COMMENTS ON THE MORPHOLOGY OF NOUNS IN MISHNAIC HEBREW: NOUNS ATTESTED AND UNATTESTED IN BIBLICAL HEBREW

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INTRODUCTION

1. The scientific investigation of the morphology of mishnaic Hebrew (= MH) has focused primarily on the verb and the pronouns, and very little on the noun. Only in the past few years have scholars begun to deal with nominal morphology as well.[1] I myself have recently been occupied with a systematic description of the nominal patterns based on the best of the manuscripts of the Mishnah: first and foremost MS Kaufmann (= K) and MS Parma B (De Rossi 497 = P2). In my work the data from these two manuscripts are described fully, both on the level of details and the level of synthesis. The findings that arise from these two MSS are compared with data from a series of other witnesses, such as MS Parma A (De Rossi 138 = P1), MS Cambridge, ed. Low (= L), and MS Antonin of *Seder Ṭeharot* (= A).[2]

2. By its nature, the study of the morphology of nominal patterns focuses on details and sub-details; each and every noun that appears in the Mishnah is checked, at every occurrence, in the two primary witnesses and in many other witnesses, in order to establish which nouns are to be classified under each pattern,

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* I am very pleased to dedicate this study to a great scholar, my dear friend Tapani Harviai-nen.

[1] We will mention here only one example: Yeivin 1985 (it should be noted that Yeivin's description of the morphology of nouns in biblical Hebrew in the Babylonian vocalization is accompanied in every chapter and every paragraph by a description of the data from rabbinic Hebrew in its Babylonian form); a detailed bibliography of what has been done on the morphology of nouns in rabbinic Hebrew is found in my article, Bar-Asher 2004a, nn. 1–10.

[2] In addition to my articles mentioned in n. 10 of the aforementioned article, I will also mention here my articles, Bar-Asher 2004b, and Bar-Asher, *Peʿolet*.

and thus to enable a complete and accurate description of the sum of the patterns. A comprehensive inspection of many witnesses reveals that there are more than a few nouns found as one pattern in one MS, a different pattern in another MS, and sometimes even a third pattern in yet another MS. The study of the details is exhausting, but often thrilling as well; in any event without it no worthy description of nominal morphology can be completed.

3. It is not even necessary to mention that within the detailed analysis, and in its wake, our investigation has extended to a number of broader questions and issues. Here I would like to make a few short comments on one such broader issue relating to the MH nouns: the morphology of nouns attested in biblical Hebrew (= BH) as opposed to those unattested there.[3]

4. There is no doubt that the analysis of all the nouns in the Mishnah reveals a clear picture: the nouns found in BH are found, generally, in their BH forms. But in nouns unattested in BH appear many morphological differences, even among the best witnesses, and sometimes even one witness may preserve two or three variants of the same noun. For example, MS P2 preserves two forms of the noun פסול "flaw": פָּסוּל *pəsūl* is the absolute form, and פִּסּוּל *pissūl* is the form found with pronominal suffixes, as in פָּסוּל *pəsūl* (Kelim 10:4) as opposed to פִּיסּוּלָה *pissūlāh* (Parah 4:4), בפיסוּלוֹ *be-pissūllō* (Miqwa'ot 3:1). Another example is the noun שפוד "spit," for which MS K preserves two distinct vocalizations, reflecting two different nominal patterns: שְׁפוּד *šəpūd* (Pes 7:1) as well as שְׁפוֹד *šəpōd* (Kelim 5:5).

NOUNS ATTESTED IN BH

5. From the totality of biblical nouns attested in the Mishnah, two groups must be distinguished: (a) nouns whose mention is an implicit citation of a word or a phrase from BH, or an intentional insertion of biblical language, and whose use then does not prove that they were in living use in MH; (b) nouns found both in BH and in MH which we can assume were in use in the living languages of both biblical and tannaitic periods.

