

Artikel

Biblical Hebrew *w^eqāṭal* and Syriac *hwā qāṭel* expressing repetition in the past*

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0. Recent years have seen a surge of renewed interest for the Biblical Hebrew verbal system. Mostly this is a matter of earlier theories coming to fruition,¹ though we find even today a scholar who seems to attempt a fresh description of the system on the basis of the texts alone.² Each one of these recent studies makes a solid contribution to the field, leading on beyond the time-honored and ever-repeated perfect *versus* imperfect theory, which goes back to Ewald in the early 19th century, and, what is more, beyond the elementary historical approach of H. Bauer.³ Yet it may perhaps be said that as a description of the BH verbal system as a whole, none of the theories proposed in these publications is completely satisfactory.⁴ Therefore, even if the elaboration of a comprehensive model is legitimate – it is in a sense the ultimate goal of all research in this field – it is more prudent, and no less correct methodologically, provisionally to limit our research to those parts of the BH verbal system which remain obscure, or which have not hitherto received much attention. The present study is informed by this more prudent approach.⁵

One function of the BH „perfect consecutive“ (*w^eqāṭal*), namely the expression of iterative action in a past-tense context, will be discussed.⁶ Though the iterative function of this verbal form is well known – and duly noted in the grammar-books – there is considerable discussion as to how it should be defined and how it relates to

* I wish to thank Dr. M. Eskhult who has read and commented an earlier draft of this paper.

¹ Two works which stand in the tradition of O. Rössler's and W. Richter's studies on the Hebrew verb: B. Zuber, *Das Tempussystem des biblischen Hebräisch*, BZAW 164 (Berlin 1985). A. Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*, JSOT Suppl. 86 (Sheffield 1990), translation of *Sintassi del verbo ebraico nella prosa biblica classica* (Jerusalem 1986). Two studies which owe a heavy debt to the work of F. Rundgren: B. Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth. With Special emphasis on the Verbal System*, *Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 10 (Uppsala 1987); M. Eskhult, *Studies in Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique in Biblical Hebrew Prose*, *Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 12 (Uppsala 1990). A more eclectic approach: B. K. Waltke, M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake 1990), 455-631.

² E. J. Revell, *The System of the Verb in Standard Biblical Prose*, *HUCA* 60 (1989), 1-37.

³ H. Bauer, *Die Tempora im Semitischen, ihre Entstehung und ihre Ausgestaltung in den Einzelsprachen*, *Beiträge zur Assyriologie und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* 8 (1910), 1-53.

⁴ If only because these theories leave the predicative participle almost wholly out of consideration. See J. Joosten, *The Predicative Participle in Biblical Hebrew*, *ZAH* 2 (1989), 128-159, esp. 156-158.

⁵ See also my study mentioned in the preceding note.

⁶ For the meaning of the term „iterative action“ see section 1.1.

the general function of $w^c qāṭal$. The theory which will be advanced in section 1 is that the iterative function of $w^c qāṭal$ is an extension of its main function, namely the expression of modality.⁷

The phenomenon of a modal verbal form expressing iterativity in the past finds an interesting Semitic parallel in Syriac. Section 2 is devoted to the use of the Syriac periphrastic construction *hwā* + participle (*hwā qāṭel*) to express persistent action – durative or repeated – in a past-tense context. This use has not hitherto been recognized by grammarians of the Syriac language, and a representative sample of cases is gathered in the present study in order to establish that this is indeed a function of *hwā qāṭel*. Since the main function of the Syriac verbal form is the expression of modality (though with a nuance slightly different from $w^c qāṭal$) the fact that one of its subsidiary functions is the expression of persistent action in a past-tense context constitutes an important argument in favour of the theory advanced in section 1. Whereas there is surely no „genetic“ relationship between the Hebrew and Syriac constructions, the structural similarity between them is mutually illuminating.⁸

1. $w^c qāṭal$

1.0. $w^c qāṭal$ a separate verbal category

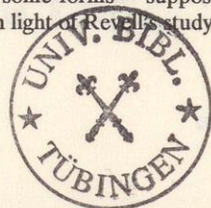
From the formal and functional points of view, $w^c qāṭal$ is clearly differentiated from $qāṭal$.⁹ Driver has gathered all the arguments which need not be repeated here: in the vast majority of cases $w^c qāṭal$ behaves differently from $qāṭal$ and expresses a different meaning.¹⁰ In grammatical description $w^c qāṭal$ must therefore be treated as a separate verbal category. Though it is legitimate, at least from the historical point of view, to inquire about the relationship between $w^c qāṭal$ and $qāṭal$, the ideas one holds about this relationship should not be allowed to impinge upon the determination of the function of $w^c qāṭal$ in the BH language system.

⁷ For a definition of the term „modality“ see n. 11.

⁸ Comparative Semitics was born out of the desire to clarify certain problems of BH, see e.g. M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Hebrew Bible in the light of the Qumran Scrolls and the Hebrew University Bible*, SVT 40 (1988), 42-53. Though it has legitimately developed into an independent discipline, it is regrettable that its original function is nowadays, with the notable exception of lexicography, almost completely abandoned.

⁹ This statement is valid for prose-texts of the classical period. It is a well-established fact that in late BH $w^c qāṭal$ may be used to express single actions in a past-tense context, as is the rule in Mishnaic Hebrew. For poetry, the present state of our knowledge does not allow to make generalizing statements. There are, even in classical prose, quite a few exceptions, where $w^c qāṭal$ expresses single action in a past-tense context: Gen 15:6; 17:20; 21:25; 26:10 etc. These cases are too numerous to be explained away as scribal mistakes. In the present study they will not be discussed.

