"Precative perfect", other "non-past" uses of qatal, and the development of Hebrew weqataltít

Proposed focal points for the discussion: How to describe the meaning of the Hebrew verbal forms. Arguments against the relative temporal interpretation. Are there cases of supposed non-past qatal that cannot be explained in this framework? The role of stress in the development of the Hebrew verbal system, specifically weqataltít: Arguments for and against?

Introduction

Huge quantities of paper and printing ink have been spent through the years by scholars trying to solve what Leslie McFall called the "enigma of the Hebrew verbal system".¹ Still, there seems to be no consensus regarding the fundamental characterization of the verbal forms or the way the system developed. Scholars disagree about the description of the forms as primarily aspectual, temporal or modal as well as about the functioning of the so-called consecutive system, the way it developed and how to categorize the forms with and without preposed waw.

In this paper, I will focus on the so-called consecutive forms, which are arguably the most characteristic trait of the Hebrew verbal system as found in (most parts of) the Old Testament. The primary topic will be the form weqataltít, i.e. the so-called consecutive perfect, which is used for indicating different shades of non-past meaning, as opposed to the simple qatal with past meaning.² The overall aim of the paper is to examine the way weqataltít developed. In order to explore the connection between this form and the simple qatal, I will take a look at supposed non-past functions of simple qatal, aiming to show that there are no persuasive instances of such usages, which leads to the conclusion that weqataltít is not simply a qatal with a preposed waw. Neither is there any evidence that weqataltít is the continuation of any Proto-Semitic form with specifically future or modal meaning. Rather, it is the result of a special analogical development within Hebrew—a

² I generally use the purely descriptive terms for the verbal forms, e.g., qatal, yiqtol, wayyiqtol, weqataltít/eqataltít instead of perfect, imperfect, consecutive imperfect, consecutive perfect.
development in which (I will argue) the distinctive stress pattern of the verbal forms probably played a significant role. As part of the argument, the general character of the system will be discussed—I will argue that a relative temporal view is better capable of explaining the attested uses than an aspectual or modal approach.

**The terms "consecutive" and "conversive"**

The most characteristic trait of the verbal system in Biblical Hebrew is the so-called consecutive or converted system—the fact that the simple forms *qatal* and *yiqtol* systematically interchange with the forms with preposed *waw*, *wayyiqtol* and *weqatalti*. Nothing quite like this is known from the other Semitic languages.³

As a first observation, it should be said that the designation "consecutive" is misleading. Obviously, since *wayyiqtol* and *weqatalti* begin with *waw*, "and", a degree of consecutive meaning is often present, but this is due to the *waw* itself, which can have all the shades of meaning that "and" is always capable of having, i.e. simple addition, connection, temporal succession etc. The *waw*-forms, however, do not necessarily continue a preceding verbal form, but rather contribute their own meaning to the context. They are found at the start of an utterance without necessarily continuing anything in the preceding sentences. We can even have an entire book beginning with a *wayyiqtol*: Lev, Num, Josh, Judg, Ruth, 1 Sam, 2 Sam, 2 Kgs, Ezek, Jonah, Esth, 2 Chr.⁴ There are also instances where a *weqatalti* is the first part of a non-past segment coming right after a past context, e.g.:

