

## Morphological Variation in the Imperfect of *hewâ* in Onqelos and Jonathan \*

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Long ago, G. Dalman<sup>1</sup> called attention to the fact that Targum Onqelos preserves two types of the *peal* imperfect for the verb *hewâ*, one form with the *waw* of the root, for example *yihweyan*<sup>2</sup>, and one with the syncopation of the *waw* of the root, for example *yehôn*<sup>3</sup>. He observed that the feminine plural always uses the *waw* form and that the first common singular uses it occasionally. Dalman observed this phenomenon in Targum Onqelos only, but drew no conclusions from it, apart from gender distinction in the plural.

Dalman failed to note that Targum Jonathan to the Prophets also attests these forms. Together with this, he failed to observe

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<sup>1</sup> G. DALMAN, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch* (2nd ed. Leipzig 1905; reprint Darmstadt 1960) p. 353.

<sup>2</sup> Some MSS vocalize according to the following pattern: *yihwiyan*.

<sup>3</sup> E. M. COOK, «A New Perspective on the Language of Onqelos and Jonathan», in *The Bible in Aramaic, Targums in their Historical Context*, eds. D. R. G. BEATTIE and M. J. MCNAMARA (JSOTS 166, Sheffield 1994) pp. 142-156: p. 152. COOK observes that while a full vowel follows the preformative of the unsyncopated forms (e.g. *yihwê*), a *shewa* normally follows the preformative of the syncopated forms (e.g. *yehê*). There is some variation in the syncopated form of the 1CS, however, where some MSS read '*ehe*' with *šere* after the initial *aleph* while others read '*ehe*' with *shewa* after the initial *aleph*.

that *waw* forms of the second masculine singular, third masculine singular and third feminine singular also appear, together with their syncopated counterparts, howbeit marginally. In recent literature, E. M. Cook has remarked that these syncopated forms are unique to the language of Onqelos and Jonathan <sup>4</sup>.

In the second and third person plural, as correctly observed by Dalman, the two morphological types distinguish gender. The *waw* forms are used for the feminine, while the syncopated forms are used for the masculine. For example:

- 2FP ... כד תהוין מילדן ית יהודיתא (Exod 1:16)  
when you assist the Jewish women in giving birth ...
- 2MP ולבית מקדשי תהוין דחלין (Lev 19:30)  
and you shall be reverencing my sanctuary
- 3FP קרוי שיזבוחא יהוין לכוון (Num 35:11)  
they shall be cities of refuge for you
- 3MP זתיין יהוין לך בכל תחומך (Deut 28:40)  
you shall have olive trees (lit. there shall be olive trees for you) throughout your territory.

In the first common plural, only the syncopated form *nehê* is attested (e.g. Ezek 20:32).

In the second and third person singular, the two morphological types do not distinguish gender. For the 3MS both *yehê* and *yihwê* appear; for 3FS, both *tehê* and *tihwê*; and for 2MS both *tehê* and *tihwê*. In the second feminine singular, only the syncopated form *tehan* appears (e.g. Ezek 23:32). For 1CS, both '*ehe*' (vocalized with either *šere* or *shewa* after the initial *aleph*) and '*ihwê* = '*ahwê* = '*ehwê* (Vat. 448) appear <sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> COOK «Perspective» p. 152 observes that the syncopated *waw* form is also attested in Palmyrene. There both forms are attested in the same document without any apparent functional or contextual conditioning. Cf. F. ROSENTHAL, *Die Sprache der Palmyrenischen Inschriften und ihre Stellung innerhalb des Aramäischen* (Leipzig 1936) p. 41. Some syncopated forms also appear at Murabaat and in Targum Neofiti and express the jussive, perhaps under the influence of Mishnaic Hebrew.

<sup>5</sup> For the phonological variation of *pataḥ* and *hiriq* in closed, unaccented syllables, see Elisha QIMRON and Daniel SIVAN, «Interchanges of *pataḥ* and *hiriq* and the Attenuation Law», *Leshonenu* 59 (1995-1996) pp. 7-38.

In this essay, I will explore the usage of the two morphological types in the 1CS, 2MS, 3MS and 3FS in Onqelos and Jonathan and propose a working model for explaining their coexistence. First, I will consider their numerical distribution in the corpus; then, their contextual distribution. I used the edition of A. Sperber collated against MS Vat. 448 for Onqelos and against the editions of E. Martínez Borobio for *Joshua – 2 Samuel*, and of J. Ribera Florit for the Latter Prophets<sup>6</sup>. The relevant readings of the new Babylonian editions where extant agree with those found in Sperber without exception. Only relevant variants are cited in the material quoted.