¹⁰ S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew* (Oxford 1881²), 138-149. However, the nature of the tone shift typical of $w^c qāṭal$ in some forms – supposed by Driver to be phonemic – may no longer be used as an argument, in light of Revel's study (see n. 27).



The main function of *w^cqāṭal* is the expression of modality,¹¹ as is relatively easy to determine. In the vast majority of cases *w^cqāṭal* is used to express obligation, potentiality or prediction.¹²

It is often stated that *w^cqāṭal* is used merely to continue other verbal forms, and that it expresses temporal or logical consequence.¹³ However, this is contradicted by two facts. In the first place, *w^cqāṭal* is not normally employed to continue verbal forms with an indicative meaning,¹⁴ but only such as have a modal meaning. Secondly, it is quite usual in BH to begin a unit with *w^cqāṭal*,¹⁵ which in this case clearly does not express consequence. The view that *w^cqāṭal* expresses consequence is probably due to an „etymologizing“ approach which tries to retrace the function of *w^cqāṭal* to the function of its separate parts: *w^c* and *qāṭal*. Once it is accepted that the function of *w^cqāṭal* must be derived solely from its use in the BH language system, its modal function – in the majority of cases – is clear.

An historical link between the functions of *w^cqāṭal* and *qāṭal* may perhaps be sought in the notorious potential of past-tense verbal forms to express modal functions.¹⁶ For Semitic languages we can point to the precative use of the perfect in Arabic and Syriac.¹⁷ In Hebrew the modal use of *qāṭal* is attested but rarely.¹⁸ It is relatively easy to imagine the development of „(and) would that he killed“ to „(and) he may kill/(and) he will kill“.¹⁹ How the modal function came to be attached specifically to the form *w^cqāṭal*, as opposed to indicative *qāṭal* (which expresses modality only marginally), is probably impossible to say. Undoubtedly the language has here systematized, assigning one form to each function. In an earlier stage the modal function may have been less bound to the use of *wāw*.²⁰

¹¹ The principal element in the notion of modality is that of non-reality: the action expressed by the verbal form exists in potential but is not yet realized. This leads to the different nuances of desire, obligation, permission, prediction. For a general discussion of modality, see J. Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge 1968), 307-311.

¹² See e.g. B. Zuber (note 1), 139.

¹³ E.g. A.E. Cowley (ed.), *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar as Edited and Enlarged by the Late E. Kautzsch* (Oxford 1910) (= GKC), 331, §112.2: „The perfect consecutive, like the imperfect consecutive, always belongs to the period of time expressed by the preceding tense, or its equivalent, with which it is connected as the temporal or logical consequence.“

¹⁴ This was clearly discerned by F. Rundgren, *Intensiv und Aspektkorrelation* (Uppsala 1959), 113-114.

¹⁵ GKC, 334-336, § 112.4

¹⁶ An exact linguistic formulation would not employ the term „past-tense verbal form“ in this connection.

¹⁷ See C. Brockelmann, *Grundriß der vergleichende Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen*, II *Syntax* (Berlin 1913), 29-30, § 16b.

¹⁸ E.g. Gen 21:7 „Who would have said...“; Jud 9:11, 13 „Should I abandon...“.

¹⁹ See H. L. Ginsberg, *The Rebellion of Ba'lu*, Or 5 (1936), 161-198, 177.

²⁰ Instances of a modal use of the suffix conjugation are met with in the Akkadian of the Amarna texts, which probably means that such a usage existed in the Canaanite language of the scribes. See W. L. Moran, *The Hebrew Language in its Northwest Semitic Background*, in: *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. by G. E. Wright (Garden City, New York 1961), 54-72, 64-65. However, in this idiom the modal use of the suffix conjugation is not conditioned by the use of the conjunction *w* (but on the syntactic constellation). The same situation obtains in Phoenician, see C. R. Krahmalkov, *The Qatal with Future Tense Reference in Phoenician*, JSS

1.1. The expression of iterativity in the past

An important subsidiary function of *w^cqāṭal* is the expression of iterativity in a past-tense, usually narrative, context.²¹ Let us consider a few examples:

Gen 47:22 *raq ʾadmat hakkōh^anīm lō^ʾ qānā kī ḥoq lakkōh^anīm mē^ʾēt Par ʿō w^cʾak^clū^ʾ ʾet ḥuqqām ʾašer nātan lāhem Par ʿō* Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh, and lived on the allowance which Pharaoh gave them.²²

By the use of *w^cʾak^clū^ʾ* the Hebrew text indicates that this action occurred more than once over a certain period of time in the past: the priests *used to eat* from the allowance of Pharaoh, and they continued to do so during the 7 years of famine. For Gen 47:22 one could possibly hold on to the idea that *w^cqāṭal* expresses consequence, the following example shows that this is not the function of *w^cqāṭal*:

1 Sam 2:22 *w^cʿelī zāqēn m^cʾōd w^cšāma^c ʾet kol ʾāšer ya^cšūn bānāw l^ckol Yīsrāʾēl* Now Eli was very old, and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel.²³

In some cases the context itself contains an adverbial phrase of time (1 Sam 1:3 „year by year“), a conditional clause (Gen 38:9 „when he went in...“) or another type of clause expressing repetition:

Jud 19:30 *w^chāyā kol hārō^ʾe w^cʾamar lō^ʾ nihy^ctā w^clō^ʾ nir^{ʾa}tā kāzō^ʾt* And all who saw it said:²⁴ „Such a thing has never happened or been seen...“²⁵

Very often *w^cqāṭal* is used side by side with *yiqtol*-forms which also express iterativity:

Exod 33:7 *uMōše yiqqah ʾet hā^ʾohel w^cnāṭā lō^ʾ miḥūš lammaḥ^ane* Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp.²⁶

In the majority of cases, *w^cqāṭal* occurs in the 3rd person (masculine or feminine, singular or plural). However, the following example shows that it is not confined to the 3rd person:

1 Sam 17:34,35 *rō^ʾe hāyā ʿabd^ckā l^cʾābīw baššō^ʾn ubā^ʾ hā^ʾrī w^cʾet haddōb w^cnāšā še mēhā^cʿeder w^cyāšā^ʾtī ʾaḥ^arāw w^chikkītīw w^chiššaltī mi ppīw* Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and when there came a lion, or a bear,

31 (1986), 5-10. Krahmalkov shows that Phoenician may use the suffix conjugation as a modal form in a specific function not unlike that of *w^cqāṭal*; however, this use is not dependent on the presence of the conjunction *w*.