Gen 26:22: כִּי־עַתָָּ֞ה הִרְחִִ֧יב יְהוָָ֛ה לָָ֖נוּ וּפָרִִ֥ינוּ בָאִָּֽרֶץ

³ Some scholars have argued that the system as found in BH is an artificial creation that was never part of the real, spoken language. E.g., Sasson has claimed that *wayyiqtol* is a purely literary construction, which was originally developed "for recounting heroic, war-related, mythic, or national epic drama". He considers the form to be "pretentious by its very nature" and "simply [...] not a practical, day-to-day linguistic tool; not even in written form", Victor Sasson, "Some Observations on the Use and Original Purpose of the Waw Consecutive in Old Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew" VT 47.1 (1997): 111–127 (122–123). The fact is, however, that the ancient Hebrew inscriptions has the same fundamental verbal system as the one used in the OT, even in seemingly trivial texts about matters such as a field worker’s lost piece of clothing (Mesad Hashavyahu 1). The main difference is really the frequency of the various forms, since an inscription of the types we have usually does not need the long series of *waw*-connected verbal forms that we see in the OT. Of course, any kind of writing is a departure from pure spoken language, but the idea that the inscriptions use a purely literary style of language seems an unfounded assumption, since it would necessitate a high level of influence from a body of literature, which must in this case have existed at a very early date and have been known by the people who wrote the inscriptions. At the same time, there is nothing decidedly artificial about the system—there are many phenomena in the languages of the world that people from another linguistic background would find strange, but that does not mean that they are artificial or "made up" specifically for a literary purpose.

⁴ In some of these cases, of course, the division into books is only secondary, as the narrative clearly continues straight on from the end of the preceding book.
What about the term "conversive"? This is the way medieval scholars described the system with the designation חזותי. Superficially, this is a good synchronic description, as it seems that the addition of the waw changes a qatal, which usually expresses something in the past, to a non-past, and a yiqtol, which usually has non-past meaning, to a past tense. However, concerning the wayyiqtol, the introduction of comparative Semitic linguistics, especially the use of evidence from Akkadian, has led to the abandonment of this view. It is now clear that the yiqtol-part of wayyiqtol is not the same as the simple yiqtol, but rather the reflex of a Proto-Semitic past tense form *yāqτul, which is also continued by the ordinary past tense form in Akkadian (iprus). The simple yiqtol, on the other hand, is the descendant of an earlier *yaqtulu, while the specifically jussive yiqtol (in a shortened form where possible) comes from a Proto-Semitic *yaqtul. Thus, when looking at the historical development, there is really no "conversion" taking place. When it comes to weqataltí, however, the question is a bit more complicated.

The background of qatal

Some scholars have argued that the qatal-part of weqataltí comes from an ancestral form different from that of the simple qatal. Thus, Driver says that there were two forms in Proto-Semitic, a western *qatəl with a past meaning, reflected in the Hebrew simple qatal, and an eastern *qātil with future meaning, which is reflected in weqataltí. The fact that Hebrew has both forms is explained by

---

5 Cf., e.g., Longacre's characterization of weqataltí as "backbone structures" in "predictive, procedural, and instructional discourses", "in their own right and not consecutive on other preceding verb forms", Robert E. Longacre, "Weqatal Forms in Biblical Hebrew Prose", in Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics (ed. Robert D. Bergen; Dallas, Texas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994), 50–98 (51).

6 Cf. Søren Holst, Verbs and War Scroll: Studies in the Hebrew Verbal System and the Qumran War Scroll (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2008), 48, who notes that this recognition of the double origin of Hebrew yiqtol and wayyiqtol is "now one of the few things on which there is almost general consensus in Hebrew studies". There are relics of *yąqτul in most other Semitic languages, usually in very restricted use. A few forms corresponding to the Hebrew wayyiqtol are attested in Aramaic and South Arabian inscriptions, and many more on the Moabite Meša-stone. Note that when talking about Akkadian forms, it is customary to use the root P05, and not QTl as in Hebrew and other languages.

7 The question of the stress in *yąqτul as opposed to jussive *yąqτul is controversial and will be considered in more detail below (p. 17). Another controversial issue, which I will not deal with in this paper, is the specific origin of the *yaqtulu form. In Akkadian (and Ethiopic and modern South Arabian) the non-past tense is expressed with a form with doubled middle radical (Akkadian ipparrus, Ethiopic yęqattəl). Some scholars consider this a Proto-Semitic form, in which case *yaqtulu would be an innovation in Central Semitic, probably containing the subordinating marker -u, which is also found on the Akkadian subjunctive (see, e.g., Edward Lipiński, Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 343 and 352). Others would argue that *yaqtulu is the original non-past form and that the use of the doubled form in this function is a secondary development (e.g., N. J. C. Kouwenberg, The Akkadian Verb and its Semitic Background (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2010) and T. David Andersen, "The Evolution of the Hebrew Verbal System", ZAH 13.1 (2000): 1–66.).
his idea that Hebrew is a mixed language having both western and eastern traits. The whole idea of Hebrew as a "Mischsprache" has rightly been discredited, and the assumption of a special East Semitic/Akkadian form with specific future meaning has no basis in the verbal system of Akkadian, or anywhere else.