## 1. STATISTICS

A statistical computation of the one type over against the other is useful. Because of multiple MSS, some of which contain the counter-form as a variant and some of which contain midrashic pluses not found in other MSS, the exact statistical count may vary, depending on how one counts cases. However, the big picture is clear. For the 1CS, there is about an equal amount of 'ehe"s as 'ihwê"s. In Onqelos, 'ihwê appears more

<sup>6</sup> A. SPERBER, *The Bible in Aramaic*, Vol. I: *The Pentateuch according to Targum Onkelos* (Leiden 1959); Vol. II: *The Former Prophets according to Targum Jonathan* (Leiden 1959); Vol. III: *The Latter Prophets according to Targum Jonathan* (Leiden 1962); and *The Pentateuch with the Masorah Parva and the Masorah Magna, and with Targum Onkelos: Ms. Vat. Heb. 448, Facsimile Edition* (Jerusalem 1977). E. MARTÍNEZ BOROBIO, *Targum Jonatan de los Profetas Primeros en Tradición Babilónica*, Vol. I: *Josué - Jueces* (Madrid 1989), and Vol. II: *I-II Samuel* (Madrid 1987). J. RIBERA FLORIT, *Biblia Babilónica: Profetas Posteriores (Targum)* (Salamanca 1977), *Targum Jonatan de los Profetas Posteriores en Tradición Babilónica: Isaias* (Madrid 1988), and *Jeremías* (Madrid 1992).

The following abbreviations are used as in SPERBER: b = Bomberg's first Rabbinic Bible (Venice 1515-1517); c = MS p. 116 of the Montefiore Library, Jews' College, London; d (in Onqelos) = MS Solger No 2 of the Stadbibliothek, Nuremberg; d (in Jonathan) = prophetae priores (Leira 1494); f = Codex Reuchlinianus; g = Bomberg's second Rabbinic Bible (Venice 1524-1525); h = Biblia Hebraica, shelf mark I 1363, University Library, Freiburg i. / Br., Germany; i = BM MSS Or. 2228, 2229 and 2230 = one MS in three volumes; j = MS Sassoon 332; k = *Biblia Hebraica* (Lisbon 1491); l = *Biblia Hebraica* (Híjar 1490); n = *Biblia Sacra Complutensis* (1516-1517); o = The Antwerp Polyglot (1569-1573); w = BM MS Or. 1471; y = BM MS Or. 2371.

often than 'ehe' by a ratio of about 2:1, but in Jonathan the ratio is reversed. All together, there is a slight preference for the *waw* form over against the syncopated form for the 1CS. By contrast, the 3MS *yehê* is the preferred form, appearing about 99% of the time in our corpus. Only 6 cases of *yihwê* appear (*Gen* 18:18; *Exod* 20:3; *Deut* 5:7; 29:12; 2 *Kgs* 2:10 var; 7:2 var). The same can be said for 3FS *tehê* and 2MS *tehê*, each of which appear about 98% of the time. Only 4 cases of 3FS *tihwê* appear (*Num* 30:7; 2 *Sam* 12:12 var; 24:17; *Ezek* 1:12 var), while only one case of 2MS *tihwê* is found (2 *Sam* 5:2).

<b>3MS</b>	<b>yehê</b>	<b>yihwê</b>	<b>3FS</b>	<b>tehê</b>	<b>tihwê</b>
Onq	406 (= 99%)	4 (= 1%)	101	(= 99%)	1 (= 1%)
Jon	450 (= 99%)	2 (= 1%)	148	(= 98%)	3 (= 2%)
Total	856 (= 99%)	6 (= 1%)	249	(= 98%)	4 (= 2%)
<b>2MS</b>	<b>tehê</b>	<b>tihwê</b>	<b>1CS</b>	<b>'ehe'</b>	<b>'ihwê</b>
Onq	34 (= 100%)	0 (= 0%)	6	(= 60%)	4 (= 40%)
Jon	32 (= 97%)	1 (= 3%)	13	(= 38%)	21 (= 62%)
Total	66 (= 98%)	1 (= 2%)	19	(= 43%)	25 (= 57%)

In summary, while there is a slight preference for the *waw* form of the 1CS over against its syncopated counterpart, the *waw* forms of the 3MS, 3FS and 2MS are marginal as compared to their syncopated counterparts.

## 2. CONDITIONING

How can one explain this phenomenon? An analysis of the cases of the singular with the *waw* forms reveals conditioning in its usage to a large extent. That conditioning seems the same, regardless of person or gender. Functional opposition does not appear to explain its appearance. Rather, the choice appears to be stylistic in most of the cases.