²¹ Most grammars recognize the use of *w^cqāṭal* to express iterativity in present-tense contexts as well. This use may also be explained as an extension of the modal function. However, since it is not very well attested it will not be discussed in its own right in the present study.

²² The English version cited is the Revised Standard Version, but here and there the translation has been adapted to bring out the point which is of importance to the argument.

²³ Other examples of *w^cqāṭal* where the notion of consequence is not applicable: Ex 16:21; 34:34; Num 9:21; 1 Sam 7:16; 27:9.

²⁴ I.e. „Every time one saw it he would say...“.

²⁵ Additional examples Gen 30:41; Ex 17:11; Num 21:9; Jud 6:3; 1 Sam 2:13, 19.

²⁶ Gen 2:6; 6:4; 29:2, 3; Ex 34:34; Jud 2:19; 1 Sam 27:9.

and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and smote him and delivered it out of his mouth.²⁷

From these few examples can be seen what is confirmed by a review of a great number of cases, namely that $w^e qāṭal$ expresses iterative action, i.e. it expresses that the action was repeated a number of times over a certain period of time, in the past. In some of the cases one might argue that it expresses habitative action, durative action or that it functions as a protasis or apodosis in a conditional clause;²⁸ but none of these other concepts fits all the cases.

1.2. Theories of the iterative function of $w^e qāṭal$

The iterative function of $w^e qāṭal$ has since long intrigued grammarians of BH. Several approaches to the problem have been essayed. A first type of explanation of the iterative function of $w^e qāṭal$ is one which attempts to relate this function to the function of simple $qāṭal$. This approach was championed by H. Ewald, who exerted enormous influence on subsequent research into the BH verbal system. Ewald held on to the idea that $qāṭal$ and $w^e qāṭal$ express fundamentally the same function, the difference between the two being that, through the addition of the copula, $w^e qāṭal$ is linked more closely to what precedes.²⁹ Therefore, the different functions of $w^e qāṭal$ must be explained as applications or developments of the fundamental function of $qāṭal$. A recent exponent of this view is F. Rundgren, who explains the iterative function of $w^e qāṭal$ as a manifestation of the stative function of $qāṭal$.³⁰ What is expressed by $w^e qāṭal$ is the general-stative aspect; in certain contexts this may be interpreted in the sense of an iterative.³¹ Thus in 1 Sam 1:3, $w^e cālā$ means merely „er ist (war) Hinaufzieher“; by the addition of the adverbial phrase „year by year“ we learn that in fact repeated action is meant.³²

²⁷ Other examples (from poetry): Amos 4:7; Jer 6:17. The examples in 1 Sam 17:35 do not exhibit the tone-shift typical of $w^e qāṭal$ in the 1st and 2nd p. singular, whereas the examples in Amos 4:7 and Jer 6:17 do exhibit it. However, it is to be doubted whether the tone-shift has any real importance in the study of $w^e qāṭal$. The research of Revell on the distribution of the cases of tone-shift has made it clear that, in all probability, the phenomenon arose in the reading tradition of Biblical Hebrew a long time after the modal use of $w^e qāṭal$ had become obsolete in the living language. See E. J. Revell, *Stress and the WAW „Consecutive“ in Biblical Hebrew*, JAOS 104 (1984), 437-444, esp. 440.

²⁸ In those cases where it occurs in a conditional clause it still expresses repeated action: Gen 38:9; Ex 16:21; 17:11; Num 21:9; Jud 6:3. After the completion of the present study, W. von Soden has forcibly opted for the habitative, as opposed to the iterative, function of the verbal form under discussion. See W. von Soden, *Gab es im vorexilischen Hebräisch Aramaismen in der Bildung und der Verwendung von Verbformen?* ZAH 4 (1991), 32-45, esp. 36-43. Limitations of space preclude a thorough discussion of von Soden's contribution; note, however, that not every case cited by him can be explained as habitative: Ex 17:11; 1 Sam 2:22; 2 Sam 17:17; Isa 6:3.

²⁹ H. Ewald, *Ausführliches Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Bundes* (Leipzig 1856⁶), 512, 518.

³⁰ F. Rundgren (n. 14), 111.

³¹ See also M. Eskhult (n. 1), 31: „...an activity that reoccurs over and over again may be presented as if it were a state.“

³² However, not all cases of iterative $w^e qāṭal$ are accompanied by an adverbial phrase expressing repetition.

