

The patterns of the qal conjugation in Mishnaic Hebrew: Between the first vocalized editions and the oral reading traditions

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At an early stage in the history of Hebrew, there was a systematic distinction between the Pa^{al} pattern, which indicated active verbs, and the Pa^{el} and Pa^{ol} patterns, which indicated a state or quality. In Mishnaic Hebrew, the use of Pa^{al} supplanted the use of the other patterns. In addition, the role of the active conjugations to express a state or process was diminishing, and many of the stative verbs moved to the passive conjugations. Nevertheless, many stative verbs remained in the active conjugations, some of them are used in both passive and active conjugations with no difference in meaning, creating morphological duplications in similar contexts.

Towards the middle of the 17th century, the first vocalized Mishnah editions were published in Constantinople and Amsterdam. The above issue has not yet been thoroughly researched with attention to these editions. It turns out that the disappearance of Pa^{el} and the transition of stative verbs to the passive conjugations were greatly deepened compared to the medieval vocalized manuscripts, and yet, the written version held by the learners of MH reduced the effect of these changes on the Hebrew realized by the readers. The picture that emerges from the 17th century European editions is surprisingly similar to the reading traditions from North Africa and the Levant recorded by scholars in the second half of the 20th century.

My presentation deals with the main differences between the medieval manuscripts and the first editions of the Mishna in comparison with the reading traditions, and the fascinating interface between reading and writing, since in many cases the written forms did not match the reading methods of the vocalizers. In some cases, they aligned themselves according to the written form and vocalized contrary to their habit. However, in other cases their awareness of the reading tradition stood firmly against the written form.