The unsyncopated *waw* forms of the singular appear in the following contexts:

1) In the covenant formula in reference to God. In Onqelos, 1CS *'ihwê* only appears in the covenant formula: ואהוי להון לאלה: «and I will be to them a God» (*Gen* 17:8; *Exod* 29:45); ואהוי לבון לאלה «and I will be to you a God» (*Exod* 6:7; *Lev* 26:12),

though each time *'ehe'* appears as its variant in some witnesses, mostly prints<sup>7</sup>. MS Vat. 448 reads the *'ihwê* type in all four cases, which reading is to be preferred. In Jonathan, *'ihwê* is the exclusive form in the covenant formula: וְאֵהוּי לְכֹהֵן לְאֱלֹהִים, וְאֵהוּי לְכֹהֵן לְאֱלֹהִים (Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7 respectively; cf. Jer 30:22; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 34:24; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech 8:8; cf. Jer 31:1 אֵהוּי לְאֱלֹהִים לְכָל שֵׁבֵט יִשְׂרָאֵל «I will be a God to all the clans of Israel»); no variants are found. In the only case of 3MS, *yihwê* appears in the best witnesses, although some poorer witnesses –mostly prints– read *yehê*: וְהוּא יְהוּי וְהוּא יְהוּי (Deut 29:12) «and he shall be to you a God» (Deut 29:12). Historically, the *waw* form is the older form, attested in Old Aramaic, Imperial Aramaic and Biblical Aramaic, and seems to be used in Onqelos and Jonathan to give an impression of solemnity, as the speaker of English might use «thou» in reference to God.

2) In the Lord's solemn promise to King David concerning his offspring: אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לְךָ כְּאָב וְהוּא יְהוּי קִדְמוֹי כְּבֵן (2 Sam 7:14). The variant *'hy* found only in the first *Biblia Rabbinica* published by Bomberg in Venice in 1515-1517 (= witness b) is surely secondary, since it stands alone against the MSS. It is interesting to observe that in this example the *waw* form *'ahwê* appears in reference to God, while the syncopated form *yehê* appears in reference to David's son. Structurally, this example is similar to the covenant formula.

3) In the prohibition against having another god apart from Yahweh in the ten commandments, which, too, is structurally similar to the covenant formula: לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים בְּרַחֲמֵי יְהוָה (Exod 20:3 = Deut 5:7) «You shall not have another god apart from me». Witnesses k, l, and n to *Exod*, and witness i to *Deut* read the syncopated form *yehê*, which reading is certainly secondary<sup>8</sup>. In both

<sup>7</sup> Only the prints *Biblia Hebraica* (Hijar 1490) and *Biblia Sacra Complutensis* (1516-1517) contain the variant of the *'ehe'* type in *Gen* 17:8 and *Exod* 6:7, while the former witness alone contains the variant of that type in *Lev* 26:12. In *Exod* 29:45, *Biblia Hebraica* (Hijar 1490) is joined in reading the *'ehe'* type variant by MS Sassoon 282 and BM MS Or. 9400. These are inferior witnesses to the text of Onqelos.

<sup>8</sup> So, too, is the variant *phyh* (a Hebrew form) found in witness h = *Biblia Hebraica* to *Deut* 5:7.

places, MS Vat. 448 reads the *yihwê* type as do the other good witnesses.

4) Immediately after the infinitive absolute:

a) In an oath: *Gen 18:18* וַאֲבָרָהֶם מְהוּרָה יִהְיוּ לְעַם סָנִי וְתִקְיָף «and Abraham shall surely become a numerous and powerful people».

b) In a conditional clause: *Num 30:7* 3FS ... וְאִם מְהוּרָה תִּהְיוּ לְגִבּוֹר... «and if she should indeed marry (lit. and if she should indeed be to a man) ...». Contrast the following similar case where there is no immediately preceding infinitive absolute, where *tehê* is used: ... וְכַתּוּב אַרְיֵי תַּהֵי לְגִבּוֹר חֵילוֹנִי... «now, as for the daughter of a priest, if she should marry a layman (lit. if she should be to a layman) ...» (*Lev 22:12*).

These are the only two cases where a singular form of the imperfect of *hewâ* appears immediately after the infinitive absolute in the corpus. While one might therefore claim syntactic conditioning, solemnity characterizes both of these contexts, so that the choice of the one form over against the other may have been stylistic.