The main criticism which may be levelled at Rundgren's (and Ewald's) theory, is that he does not recognize $w^c qāṭal$ as a separate verbal category.³³ Strikingly enough, simple $qāṭal$ is never used to express iterativity. It is therefore incorrect to use the supposed function of $qāṭal$ as the basis of the explanation of iterative $w^c qāṭal$.³⁴

A different type of approach is that of S. R. Driver.³⁵ Driver realized that, at least on the synchronic level, the gap between the functions of $qāṭal$ and $w^c qāṭal$ is too great to be bridged by theoretical linguistic considerations. This led him to the conclusion that $w^c qāṭal$ has no independent function properly speaking.³⁶ It is used to continue certain other verbal forms (mainly $yiqṭol$) and merely expresses the same verbal function as they.³⁷ The fact that $w^c qāṭal$ is also used at the beginning of a unit he explains by quite a feat of prose:

But the perfect with *waw conv.* is also found without being attached to any preceding verb from which to derive its special signification: like the iron which, after long contact with the magnet, becomes itself magnetic, the perfect with *waw*, from constant association with a preceding imperfect, became so completely invested with the properties of the latter that, though not originally belonging to it but only *acquired*, it still continued to retain and exhibit them, even when that in which they had their proper seat was no longer itself present.³⁸

From this point of view, the iterative function of $w^c qāṭal$ ceases to be problematic. Since $yiqṭol$ may be used to express iterativity in a past-tense context,³⁹ $w^c qāṭal$ may be used in exactly the same way.⁴⁰

Of all the existent theories concerning iterative $w^c qāṭal$ Driver's is certainly the most coherent and in accord with the facts. And yet it raises quite a few questions which are difficult to answer. Is it likely that a verbal form would have no expression of its own? And that it would completely assimilate the function of another form? A concrete difficulty with Driver's theory is that whereas $w^c qāṭal$ may continue $yiqṭol$ in most of its functions, it is conspicuously absent as a continuation of $yiqṭol$ expressing the real present.⁴¹ In view of these remarks it is

³³ Rundgren cites the verb in 1 Sam 1:3 as cālā – whereas the Hebrew text has $w^c ^cālā$ – as if the presence of the conjunction is of no consequence.

³⁴ It seems that Rundgren himself changed his idea on this point, see n. 37.

³⁵ S. R. Driver, *Treatise* (see n. 10).

³⁶ Compare B. Johnson, *Hebräisches Perfekt und Imperfekt mit vorangehendem w^c* (Lund 1979), 95f. Johnson holds that the value of $w^c qāṭal$ was determined negatively: those verbal functions that could not be expressed by $wayyiqṭol$ were assumed by $w^c qāṭal$.

³⁷ F. Rundgren, *Das althebräische Verbum. Abriß der Aspektlehre* (Uppsala 1961), 86, (on Gen 29:2f) expresses a similar but more nuanced view: „Die sich aus der konjunktivischen Verbindung ergebende habitative Bedeutung („pflügen“) gehört daher nicht zum linguistischen Zeichen des Perfekts im System der Sprache (langue).“

³⁸ Driver, 116.

³⁹ GKC, 315, §107.1b.

⁴⁰ This view comes very close to that of the theory of the „Inversionspaare“ which was developed by W. Richter and his students, from a hint of O. Röblier. See W. Groß, *Verbform + Funktion. Wayyiqṭol für die Gegenwart* (St. Ottilien 1976), 19-44 for a historical review of this theory.

⁴¹ Admittedly $yiqṭol$ is very rare in this function.

probably better to suppose that $w^c qāṭal$ did from the start have its own function, which was, however, very close to that of $yiqtol$ in a number of cases.⁴²

A very original proposal with regard to the iterative function of $w^c qāṭal$ is that of H. Bauer.⁴³ In his seminal – though completely outdated – study on the development of the tense-systems of the Semitic languages he comes to discuss the problem of the „conversive tenses“ of BH. For $w^c qāṭal$ he offers the following solution. West-Semitic $qatal$ is related to East-Semitic *ikašad* (the Akkadian imperfect). Whereas in most West-Semitic languages $qatal$ developed into a past tense, its more original function is preserved in East-Semitic: *ikašad* is used as a present-future, as an injunctive and as an expression of duration in the past. BH has preserved both the younger and the older functions of $qatal$. On the one hand $qāṭal$ is a past tense (the younger function), as is its counterpart in Arabic, Aramaic and Ethiopic. On the other hand $w^c qāṭal$ has the same functions as *ikašad*: present-future, injunctive and the expression of iterativity in the past (the older function).⁴⁴

Though it is difficult to deny the brilliance of Bauer's approach, it is, at least on this point, completely misguided. Even if the morphological relationship between West-Semitic $qatal$ and East-Semitic *ikašad* were defensible, which seems doubtful,⁴⁵ there would still be some very important functional differences between $w^c qāṭal$ and *ikašad*. In BH $w^c qāṭal$ is never used simply as a present tense.⁴⁶ And in a past-tense context $w^c qāṭal$ expresses iterativity, not simple duration.⁴⁷ In view of these considerations we cannot accept Bauer's theory as a realistic explanation of the iterative function of $w^c qāṭal$.

1.3. A new proposal

An adequate theory of the iterative function of $w^c qāṭal$ should, in my opinion, take its point of departure in the recognition that $w^c qāṭal$ is not to be equated in any way with simple $qāṭal$; it should be considered as a separate formal category with its own function. Furthermore, it is not likely, *a priori*, that $w^c qāṭal$ should have no expression of its own, functioning, as it were, as a „dummy“ form which assimilates the meaning of the preceding verbal form. Finally, it is not admissible to use an Akkadian verbal form, or a reconstructed Proto-Semitic one, as a *deus ex machina* to account for the different functions of $w^c qāṭal$.

All these pitfalls can be circumvented if we view the iterative function of $w^c qāṭal$ as an extension of its modal function. The phenomenon of the use of a modal verbal

⁴² This does not exclude the possibility that $w^c qāṭal$ and $yiqtol$ should be regarded as a pair, in the way of Richter and his school (see section 4.).

⁴³ Die Tempora im Semitischen (see n. 3).