The origin of Hebrew qatal can be traced to West Semitic *qatala, whose ancestor is a Proto-Semitic nominal form used with personal endings, corresponding to the Akkadian stative or permansive, parsāku. This form never has a future meaning as such, but is rather atemporal, since it is basically a conjugated verbal adjective. In fact, Akkadian statives can also be formed from ordinary nouns and adjectives, with the sense that the subject "is" or "was" what is signified by the noun or adjective, and as such they are outside of the temporal system of the proper verbal forms. When statives are formed from verbal adjectives, they express a (past or present or future) condition or state as a result of a preceding action. This is in most cases a passive state in connection with active-transitive roots, a resultative state in connection with active-intransitive roots, and a descriptive state in connection with adjectival roots.

This type of usage is well-known from Hebrew and other West Semitic languages in a restricted group of verbs, the so-called stative verbs (e.g. adjectival verbs like בָּיָּד, or verbs like יָדַע and עָּמַד), where qatal can have a present tense function, reflecting the original atemporal character of the Proto-Semitic nominal construction. In most verbs, however, a significant development took place. While there are several problems in connection with the details of the form itself, the general development seems to be clear: An atemporal, originally nominal construction developed into a real

---

9 Cf. McFall, The Enigma (n. 1 above), 141.
10 The verbal adjective has the form parVs, typically with i in the second syllable, less often with u or a. The vowel, however, only appears in the third person singular, where there is no ending, while in the other persons it is syncopated before the personal endings: 3sm-O, 3sf-at, 3pm-å and 3pf-ā. The remaining persons look like short forms of the personal pronouns with a connective -ā (-āku, -āta, -āti, -ānu, -ātunu, -ātina).
12 The form must be reconstructed as *qatala for West Semitic, while it is most often qatil in Akkadian. The problems include the final -a in 3sm, that must be reconstructed for West Semitic, but which is not there in Akkadian, and the long connecting á-vowel before the personal endings in Akkadian, which is not present in the western languages, unless one sees the -ā- of certain Hebrew roots (II-gem., II-w) as a relic of this formation, cf. Harris Birkeland, Akzent und Vokalismus im Althebräischen, mit Beiträgen zur vergleichenden semitischen Sprachwissenschaft (Oslo: Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, i kommisjon hos Jacob Dybwad, 1940), 109. Furthermore, the vowel in the second syllable is problematic. In Akkadian it is mostly i, but in the West Semitic transitive type it is typically a. This is not the place for all the details of the various explanations.
verbal form in the West Semitic languages, with a relative past tense meaning. Nowhere in this process is there a form with an explicit non-past meaning as attested in the Hebrew weqatalti.

**The meaning of weqatalti and its interchange with yiqtol**

Weqatalti is used with all the shades of meaning that the simple yiqtol has. In fact, the two forms must be said to be two different expressions of the same semantics, and the same can be said about the relation between qatal and wayyiqtol. The only differences can be attributed to the presence of the conjunction "and" in the waw-forms and the different context-induced shades of meaning derived from this and the corresponding difference of position in the sentence. The determining factor for choosing between yiqtol and weqatalti (and between qatal and wayyiqtol) is not the inner meaning of the forms, but rather the position of the verb in the sentence. In the ordinary flow of discourse, the verb comes first, and if a need is felt for an "and", then the waw-forms are used. If, for any reason, something else is put forward in the sentence, e.g., if a new subject is introduced, an object or adverb is emphasized, or the author just wants some variation in his way of expressing himself, then the simple forms are used. Thus, it is perhaps best seen as a question of stylistics.

