table 3.

Table 3: Tiberian distribution of ק"צ and ק"ז in the principal biblical sections

	ק"צ	ק"ז
Pentateuch	27	2
Prophets	34	67
Non-LBH Writings	12	10
LBH	3	12

As observed above, while LBH, with rare usage of ק"צ, differs from CBH, where ק"צ is common, this is not the only shift perceptible in the data. The LBH reduction in ק"צ is obviously related to increased use in ק"ז. Crucially, however, this latter development evidently took place before LBH's heyday. While rare

in the Tiberian Torah, ק"עז is common elsewhere in CBH, and dominant in the CBH Prophets. The main question, then, is how to interpret the obvious numerical disparity between the CBH of the Tiberian Torah and the CBH of the relevant books in the Prophets and Writings when it comes to the use of ק"עז.

It is first of all worth asking whether the distribution of forms in the Tiberian Torah is genuine. Despite some evidence of textual variation involving ק"עצ and ק"עז in the text of the Pentateuch, it does not materially alter the picture that emerges from the MT. As mentioned above, the SP, which shows greater incidence of ק"עצ than the MT Torah—to the total exclusion of ק"עז—decisively supports the authenticity of Tiberian Pentateuchal partiality for ק"עצ. For their part, the shifts from ק"עצ to ק"עז in DSS material in examples (1)–(4) above are evidence of textual instability. Yet, as the DSS renditions are in line with Second Temple linguistic conventions, they should arguably be considered conditioned secondary developments, rather than evidence of random textual fluidity.

If the Tiberian linguistic tradition is to be regarded as historically reliable in this detail, then perhaps the most straightforward explanation for the conspicuous difference in the use of ק"עז between the CBH Prophets and Writings, on the one hand, and the Torah, on the other, should be seen as a function of inner-CBH diachronic development. According to a reading of the evidence that assumes some temporal correlation between content and linguistic tradition, it is reasonable to hold that ק"עצ and ק"עז coexisted as far back as BH reaches, with ק"עצ the dominant option. Subsequently, *but prior to the post-Restoration period of LBH*,

ק"עז saw increased usage at the expense of ק"עצ, though, crucially, use of the latter persisted in a substantial minority of cases. Finally, only some post-Restoration corpora exhibit the exclusive employment of ק"עז to the total exclusion of ק"עצ (though other late sources continue to utilise ק"עצ). If the scenario outlined here is correct, then the process according to which ק"עז gained total ascendancy (in some late material) was long and gradual, beginning with relatively early proliferation of ק"עז forms, i.e., in CBH, and culminating with virtual abandonment of ק"עצ in LBH and similar material.

According to the approach advanced here, the frequency of ק"עז constitutes an isogloss distinguishing the CBH of the Torah from the CBH of the relevant Prophets and Writings. In theory, this difference might be organic, accurately reflecting genuine linguistic patterns characteristic of the period in which the material in question was composed. This presupposes a fairly stable linguistic tradition in the face of the vicissitudes of compositional development and textual transmission. It also can be interpreted to mean that the Tiberian Torah, whenever it achieved its extant form, reliably preserves details of a recognisably early form of CBH. Given the differences in content between the relevant sections of the Bible, this linguistic difference may be understood as one of several manifestations of real-world diachronic diversity between CBH sub-chronolects, i.e., a pre-monarchic Pentateuchal linguistic tradition, CBH₁, and a monarchic linguistic tradition in the Prophets and Writings, CBH₂.

According to an alternative approach, the extant linguistic picture is to be seen at least partially as a product of secondary

processes. Notwithstanding a dearth of textual evidence to support the notion, it may be that all CBH texts—in the Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings—once showed similar distributions of זע"ק and צע"ק, the former dominating the latter, as in the Torah. While Second Temple scribes managed meticulously to preserve the linguistic situation in the Pentateuch, they were less conscientious when it came to material outside the Torah, allowing contemporisation of the language under the influence of late Hebrew and Aramaic linguistic tendencies. While in line with the discussions on certain features treated in this volume, a dearth of concrete evidence for textual variation in this specific case leaves the suggestion in the realm of conjecture and arguably makes it less convincing than the argument for organic typological difference outlined above.

Even less compelling is the argument that the dominance of זע"ק in the Tiberian Torah is artificial. The dissonance in successive verses between זעקת 'outcry' (Gen. 18.20) and הַכְּצַעְתָּהּ 'if according to its outcry' (Gen. 18.21) would have been a prime target for linguistic levelling, if such a procedure had been implemented to achieve consistency. Rather, this linguistic irregularity in the Tiberian Torah, albeit slight, can be taken as an indication of the authenticity of its linguistic tradition. As observed above, one need look no further than the SP for the implementation of artificial homogenisation in the case of this feature.

It is worth noting in this connection that the distribution of the two roots does not seem to be a function of putative source. Basing source identification on Friedman (1989, 246–55), the two occurrences of זע"ק in the Tiberian Torah come in the

Yahwist's Gen. 18.20 and the Priestly Exod. 2.23b. Both sources also more frequently utilise ׀"ץ—J: Gen. 4.10; 18.21; 19.13; 27.34, 34, etc.; P: Exod. 3.15; 14.10, 15.

This leaves us with one of two historical reconstructions, each of which presupposes not only a difference between CBH and LBH, but different sub-forms of CBH. Whether the distributional pattern seen in the Torah was also once more characteristic of the CBH Prophets and Writings or not, as things currently stand, the CBH of the Torah and LBH look like early and late diachronic extremes, respectively, with the CBH Prophets and Writings somehow transitional between the two. Crucially, however, the 'transitional' CBH of the Prophets and Writings is typologically distant from LBH and also distinct from the TBH that some scholars associate with the late pre-exilic, exilic, and early post-exilic periods.