⁴⁴ G. R. Driver, Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System (Edinburgh 1936), follows Bauer's lead. However, rather than relating $w^c qāṭal$ to the Akkadian imperfect, he relates it to the Akkadian permansive *kašid*, to which he ascribes more or less the same functions as Bauer ascribes to *ikašad*. Furthermore, the coexistence of older and younger functions in BH is explained by Driver as the result of language mixture.

⁴⁵ It is today a recognized fact that the middle consonant of the form is doubled: *ikaššad*.

⁴⁶ See above at n. 41.

⁴⁷ See section 1.1.

form in order to express iterativity in the past is well-known from modern English. Examples:⁴⁸

I remember when we were boys, I would always be asking my tutor for a holiday, which I would pass very likely swinging on a gate, or making ducks and drakes over the pond. At times, in the dimly lighted room, he would sigh heavily and, when the gout was not too rampant, would get up from his chair and pace the room. Sometimes I would see Gerald in the Café Royal.

The auxiliary verb „will“ is most often used to express modality.⁴⁹ Most often a clause like „he would get up“ would express that the action described is not real but that its realization depends on the will of the actor, or on the circumstances. Thus the English use of modal „would“ to express iterativity in the past provides a striking parallel to the different functions of BH *w^cqāṭal*.⁵⁰ And indeed, we find that modern English translations sometimes use the „would...“-form to render iterative *w^cqāṭal*.⁵¹

It seems that English grammarians are not quite in agreement on the connection between the modal and iterative functions of the „would...“-form. The iterative function is usually viewed as a contextual application of one of the components of the modal function of the form.⁵² Such an explanation may be adequate for BH as well; it would be feasible to derive the iterative function from one of the components of *w^cqāṭal*'s modal function: prediction, potentiality, conditionality, obligation. Alternatively, one may turn to the essence of the verbal function of „modality“ in order to explain the iterative function. But however this may be, the English parallel shows that it is quite possible to connect the iterative function of *w^cqāṭal* to its main function of expressing modality. We should not, therefore, seek to explain iterative *w^cqāṭal* in a different way.

⁴⁸ The examples were taken from E. Krusinga, *A Handbook of Present-day English. Part II English Accidence and Syntax 1* (Groningen 1931²), 486.

⁴⁹ Lyons (n. 11), 306. „Will“ is used also in future-tense clauses. However, since future action is not yet realized, these may be viewed as modal clauses. Compare Lyons, 310: „For general syntactic reference, it may be taken as axiomatic that 'futurity' is a notion that cuts across the distinction of mood and tense.“

⁵⁰ Of course there are many differences, both on the morphological and the functional levels, between the English and BH phenomena. To mention only one, English „would“ is opposed as a past tense to present-tense „will“, whereas BH *w^cqāṭal* as a modal verbal form stands outside the tense-system. Nevertheless, the parallelism between the two phenomena is sufficient to support our argument.

⁵¹ E.g. in the RSV: Gen 29:3 „the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well“; Exod 33:9 „And the LORD would speak with Moses“; 34:35 „and Moses would put the veil upon his face again“; Num 21:9; Jud 6:3; 1 Sam 2:13.

⁵² The English function is explained as an extension of the predictive function of the „will“-form by R. Quirk et al., *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (London 1985), 229.

2. *hwā qāṭel*2.0. The verbal form *hwā qāṭel* and its function

In Syriac the Semitic heritage of verbal forms has been considerably expanded, mainly by periphrastic constructions which combine the verb *hwā* „to be“ with the prefix-conjugation, the suffix-conjugation or the active participle. One of the most remarkable of these composite verbal forms consists of the suffix-conjugation of the verb *hwā* followed by the active participle: *hwā qāṭel*. The form *hwā qāṭel* is a separate category of the Syriac verbal system, and in all major grammars it is treated as such.⁵³ It is notably to be distinguished from *qāṭel (h)wā*, consisting of the same elements in the reverse order, which functions in an entirely different way.⁵⁴ The main function of *hwā qāṭel* is clearly modal: it is used to express a command, a desire, a prediction.⁵⁵ Example:

Matt 6:7 *lā hwaytōn mpaqāin ʾa(y)k ḥanpē* Do not babble like the heathen.

It is also used in dependent clauses.⁵⁶ Example:

1 Tim 2:8 *šābē (ʾ)nā hākēl dahwaw mšallēn gabrē...* I desire that the men should pray...

In the grammar-books these are the only functions which are listed for *hwā qāṭel*.⁵⁷ However, as we will see, some cases may be found where *hwā qāṭel* is used in a past-tense context, with a function reminiscent of the iterative function of *w^cqāṭal* (see section 1).

2.1. *hwā qāṭel* in past-tense contexts

Most of the examples of *hwā qāṭel* in a past-tense context which have come to my attention are from the OT Peshitta.⁵⁸ To begin with, *hwā qāṭel* is relatively frequent in the rendering of Hebrew *hāyā* (/way^chī) *qōṭēl*. Example:

2 Sam 7:6 *meṭṭul dlā yetbet bbaytā men yawmā dʾasqet labnay Yisrāyel men ʾarʿā dMeṣrēn wa^cdammā lyawmānā wahwīt mhallek bmašknē* For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about (*wā^cehyeh mīthallēk*) in tents.

⁵³ T. Nöldeke, *Kurzgefaßte syrische Grammatik* (Leipzig 1898²; repr. Darmstadt 1977), 196-197, §§ 260-261; R. Duval, *Traité de grammaire syriaque* (Paris 1881; repr. Amsterdam 1969), 320, § 334c-d.

⁵⁴ Though Syriac allows relative freedom in word-order, the position of small words such as the enclitic personal pronoun, particles and forms of the verb *hwā* is usually well defined. It is therefore necessary to regard *hwā qāṭel* and *qāṭel (h)wā* as two distinct verbal forms.

⁵⁵ Nöldeke, § 260; Duval, 334 c.