6. **In the first type** we find, as expected, a faithfulness to the form as found in BH according to the Tiberian or the Babylonian vocalizations. For example, the nominal pattern פְּעֹלֶת *pəōlet* includes the noun כתובת, which is attested only once, and only in the phrase כְּתֹבֶת קעקע *kətōbet qaʿăqaʿ* (Mak 3:6). It is mentioned there adjacent to the verse cited: הכותב כְּתוֹבָת קַעֲקַע, כתב ולא קיעקע, קיעקע ולא כתב...ר' שמעון

3　　The issue of the morphology of BH nouns found in MH is discussed from different vantage points in other articles of mine (cf. Bar-Asher 2004a §7 and Bar-Asher 2004b §§7–10). Here I will deal with this on a different level.

בן יודה או' משם ר' שמעון ר' שמעון אינו חייב עד שיכתוב שֵׁם הַשֵּׁם, שנ' 'וּכְתֹבֶת קַעֲקַע[4] לֹא תִתְּנוּ בכם אני ה"[5] (Lev 19:28) "One who writes a כתובת קעקע, if he wrote but did not engrave, or engraved but did not write … R. Šimʿon b. Yudah says in the name of R. Šim̱ on, he is not liable unless he writes the name of God, as it says, 'You shall not incise any writings (כתובת קעקע) on yourselves, I am God.' " This is in effect a type of citation. The same is true regarding a few nouns of the פְּעוּל *paʿūl* pattern, which includes, for example, תְּנוּך *tǝnūḵ* and כְּרוּב *kǝrūḇ* ("angel"). But both of these nouns appear in the Mishnah in contexts which reveal that they are being used as cited lemmata or are being woven into a phrase derived intentionally from BH. In other words: (a) we find the expression תְּנוּך אזנו *tǝnūḵ oznō* in a Mishnah (Negaʿim 14:9) which discusses the verse from Leviticus (14:4), על תְּנוּך אזן המטהר הימנית "on the ridge of the right ear (תנוך אזן) of him who is being cleansed," which seems to be a type of citation; (b) in tractate *Berakhot* we read in the text of *Birkat ha-Zimmun*, נברך אלוהינו...יושב הכרובים "Let us bless our God … Enthroned on the Cherubim" (Ber 7:3); it is known that liturgical texts from the tannaitic and amoraic periods contain woven within them biblical phrases, and this is the case here as well: the only attestation of כְּרוּב *kǝrūḇ* "angel" in the Mishnah[6] is nothing other than an insertion of a phrase found a few times in BH, יושב הַכְּרֻבִים *yōšēḇ ha-kǝrūḇîm* (e.g., 1 Sam 4:4).

7. **In the second type** there are many nouns which were used in the living language both in biblical and tannaitic times; among such names are גַּנָּב *gannāḇ* "thief," חָרָשׁ *ḥārāš* "smith," חֶרֶשׂ *hereś* "clay," כְּלוּב *kǝlūḇ* "cage," נְעֹרֶת *nǝʿōret* "chaff," סֵפֶר *sēfer* "book," and many others. Some have the same meaning or similar in the two periods, and others have meanings in MH different from that they had in BH, but generally their forms are identical in the two periods. More precisely I can say, as their biblical morphology in either the Tiberian or Babylonian traditions, so their form in the Mishnah, or in other words, the nominal pattern found in MH is that found in BH. Such is the case, for example, for everything related to the six nouns just mentioned: there is no morphological difference between the words as they appear in BH and in MH.

8. Even so, we have found nouns which appear in different patterns in BH and MH, such as the noun כתונת "shirt." In both the Tiberian and the Babylonian

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4   In the biblical citation, MS K vocalizes the second ק in the noun קעקע with a *pataḥ*, like the Tiberian vocalization in the Bible, but in the occurrence in the text of the Mishnah, which is here cited at the beginning of the excerpt, this ק is vocalized with a *qameṣ*.