To summarize, roughly two thirds of the cases of singular *waw* forms fall into the four categories described above. Their usage in these environments gives the impression of solemnity to the reader/hearer.

5) In other instances where the unsyncopated *waw* form appears (Jonathan only):

The following cases do not fit into this stylistic scheme so easily. All but one of the following cases come from the Former Prophets.

a) Six instances should be excluded from consideration due to poor attestation:

1) *Josh 1:5* var. אֲהִי עִמָּךְ «I will be with you», instead of יהי מימרי בסעריך «my Word will be your help». The Lord speaks to Joshua. This variant, a different set of words, is attested in two prints, the First Rabbinic Bible of 1515-1517 (= witness b) and the Leira print of the former prophets of 1494 (= witness d), but is not found in any MS. Its origin, then, may have been external to Onqelos and Jonathan.

2) 2 *Sam* 12:12 plus ולמא דאמרת ישלים על חד ארבע הכי תיהוי «And because you said, Let him repay four times, so it will be». These are the words of Nathan to King David in his reproof of David for his sin with Bathsheba. Responding to the allegory about a rich man taking a poor man's lamb, David had said that the rich man should repay the lamb he stole fourfold (v. 6). David's fourfold repayment would be the lives of four of his sons. Only witness c (= MS p. 116 of the Montefiore Library, Jews' College, London) contains this midrashic plus. In all probability, this case does not belong to the early Jonathan tradition, but entered later from the outside. Consequently, it should be excluded from consideration. In his study of targumic toseftot, R. Kasher classifies the language of this addition as mixed<sup>9</sup>.

3) 1 *Kgs* 22:22 var. אפוק ואהיטו (b y: ואהוי) לרוח דשקר בפום כל נביהוי «I will go out and become a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets». An evil spirit is speaking to the Lord. Only witnesses y (= BM MS Or. 2371) and b (First Rabbinic Bible, Bomberg, Venice 1515-1517) support the *waw* form.

4) 2 *Kgs* 2:10 var. אם תחוי יתי דאנא מדבר מלותך יהי (f: יהוי) לך כן «if you see me when I am being taken from you, it will be so to you; but if not, it will not be». Only the first instance of *yehê* has the variant *yhwy*, attested only in witness f (= Codex Reuchlinianus).

5) 2 *Kgs* 7:2 var. אלו יוי פתח כוין ומחית טובא מן שמיא יהוי (var.): «If the Lord would open the windows and cause goodness to descend from heaven, would there be as this matter?». The form appears in a rhetorical question. Only witness j (= MS Sassoon 332) attests the *waw* form, which appears to be secondary.

6) *Ezek* 1:12 var. ובריא לקבל אפהא אזלא לאתר דהוי (g b: דתהוי) «and the creature was going forward, to the

<sup>9</sup> R. KASHER, *Targumic Toseftot to the Prophets* (Jerusalem 1996) p. 114, #63.

<sup>10</sup> KASHER *Targumic* (p. 136, #90b) reads *w'h'*. His full text reads: *'pwq w'h' rwh šqr bšdqyh br kn'nh wbš'r nby'y šqr'* «I will go out and be a false spirit in Zedekiah son of Chenaanah and in the rest of the false prophets».

<sup>11</sup> KASHER *Targumic* p. 197, #128, reads the participial form *dhwy*.

place where it was (var. would be) pleasing to go it was going». Only the prints b (= First Rabbinic Bible) and g (= Second Rabbinic Bible) read the imperfect *thwy*, which reading is certainly secondary, in place of the participle *hawê*.

b) Five instances are well documented and need explanation:

1) *Jdg* 11:9: אם מתיבין יתי לאנחא קרבא בבני עמון וימסר יי יתהון קדמי «if you are restoring me to wage war against the Ammonites and the Lord should deliver them before me, I will become a chief to you!». Jephthah speaks to the elders of Gilead. *'Ahwê* appears in the apodosis of a conditional sentence. Structurally, this sentence is similar to the covenant formula and has the independent personal pronoun as subject in initial position. Contrast: ותהי לנא לריש «and (that) you might become a chief to us» (v. 8), while similar in structure, lacks an initial independent personal pronoun. Further, contrast: והוא יהי להון לפרנס «and he will be to them a leader» (*Ezek* 34:23), and הוא יהי לך למתורגמן ואת תהי ליה לרב «and he will be to you an interpreter and you will be to him a chief» (*Exod* 4:16), both of which contain the independent personal pronoun as subject in initial position.

2a) *Jdg* 16:7: אם ייסרוני בשבעה יחרין רטיבין דלא יבישו ואחלוש ואחוי כחד «if they bind me with seven wet cords which have not dried, then I will become weak and be like one of the mortals».