⁵⁶ Nöldeke, § 261; Duval § 334 d.

⁵⁷ Nöldeke, 208, mentions one case of *hwā qāṭel* in a past-tense context, in the section on *qāṭel (h)wā*.

⁵⁸ For the books for which it is available the edition of the Peshitta institute in Leiden (published by Brill) has been used; for other books the OTP is quoted according to the edition of S. Lee.

There are 22 such cases with *hwā qāṭel* rendering Hebrew *hāyā* (/way^ehī) *qōṭēl*.⁵⁹ The fact that Syriac grammar-books say nothing of a function of *hwā qāṭel* in a past-tense context would seem to invite the view that in these cases the translator is producing translation-Syriac which is not representative of regular Syriac syntax but merely imitates the Hebrew. However, let it be said immediately that such a practice would not be typical of the Peshitta's usual translation technique, which is aimed at reproducing the sense of the source-text in idiomatic Syriac.⁶⁰ And on the other hand this view does not explain why most cases of *hāyā* (/way^ehī) *qōṭēl* were not rendered by *hwā qāṭel*.⁶¹ Even so, it would of course be methodologically incorrect to use these 22 cases to establish that *hwā qāṭel* has, apart from its modal function, a function in past-tense contexts.

The case is different, however, when *hwā qāṭel* is used where the Hebrew does not have a composite tense. I have gathered the following examples:

Jud 4:4 *waDbōrā* ^a(n)ttā *nbīrā* ^a(n)ttat *Lpīōr whī hwāt dāynā* *lYisrāyel bhaw zabnā* And Debora, a prophetess, the woman of Lapitur, she judged (*hī*^o *šōp*^e*īā*) Israel at that time.

Jud 14:17 *wahwāt bākya hānnōn šab*^e*ā yawmīn dmešūtūā* She wept (*wattēbk*) during those seven days of the feast.

Jud 16:2 *w^eetkmen(w)* ^e*law(hy) kulleh lelyā ... wahwaw melahšīn kulleh lelyā w^eemar(w)* And they lay in wait for him all night... and they were whispering (*wayyithar*^e*šūt*) all through the night saying...

1 Kings 18:26 *wnasbū(hy) ltawrā d^eetTheb lhōn w^eabdū(hy) wahwaw qārēn bašmeh dBa^elā men šaprā wa^edammā lṭahrā* And they took the bull which was given them and they prepared it and called (*wayyiqr*^e*ū*) on the name of Baal from morning until noon.

1 Kings 18:29 *wkad* ^e*bar ṭahrā hwaw metnabbēn* ^a*dammā lzabnā dsāleq qurbānā* And as midday passed they prophesied on (*wayyitnabb*^e*ū*) until the time when the sacrifice goes up.

Ruth 2:17 *wahwāt lāqtā bḥaqlā* ^e*dammā lramšā* So she gleaned (*watt^elaqqēt*) in the field until evening.

2 Chron 26:8 *wahwā* ^a*zel šmeh* ^e*dammā l^aar^eā dMešrēn meṭṭul dmasgē (h)wā* And his fame spread (*wayyēlek*) even to the land of Egypt, for he became very strong.

2 Chron 26:13 *wgabrē* ^a*sray saypā hwaw leh šab*^e*ā al pīn whameš m()ā dahwaw qāymin kulyōm wnāṭrīn lmalkā* And he had 7500 swordsmen who stood around the king all day and guarded him (MT diff.).

These cases go to show that, at least in the language of the OT Peshitta,⁶² *hwā qāṭel* does function in past-tense contexts. Especially in those cases where *hwā qāṭel*

⁵⁹ Jud 16:21; 2 Sam 7:6; 8:15; 1 Kings 5:24 (5:10 in the Syriac); 2 Kings 17:25, 28, 29, 32, 41; Jer 32:30; Esth 2:7; 6:1; Dan 10:2; Neh 2:13,15; 3:26; 6:14; 1 Chron 18:14; 2 Chron 17:12; 24:12; 30:11; 36:16.

⁶⁰ In the domain of the verbal system one could point to the fact that temporal phrases of the type *b^eqoṭlō* are never rendered with an infinitive phrase in Syriac.

⁶¹ Gen 37:2; 39:22; Exod 19:19; Jud 1:7; 1 Sam 2:11; 18:9; 29; 2 Sam 3:6, 17; 1 Kings 5:1; 12:6; 20:40; 2 Kings 17:33; 18:4; Isa 59:2; Ezek 34:2; Job 1:14; Est 2:15; Dan 8:5; Neh 1:4; 6:19,19; 1 Chron 6:17; 2 Chron 5:8; 9:26; 10:6; 22:3; 30:10. Note that there is no Bible book which uses *hwā qāṭel* exclusively.

⁶² As is well-known, the two books of Chronicles are not part of the original OT Peshitta, and their text is characterized by a number of solipsisms, with regard to syntax, vocabulary and

renders BH *wayyiqtol*, the translator clearly deviated from his usual practice,⁶³ in order to express a nuance which he felt was implied in the source text.

Final corroboration for this function of *hwā qāṭel* is afforded by its occurrence in other Syriac texts which were not translated from Hebrew. I have noted the following instances:

Ahiqar⁶⁴ p. nṯ, l. 1 *wahwaw qā^cēn ṭlayā² a(y)k dyallṭpīn hwaw* (Being asked to build a castle in the sky, Ahiqar teaches two infants to shout: „Give bricks and mortar to idle masons“. ⁶⁵ He then puts the infants in a basket which two eagles take up into the air.) And the boys cried out as they had been taught.

