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## Paradigm migration in the QoTeT verbs of Modern Hebrew

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The verbal type QiTeL of Modern Hebrew exhibits two unsuffixed stems (1a). Most verbs in QiTeL involve three different consonants, like (1a), but there are triconsonantal stems with identical 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> consonants. Such verbs appear in one of two patterns, QiTeT and QoTeT (1b,c). At least since Bat-El (1994), a migration from QoTeT to QiTeT has been noted. It is possible to hear speakers use the past <i,e> vocalization for verbs normatively exhibiting <o,e>, as illustrated by the variation in (1d).

(1)	<i>past stem</i>	<i>non-past stem</i>	<i>gloss</i>
a. QiTeL	[diber]	[-daber]	'speak'
b. QiTeT	[dimem]	[-damem]	'shut down (an engine)'
c. QoTeT <sub>1</sub>	[domem]	[-domem]	'bleed'
d. ??	[roʃeʃ]~[riʃeʃ]	[-roʃeʃ], *[raʃeʃ]	'impoverish'
e. hitQaTeL	[hitχanef]	[-itχanef]	'suck up'
f. hitQaTeT	[hitχanen]	[-itχanen]	'implore'
g. hitQoTeT	[hitkonen], *[hitkanen]	[-itkonen], *[-itkanen]	'prepare'

In terms of vocalization, QiTeT verbs behave like QiTeL verbs. The exceptionality of QoTeT in this respect was claimed by Bat-El (1994) to motivate the migration in (1d). However, this cannot be the entire story, since *only the past stem* exhibits variation. If such entries migrated to the paradigm in (1a,b), one would expect both stems to exhibit variation. Instead, a new paradigm is born, with the <i,e> vocalization in the past and the <o,e> vocalization in the non-past.

Importantly, as shown in (1e-g), no migration is attested in the verbal type hitQaTeL. In this type, as in QiTeL, stems with identical 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> consonants involve either the regular vocalization or an exceptional vocalization <o,e>; yet no migration is attested from hitQoTeT to hitQaTeT. Why is the exceptionality in hitQoTeT more stable than the exceptionality in QoTeT?

I argue that what is exceptional about the QoTeT paradigm is not its vocalization but its pattern of syncretism. Unlike QiTeL/QiTeT, QoTeT verbs do not distinguish between past and non-past stems. For this reason, the past stem, and only this stem, is assimilated to the general pattern; the <o,e> vocalization of the non-past stem does not pose a problem as long as this stem is different from the past stem. This reasoning also motivates the absence of migration from hitQoTeT to hitQaTeT: both paradigms are entirely syncretic to begin with. The pressure in the system is thus one of assimilation in *paradigm shape*, rather than stem shape. This is reminiscent of Maiden's (2004) "morphomic" view, according to which paradigm shape is a morphological object. Interestingly, as in the present case, such pressure can end up reducing syncretism. This move would otherwise be unmotivated (disambiguation cannot be a factor, since no two word-forms in the past and non-past are ever homophonous even if the stem is identical).

This reanalysis raises another question. If the goal is to distinguish past and non-past, why is the past stem assimilated and not the future stem? Why is the new paradigm [riʃeʃ, -roʃeʃ] and not \*[roʃeʃ, -raʃeʃ]? There are two possible explanations: i. the non-past form is more widespread within the word-shapes of the paradigm, and thus more resistant to change

(McCarthy 2005); ii. the vocalization /i/ is a specific marker of [+past] QiTeL, whereas /a/ is a default vowel in the verbal system (Dor 1995).

I concentrate on the second view, as it does not require counting cells in the inflectional paradigm. According to this view, /a/ is inserted in the template whenever there is no specific exponent for the morphological feature bundle requiring realization. Thus, in a pair such as (1a) [diber, -daber], the vowel /e/ in  $V_2$  realizes the verbal class, and the vowel /i/ in  $V_1$  realizes the feature [+past]; but the feature [-past] is not related to a specific realization, and so the non-past  $V_1$  is realized as [a]. QoTeT verbs involve a specific exponent  $V_1 = [o]$ . In the non-past, this exponent takes the place of the default [a], because it is more specific. In the past form, however, there is a non-default vowel /i/ associated with this meaning, whose position is *also*  $V_1$ . It is unclear which exponent is more specific, and so either can be selected. For a paradigm of the type (1c), the verb-specific exponent has the upper hand. The variation in paradigms like (1d) nevertheless expresses this equal degree of specification.

Under such an understanding, what are the factors that may influence the choice between two equally-specific realizational statements? The morpheme or canonical paradigm shape is only one possible answer to this question. If it can be shown that there are other factors – for instance, frequency – there might not be a need to appeal to morphemes in this case.

## References

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