5   This citation is taken directly from MS K with only one change: in the MS the Tetragram is written as three *yod*s.

6   In printed editions the phrase יושב הכרובים is found twice in mBer 7:3, but the MSS support only one occurrence (for details, see Zaksh *ad loc.*).

traditions of BH its form is always כֻּתֹּנֶת *kuttōneṯ*,[7] such as הַכֻּתֹּנֶת *ha-kuttōneṯ* (Gen 37:31), כֻּתָּנְתִּי *kuttontī* (Song 5:3). It is perhaps not beside the point to mention here that the gemination of the *taw* is known also from the Samaritan tradition to the Pentateuch, which reads *kittanet*.[8] But in MH the noun is always found in the pattern פְּעֹלֶת *pəʿōleṯ*, as in כְּתוֹנֶת *kəṯōneṯ* (absolute singular form: Yoma 7:5) in all the reliable witnesses.[9]

9. An example of a different type is the noun גבול "border." This noun is found often in the Bible, and its pattern is always גְּבוּל *gəḇūl*, of the pattern פְּעוּל *pəʿūl*. It is plausible that this is the form of the noun when suffixes are attached to it, whether pronominal or pluralizing: בִּגְבוּלָהּ *biḡḇūlāh*, בִּגְבוּלִי *biḡḇūlī* (AZ 3:4), וּבַגְּבוּלִין *u-baggəḇūlīn* (Šab 1:11). However, in the singular absolute the best MSS show the form גּוֹבָל *gōḇāl* (Kil'ayim 3:1 [4x]; 3:2); this is how it appears in MS K, MS P1, and also (with or without vocalization) in other witnesses, including a number of Genizah fragments.[10] But in less reliable MSS and in printed editions the form is גְּבוּל *gəḇūl*, even in the aforementioned examples from KilꜤayim. It is very probable that the version in the less reliable MSS and the printed editions is a correction made based on BH, a correction which serves to obliterate a rare and unrecognized form of MH.

Even so it can be said that most of the BH nouns attested also in the Mishnah appear in the majority of reliable witnesses in the same forms as they appear in the Bible, and only for a minority of nouns do the [reliable] witnesses of the Mishnah preserve forms other than those preserved by the vocalization traditions of the Bible, as we saw for כתונת and גבול.

10. But sometimes the differences between the traditions reflect two forms of the word which reflect two authentic linguistic variants, and can thus inform us about the parallel existence of two dialects or language-types.[11] Here is an explicit example:

The noun גֹּמֶד *gōmeḏ* "small cubit, half-cubit" is found in the Bible only once, and only in the Tiberian vocalization: וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ אֵהוּד חֶרֶב...גֹּמֶד אָרְכָּהּ "Ehud made for himself a dagger … a *gomed* in length" (Judg 3:16). In the Mishnah, too, it is attested only once, in the plural: וְהַגּוּמְדִין שֶׁל עַרְבַּיִם (Kelim 29:1). This form is found vocalized גּוּמְדִין *gumḏīn* (K, and also LIV and YEM) and also גּוֹמְדִין *gomḏīn*

(thus in PARIS); these two vocalization both reflect a singular גֹּמֶד *gōmeḏ*, as above, known to us from BH and similar to כֹּתֶל *kōṯel* (singular) ~ כּוּתְלִין/כּוֹתְלִין *kuṯlīn/koṯlīn* (plural), according to the pattern known as the "Aramaic plural." As opposed to these, P2 shows גּוּמְּדִין *gummədin* (with geminated *mem*!); this is the plural form of גּוּמֵּד *gummēḏ*. It is totally clear that there is no error here; גּוּמֵּד *gummēḏ* is the equivalent of Aramaic גרמידא/גורמידא.[12] These Aramaic forms appear to be developments of גּוּמֵּד via dissimilation (*mm* > *rm* : *gummed* > *gurmed*), although it is possible that גּוּמֵּד developed from גורמידא via assimilation (*gurmēḏa* > *gummēḏa*).[13] In any case, it would be very difficult to deny the connection between these two forms, the Hebrew and the Aramaic.