**A relative temporal view of the verbal system**

The way to describe the basic meaning of qatal/wayyiqtol and yiqtol/weqatalti has been the subject of much debate in the history of research. Today, some sort of aspectual view is probably the dominant one among scholars, but others have argued for a modal or temporal view. Since it is not possible to give any kind of comprehensive overview of all the different approaches here, I will

---

13 In a small set of verbs in Akkadian, this development is also attested, most often with verbs with the general meaning "to hold", "get a hold of" etc. Thus, in a verb like mahārum "receive", the stative functions as an "ordinary present perfect"—"he has received, accepted", Michael B. Rowton, "The Use of the Permansive in Classic Babylonian", *JNES* 21,4 (1962): 233–303 (243). As for the description of the meaning of the form in West Semitic as relative past, see further below.

14 It should be noted that Hebrew and other Semitic languages make much more frequent use of coordinated sentences than, e.g., English. Thus, quite often, we find cases of waw which are from the translational viewpoint "superfluous". Thus, the apodosis of a conditional sentence may be introduced by waw, and in some cases with a preposed adverbial expression, a waw-form of a verb is still used, e.g. Gen 22:4 or Exod 16:6.


16 The notion of time and whether a given event or situation is finished or ongoing, or whether it is possible, necessary, wished for, demanded etc., are real-world phenomena which every language presumably has the capability to express in some way. Thus, both temporal, aspectual and modal shades of meaning must be present in all languages, and the three notions are often closely interconnected. The question here, however, is to decide the basic meaning grammatically expressed by the verbal forms as such, as opposed to notions that are derived from context, adverbial expressions etc. Thus, when it is argued that Hebrew has a system of relative tenses, it does not mean that it is incapable of expressing aspect or modality—it only means that this is the best way to describe the fundamental notion expressed by the opposition qatal/wayyiqtol vs. yiqtol/weqatalti.
simply give a few critical remarks about the aspectual and modal interpretations and shortly sketch a view of the system as primarily expressing relative tense.\textsuperscript{17} 

A major objection to an aspectual view, which takes the difference between \textit{qatal} and \textit{yiqtol} to be one of perfective (i.e. complete, punctual events seen as a whole) vs. imperfective (i.e., incomplete, continuous etc.) aspect, is the fact that this distinction seems to play no specific role in most of the instances of the forms.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, a \textit{qatal} might express something that was an unfinished, continuous situation in the past, and a \textit{yiqtol} might signify an event in the future that must be considered a single, punctual, instantaneous act. The first fact might not be a problem for an aspectual view, since it is often the case that what is arguably the unmarked member of an opposition can encompass the meaning of its marked counterpart.\textsuperscript{19} The second fact, however, throws serious doubt on the appropriateness of the term aspect as the description of the basic category in the verbal system. In most cases, it is a much more obvious approach to describe the notions expressed as simply past vs. future. An indication of this is given by the cases where we have the same verbs in \textit{qatal} and \textit{yiqtol} in the same passage. 

In Josh 3:7, e.g., Yahweh gives the promise: נָא הָיִיתִי עִם מֹשֶה אֶהְיִֶ֥ה עִמָ. Presumably, both the situations described have the same continuous character, the only difference being that the one with Moses happened in the past, and the one with Joshua will happen in the future. 

Similarly, in Josh 11:6 we have a command or prediction from Yahweh with two \textit{yiqtol}s,\textsuperscript{20} followed in v. 9 by a description of the actual event with the same two verbs in \textit{qatal}. Aspectually, the events implied in the \textit{yiqtol}s as well as in the \textit{qatal}s must be seen as instantaneous, single acts, so the opposition \textit{yiqtol} vs. \textit{qatal} here is hardly one of aspect, but rather tense or mood.

\textsuperscript{17} For a comprehensive guide to the early history of research, see McFall, \textit{The Enigma} (n. 1 above), and for the later developments e.g., Holst, \textit{Verbs and War Scroll} (n. 6 above).