Aphr.⁶⁶ vol. I, col. 925, ll. 5-7 *ṣyādeh (h)wā gēr d² Abrāhām dkul yōm dahwā mqabbel² aksnāyē lwāteh* For it was Abraham's every-day habit that he would host strangers at his place.⁶⁷

Aphr. vol. I, col. 129, ll. 9-10 *dhū hwā mqabbel ṣlawūtā bkul zban* For he (Gabriel) used to collect the prayers at all times.

Apoc. Bar.⁶⁸ 13:12 *bkulzban gēr hwīt ma(ṣ)ṭeb lkōn w²a(n)ttōn hwaytōn kāprīn bṭaybūtā bkulzban* For at all times I did you good, and you were ungrateful at all times.

Odes of Sol.⁶⁹ 24:5 *wathōmē² etptah(w) wetkassīw wahwaw bā^cēn Imāryā² a(y)k hānnēn dyāldān* The depths were opened and covered and they searched for the Lord as women in childbirth.

Odes of Sol. 35:2 *wa^cnānā daṣlāmā² aqīm l^cel men rēš(y) dahwāt mnaṭṭrā lī bkulzban* And a cloud of peace he set above my head and it guarded me all the time.

In these clauses, *hwā qāṭel* appears to be used in the same way as in the OTP (see section 2.2). Admittedly the examples are so scarce as almost to be discredited,⁷⁰ which, incidentally, is probably the reason why the construction is not treated in the grammar books. And yet, the fact that these cases exist show that *hwā qāṭel* does have a distinct function in past-tense contexts. We will now take a closer look at this function.

2.2. The frequentative function of *hwā qāṭel*

Close study of the examples of *hwā qāṭel* in past-tense contexts reveals that its function is similar to the function of BH *w^cqāṭal* discussed above, though not identical with it. In the following we will take our argument from the cases where

translation technique. However, in this case, Chronicles concurs with other books of the OT Peshitta.

⁶³ BH *wayyiqtol* is usually rendered by Syriac *qṭal*.

⁶⁴ The Story of Ahiqar, ed. by F. C. Conybeare, J. Rendel Harris and A. Smith Lewis (Cambridge 1913²).

⁶⁵ See, for the text of what the infants shouted, J. P. Margoliouth, Supplement to the Thesaurus Syriacus of R. Payne Smith (Oxford 1927; repr. Hildesheim 1981), 35.

⁶⁶ Patrologia syriaca, Vol. I (Paris 1894), Vol. II (Paris 1907), ed. J. Parisot.

⁶⁷ Nöldeke cites this case in the paragraph on the use of *hwā qāṭel* in dependent clauses, § 261. However, this is the only case where the clause depends on a noun.

⁶⁸ The Apocalypse of Baruch, according to the edition of the Peshitta Institute (Leiden 1973).

⁶⁹ The Odes of Solomon, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Oxford 1973).

⁷⁰ There are, unless I am mistaken, only two examples in the whole corpus of Aphrahat's 23 demonstrations. Compare, for syntactical phenomena which are extremely rare but nevertheless part of the Syriac language, the data gathered in my article on: The Use of Some Particles in the Old Testament Peshitta, *Textus* 14 (1988), 175-183.

hwā qāṭel does not correspond to BH *hāyā* (/wayPh) *qōṭēl* and the cases outside the OT Peshitta.

It is striking that *hwā qāṭel* often occurs in clauses which contain an adverbial *bkulzban* „at all times“ (Aphr. I 129; Apoc. Bar. 13:12; Odes of Sol. 35:2) or (*b*)*kulyōm* „every day“ (2 Chron. 26:13; Aphr. I 925). This indicates a durative or habitative function. In other clauses we find an express mention of the time during which the action was perpetuated or repeated (1 Kings 18:26 „from morning till noon“; 18:29 „until the time when the sacrifice goes up“; Jud 14:17 „during those seven days“; 16:2 „all through the night“; Ruth 2:17 „until the evening“).⁷¹ In the few remaining cases which are not defined by an adverbial phrase, the action may also be understood as enduring or repeated.⁷² Often, the clause seems to contain a nuance of persistence, typical examples are: 1 Kings 18:26, 29; Ruth 2:17; Apoc. Bar. 13:12.

The material is too scanty to allow a thorough comparison between the Syriac and BH verb forms. A distinction between Syriac *hwā qāṭel* and BH *w^cqāṭal* seems to be that the lapse of time over which the action is spread may be much shorter for *hwā qāṭel* than for *w^cqāṭal*. Such clauses as Ahiqar 59:1 „And the children shouted (kept shouting) as they had been taught“ are not attested for BH; *w^cqāṭal* probably implies repetition over a longer period of time.⁷³

On the other hand, the past-tense function of *hwā qāṭel* is sufficiently similar to that of *w^cqāṭal* to draw a parallel between the two. Especially so because both forms have as their main function the expression of modality. These forms and the English „would...“ form testify to the fact that a modal verb form may, under certain circumstances, acquire the secondary function of expressing repeated action in a past-tense context.

3. The BH verbal system

The present study shows that if *w^cqāṭal* has as its main function the expression of modality, its iterative function may be viewed as a regular extension of the main function. The phenomenon of a modal verbal form expressing repeated action in a past-tense context finds more or less close parallels in English and Syriac.

Such a conclusion raises a question with regard to BH *yiqtol*. This verbal form often appears side by side with *w^cqāṭal*, expressing at least seemingly the same functions.⁷⁴ Notably, it also expresses iterativity in past-tense contexts.⁷⁵ Should we

⁷¹ Though I would rather opt for the frequentative function, it is impossible, on the basis of the examples, to exclude the durative function.

⁷² Jud 4:4 ; 2 Chron 26:8; Ahiqar 59:1 the infants do not shout once, they „keep shouting“; OoS 24:5 the image indicates that the action was perpetuated during a certain time.