For our purposes the two forms attested in the Mishnah – the one a segolate shared by the Bible and some of the MH traditions (גֹּמֶד) and the other geminated and found in P2 (גּוּמֵּד), which shows a relationship to the Aramaic[14] – reflect, to my mind, two authentic forms from two language-types or two dialects.[15]

11. It is important to comment that occasionally we find nouns common to both BH and MH, but the data in BH are not complete and the precise patterns are not known to us. This is exemplified by the noun זכור "male"; we found זְכוּרְךָ *zəḵūrḵā* (Exod 23:17 and more), זְכוּרָה *zəḵūrāh* (Deut 20:13). These vocalizations could reflect either of two different absolute forms, which represent two different nominal patterns: (a) a פְּעוּל *pə ʿūl* nominal form, זְכוּר *zəḵūr*; this is in fact found in MS K at San 6:4 (2x) and also in YEM there; Yeivin found this vocalization in the Babylonian tradition as well; (b) a פָּעוּל *pāʿūl* nominal form, זָכוּר *zāḵūr*; this is how MS K vocalizes at San 4:7, and thus also in PARIS and LIV in all the word's occurrences in the Mishnah, and Yeivin found Babylonian traditions along these lines, as well.[16] In a case such as this there is no avoiding the assumption that we have preserved two reliable traditions, which record two authentic variants that were used in the language when it was spoken (and even in BH?).

12. We can summarize and say that the BH nouns found also in the Mishnah usually appear in Mishnaic Hebrew in the same forms they had in BH, but there are not a few forms that show findings worthy of note; the examples above –כֻּתֹּנֶת as opposed to כְּתֹנֶת, גְּבוּל alongside גּוֹבָל – give some expression to the features

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12　See the dictionaries of Jastrow (for the Talmudim and Midrashim), Sokoloff (for Babylonian Aramaic), Brockelmann (for Syriac), and Macuch (for Mandaic).

13　The distinction between Hebrew *gummēd* with *ē* and Aramaic *gurmīda* with *ī* is a secondary development that does not need to be addressed here.

14　It should be clear that I am not implying that this form is borrowed from Aramaic.

15　I will point out that the pair גּוּמֵּד/גֹּ׳מֶד is parallel to another pair familiar to all: שַׁרְבִיט/שֵׁבֶט (< *šabbitu*) "scepter," one form a segolate and the other consisting of two closed syllables.

16　For the details of this issue, see Bar-Asher 2004b §9.4.

separating two layers of the language. The last example – זָכוּר as well as זְכוּר – exemplifies the lacunae in our data about the Hebrew of the Bible.

NOUNS NOT IN BH

13. The question of the morphology of non-BH nouns in the Mishnah is a complex one, and on this topic a few brief comments will have to suffice here. First we will point out that one must distinguish between very common nouns, such as פטור "exemption" and פסול "flaw," and rare nouns which appear in the Mishnah once or, maximum, twice, like some of the פַּעָל *pa''āl* nouns: בַּקָּר *baqqār* "cattle owner,"[17] סַכָּרִין *sakkārīn* "makers of dams (סָכָרִים),," כַּתָּן *kattān* "cotton merchant," סַקַּיי/סַקָּאי *saqqay/saqqāy* "sack maker,"[18] and more.[19] The same is true for a number of the nouns of the pattern פְּעֹלֶת *pə ʿōlet*, such as גְּרֹדֶת *gərōdet* "the material scraped [נגרד] from vessels while they are being made," קְצֹצֶת *qəṣōṣet* "the material cut [נקצץ] from vessels while they are being made," שְׁחֹלֶת *šəḥōlet* "the waste material that falls from vessels while they are being made."[20]