2b) *Jdg* 16:11: אם מיסר ייסרוני בגדילן חרתן דלא אתעבידת בהון עבידתא «if indeed they bind me with new ropes with which work has not been performed, then I will become weak and be like one of the mortals».

2c) *Jdg* 16:17: אם אנלח ויעדי מני חילי ואחלוש ואחוי ככל אנשא «if I shave, my strength will pass from me and I will become weak and be like any mortal». Samson speaks to Delilah. *'Ahwê* appears in the apodosis of a conditional sentence. Contrast: ואת תהי כחד מן שטיא בישראל «and you will be as one of the fools in Israel» (2 *Sam* 13:13), which is similar but not identical in structure.

These four cases are the only instances where the 1CS imperfect of *hewâ* appears in Judges.

3) *1 Sam* 23:17: ואת תמלוך (f: תהי מלכא) על ישראל ואנא אחוי (b: אהי) «you will rule (var.: you will be king) over Israel and I

will be second to you». Jonathan speaks to his friend David. This instance has the same structure as the covenant formula, of the type with the introductory connective *waw* and independent personal pronoun as subject. Cf. *Jdg* 11:9 above and the counter examples cited there.

4) *2 Sam* 5:2 «you shall lead Israel and you shall be king over Israel». The people are reminding David what the Lord had said about him. An independent personal pronoun immediately precedes the *waw* form *tihwê*. However, this does not appear to be a conditioning factor. Contrast: «and this shall be their punishment» (*Ezek* 21:16), which is syntactically similar.

5) *2 Sam* 24:17 «let now your stroke be against me and against my father's house». This example appears in David's prayer that the Lord would be merciful to the people and would punish him alone. Syntactically, the *waw* form functions as a jussive and is immediately followed by the adverb *ke'an* = Hebrew *na'*.

Compare the following similar examples, which appear to negate syntactic conditioning: «let now the word of my lord the king be for comfort» (*2 Sam* 14:17); «now let it be dry on the fleece alone, but on all the ground let there be dew» (*Jdg* 6:39).

These five cases all appear in the Former Prophets (*Judges*, *1 Samuel* and *2 Samuel*). Two of them are similar in structure to the covenant formula, which may have led to the choice of the *waw* form over the syncopated form. All instances of ICS in *Judges* are the *waw* type.

### 3. SUGGESTED RESOLUTION

In sum, the difference between the singular of the type *yehê* and its counterpart *yihwê* in the language of Onqelos and Jonathan is not functional, but stylistic. To a large extent, the seldom appearing *waw* forms of the singular imperfect of *hewâ* appear for the purpose of giving the impression of solemnity. This is particularly clear from its consistent use in the covenant

formula, in the divine promise to David, in the prohibition against having any god apart from Yahweh in the ten commandments and its use directly after the infinitive absolute. The handful of cases where no clear stylistic conditioning is apparent and the fact that the *waw* type is the only form attested in Old Aramaic, Imperial Aramaic and Biblical Aramaic suggest that these forms are left overs from the proto-targum which were left unrevised. It is not without significance that the examples of the *waw* type lacking stylistic conditioning appear in the Former Prophets, which may have been less studied, and so less revised, than the Torah and the Writing Prophets.

#### RESUMEN

Dos esquemas morfológicos del imperfecto del verbo *hewâ* aparecen en Onqelos y Jonatán: *yihwê* y *yehê*. Aunque los dos esquemas presentan en el plural formas distintas para diferenciar el género, no sucede lo mismo en el singular. Según las estadísticas, el esquema con *waw* se utiliza poco en la 2.<sup>a</sup> y 3.<sup>a</sup> persona del singular, pero está bien atestiguado en la 1.<sup>a</sup> persona del singular. Parece ser que el uso del esquema con *waw* en el singular lo determinan razones estilísticas y se usa para transmitir una impresión de solemnidad. Se sugiere que el esquema con *waw* refleja el lenguaje del prototargum que se ha seguido manteniendo.

#### SUMMARY

Two morphological types of the imperfect of the verb *hewâ* appear in Onqelos and Jonathan, namely *yihwê* and *yehê*. While the two types distinguish gender in the plural, they do not do so in the singular. Statistically, the *waw* type is marginal in the second and third persons singular, but well attested in the first person singular. The use of the *waw* type in the singular appears to be conditioned by stylistic considerations, being employed to give the impression of solemnity. It is suggested that the *waw* type reflects the language of the proto-targum from which it was retained.