⁷³ Indirect corroboration of this point is afforded by the fact that iterative *w^cqāṭal* is never rendered by *hwā qāṭel* in the OT Peshitta.

⁷⁴ This way of presenting the facts is so general as to be incorrect. It is not possible, nowadays, simply to speak about *yiqtol* („the prefix conjugation“) as if that is a well-defined verbal category; at least two different types of prefix conjugations should be distinguished. See further on.

⁷⁵ Examples in section 1.1. (n. 26).

not, then, explain the functions of *yiqtol* in the same way as those of *w^cqāṭal*? In the framework of the present study this point must remain hypothetical, but I should at least like to state that a case can be made for analyzing the function of *yiqtol* in the same way as that of *w^cqāṭal*. According to such an analysis, the main function of *yiqtol* would be the expression of modality,⁷⁶ and one of its subsidiary functions - an extension of the main function - the expression of iterativity.⁷⁷ In order to elucidate this last remark, and to show how the results of the present study could be integrated within a general theory of the BH verb I would like, in a few concluding remarks, to broaden the discussion in order to include some recent insights into the functional structure of the BH verbal system.

The recent researches of Niccacci and Revell have demonstrated more clearly than ever before that two tiers must be distinguished in the BH modal system.⁷⁸ The first tier consists of the Short Form of the Prefix Conjugation (PCSF)⁷⁹ together with the cohortative and the imperative, which forms have a marked tendency to take the first position in the clause. The function of these forms seems to have an affinity with what is called „intrinsic modality“ in English grammar: the action is viewed as being in some way subject to human control.⁸⁰ The second tier consists of *w^cqāṭal*, which is mechanically replaced by *yiqtol* (the Long Form of the Prefix Conjugation, PCLF) whenever the verb cannot take the first position in the clause. The function of these forms reveals an affinity with „extrinsic modality“: the action is viewed as being subject to other factors than human control.⁸¹

However one wishes to define their exact functions, the classification of these forms as proposed by Niccacci and Revell seems to me to be correct. Thus we could say that the modal system is made up of the opposition between the two tiers: (coh., imper., PCSF) : (*w^cqāṭal*, x-PCLF). Within each of the two tiers there may again be opposition between the different forms which constitute the group. On the other hand, the two tiers of the modal system are opposed *en bloc* to the indicative verbal

⁷⁶ Statistically, at least, *yiqtol* is most often used to express modal functions: desire, obligation, permission, prediction, or in dependent clauses. For the indicative use of *yiqtol* see n. 82.

⁷⁷ The usual view is that *yiqtol* may express repetition (or duration) in a past-tense context because it is the normal form for the cursive aspect (or for the present tense). Just as Classical Arabic *yaqtulu* and Akkadian *iparras*, both „present-tense“ forms may express duration or repetition in a past-tense context, so also BH *yiqtol*. The difficulty with this view is that BH *yiqtol* is very rarely, and only in certain types of clauses, used as a real present tense (though it is used as a general present).

⁷⁸ See notes 1 and 2 and A. Niccacci, A Neglected Point of Hebrew Syntax: *Yiqtol* and Position in the Sentence, *Liber Annuus* 37 (1987), 7-19. Niccacci and Revell do not ascribe a modal but an indicative function to the second tier (*w^cqāṭal* and x-*yiqtol*); however, this is mostly a matter of terminology.

⁷⁹ As is well-known, the Long Form and the Short Form of the Prefix Conjugation usually coincide. However, the fact that they do not always coincide, and the marked tendency of the Short Form to take the first position in the clause, requires that they be distinguished at least on the syntactic level.

⁸⁰ R. Quirk et al., *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (London 1985), 219.

⁸¹ See the preceding note.

system which consists of the predicative participle, the Suffix Conjugation and *wayyiqtol*.

Envoy: The basic opposition within the BH verbal system is not between *qāṭal* and *yiqtol*. From the point of view of the system, such an opposition doesn't exist at all. *Qāṭal* is opposed to other indicative forms, *yiqtol* to other modal forms;⁸² the indicative and modal subsystems are opposed to one another *en bloc*. In a formula using the colon to express opposition, this may be expressed as follows: (SC, Ptcp+Su, *wayyiqtol*) : ([coh., imper., PCSF] : [*w^cqāṭal*, X-PCLF]). Of course this is only a rapid schema, not a serious attempt to describe the BH verbal system. However, since language is a system of oppositions (de Saussure), this schema may prove to be useful as a frame of reference. Even those scholars who prefer a „text-linguistic“ approach could probably use it as a starting point - though they may wish to ascribe other functions to the different tiers and forms.⁸³

Abstract:

The main function of Biblical Hebrew *w^cqāṭal* is best described in terms of modality. Its subsidiary function of expressing repeated action in past-tense contexts can be explained as an extension of the modal function, as is shown by parallel phenomena in modern English (the „would...“-form) and classical Syriac (*hwā qāṭel*). In this way the iterative function of *w^cqāṭal* is integrated into a systematic view of the verbal system of Biblical Hebrew. Within this system, *w^cqāṭal* turns out to be one of the pillars of the modal sub-system, functioning side by side with *x-yiqtol*, and opposing the cohortative, imperative and jussive.

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⁸² From the point of view of the system, the indicative functions of *yiqtol* are negligible. One could argue, even, that the use of *yiqtol* to refer to the real present in questions etc. (see Joosten, n. 4, 157) is modal: in a question the action is not entirely „real“, it is questioned.

⁸³ Personally, I am attracted by the approach of Eskhult, n. 1, for whom morphosyntax and text-linguistics are not mutually exclusive, but, on the contrary, complementary. He sees the text-linguistic function of the different tenses as an actualization of their morphological function.