14. In the decisive majority of the rare nouns there is disagreement among the witnesses (MSS and printed editions) as to the consonantal structures, and not just regarding the vocalization (i.e., the vocalic structures), and therefore the disagreement finds expression in, among other questions, the classification of the nouns by nominal pattern. Thus, for example, regarding the noun גרודת (Kel 11:3); only some of the best witnesses have the correct form, גְּרֹדֶת *gərōdet*, in the פְּעֹלֶת *pə ʿōlet* pattern. Others read גְּרֹרֶת *gərōret* or גְּרוּרֹת *gərūrōt* with a *reš*, and some have גְּרוּדֹת *gərūdōt* – the plural of גְּרוּדָה *gərūdā(h)*.[21] Even for a noun as common as פטור, although there is no disagreement regarding its consonants, the MSS are divided about its vocalization: פְּטוּר *pəṭūr*, פְּטֹר *pəṭōr*, or פִּיטּוּר/פִּטּוּר[22] *piṭṭūr*.[23]

15. Many of the rare nouns which are not attested in BH and were checked in the best MSS of the Mishnah show situations similar to that described for גְּרֹדֶת *gərōdet*. The transmission reflected within each and every witness depends on the nature of the tradition and the degree of faithfulness of the copyist/vocalizer (or printer). There are times when authentic variants have reached us, and times when

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17   The details of this noun were discussed in Bar-Asher 1999:52–55 (§§7–10).

18   סָקִיי is what is found in MS K, while סָקָאי is the version in P2.

19   These nouns and others of the pattern פַּעָל are discussed in Bar-Asher 2004a §§20, 22–23, 27.

20   Various aspects of nouns of the פְּעֹלֶת pattern are discussed in Bar-Asher, *Pe''olet* (in press).

21   For details, see Bar-Asher, *Pe''olet*, §4.1.

22   The addition of a *yod* (פיטור) or a lack thereof (פטור) is not a question of the consonantal structure, but only of vocalic orthography.

23   The details of this noun are discussed in Bar-Asher 2004b §§9.16, 17, and more.

a MS (or a printed edition) transmits a corrupt form. Generally, the best MSS – especially K, P1, P2, A – preserve authentic versions.

16. It is worth emphasizing that the issue of the non-BH nouns is exceptionally broad. Many nouns – and especially the rare ones – require, as mentioned, philological clarification prior to morphological discussions. In the decisive majority one finds that the good MSS transmit variant forms that give expression to the different authentic forms.

It must be said that the investigation of the non-BH nouns is an area upon which many fundamental issues of the nominal morphology within MH depend, and we cannot elaborate here.

SUMMARY

17. By way of summary, we can say that the detailed description of the nominal patterns in the Mishnah allows wide-ranging investigation of linguistic phenomena into the morphology of the noun; one of these phenomena is the relationship of MH as seen in MSS to BH in its two main traditions – the Tiberian and the Babylonian. Nouns from the Bible, in which the text of the Mishnah shows a relationship to the biblical texts – i.e., when we encounter an explicit citation of, or an allusion to, the biblical text, or we can clearly recognize the integration of a biblical word or phrase – they are always found in their BH forms. Of the nouns in living usage in both periods, a decisive majority show an identical form in the Bible's main traditions (Tiberian and Babylonian) and the main traditions of MH. However, there are more than a few exceptions, of different types, as exemplified above in §§7–11.

18. The research into MH has to deal primarily with the nouns that do not appear in the Bible. In their investigation, many nouns require first philological study, in order to ascertain what precisely the consonantal structure of the noun is and what its precise meaning is. Only subsequent to that can the questions of its vocalic structure be raised and the noun assigned to a nominal pattern. We have already seen that in a few cases a noun can belong to one pattern in a certain reliable tradition, but another pattern according to another reliable tradition, such as פָּטוּר in one tradition as opposed to פְּטוּר in a second.

19. A different issue is the degree of authenticity of two (or, sometimes, more than two) given parallel traditions regarding the vocalization of a certain noun such as פְּטוּר/פָּטוּר: do we have two (or more) authentic forms that derive from the living language, thus showing the linguistic variety or different dialects within rabbinic Hebrew, or do we simply have one authentic form and one form that arose at a late date in the course of transmission of Mishnaic Hebrew as a written language, or a reading language, only? This issue, like many other broader issues,

will be dealt with in the course of time in the context of a complete description of the morphology of the noun in the language of the Mishnah.

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