\textsuperscript{18} The distinction between perfective and imperfective is usually referred to as viewpoint aspect, cf. Comrie’s definition: “[A]spects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation”, Bernard Comrie, \textit{Aspect} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 3. Cf. also, e.g., D. N. Shankara Bhat, \textit{The Prominence of Tense, Aspect and Mood} (Studies in Language Companion Series 49; Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990), 44–45. He mentions other types of aspectual distinctions, viz. the ones distinguishing different phases of events (beginning, progression, results etc.) and the ones representing various quantificational aspects of an event (happening once, many times, habitually etc.). A term often used in connection with aspect is Aktionsart, which may be understood to designate some of the other types of aspectual distinctions mentioned. Often it is seen as distinct from aspect by being lexicalized as opposed to grammatically marked, cf. Comrie, \textit{Aspect}, 6–7, n. 4. However, this distinction is not always made. In Hebrew, such notions are typically part of the meaning of the different stems/binyanim.

\textsuperscript{19} Comrie, \textit{Aspect} (n. 18 above), 112.

\textsuperscript{20} It is often difficult to decide between command and prediction, especially when God is the speaker.
Another objection to the aspectual view is the fact that the Hebrew system is not very similar to other verbal systems considered aspectual. E.g., in classical Greek or modern Russian the aspectual systems exist side by side with temporal distinctions, whereas in Hebrew we only have the one opposition between *qatal*/*wayyiqtol* and *yiqtol*/*weqatalti*. Some scholars have argued that, for this reason, it makes no sense to call the Hebrew system aspectual.21

As indicated in connection with the example from Josh 11 above, there is often a certain modal shade of meaning in the *yiqtol*. This has led some scholars to the idea that the basic distinction is one of mood. On this view, the *qatal* can be termed realis and *yiqtol* irrealis. There are some problems with an approach like this, however. First of all, the terms realis and irrealis are not very felicitous, since sentences with a counterfactual sense (what is normally called irrealis) use *qatal*, and not *yiqtol*. Secondly, there are many instances of "pure" futures without any modal meaning—a fact which has led some scholars to the view that future is always a type of modality.22 These are not decisive arguments against modality as the primary category—however, a third point throws more doubt on the idea: The existence in Hebrew of a specific modal system, i.e. a specific set of modal forms used for the explicit marking of volitive modality (cohortative, imperative, jussive).23 Therefore, this is hardly the meaning of the opposition *yiqtol* vs. *qatal*. While it is clear that modal shades of meaning are often expressed by *yiqtol*/*weqatalti*, this is likely to be an implication from the context and not the basic content of the forms themselves.

---

21 Cf. Frank R. Blake, "The Hebrew Waw Conversive", *JBL* 63.3 (1944): 271–295 (273). Further, cf. Jerzy Kuryłowicz, *Studies in Semitic Grammar and Metrics* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1972), and Jan Joosten, "Do the Finite Verbal Forms in Biblical Hebrew Express Aspect?", *JANES* 29 (2002): 49–70 (51). Other scholars, however, argue that the aspect is a more fundamental distinction than tense. Cf. John A. Cook, "The Finite Verbal Forms in Biblical Hebrew Do Express Aspect", *JANES* 30 (2006): 21–35 (25), who bases himself on Joan L. Bybee and Östen Dahl, "The Creation of Tense and Aspect Systems in the Languages of the World". *Studies in Language* 13 (1989): 51–103. In fact, Bybee and Dahl talk about nine languages out of 18 in their survey having the basic distinction perfective vs. imperfective—and out of these nine, seven also have a past vs. non-past distinction. Thus, the similarity to Hebrew with only one kind of basic opposition is very limited, and it is very difficult to see how such statistics can be used as any kind of argument for or against anything when it comes to actually analyzing a particular language. In general, the use of typological evidence as arguments in the analysis of a specific language is fraught with difficulties, including the basic circularity of the argumentation: Typological surveys like the ones made by Bybee and others are based on existing descriptions of languages, while the results from the surveys are often used to "correct" such descriptions. In many cases, the description of a feature in a language is hotly debated (e.g., the Hebrew verbs), which means that it is impossible to decide which view should be used as input for a typological survey. Furthermore, only a fraction of the languages spoken through history has been scientifically described.

22 Cf. Bhat, *The Prominence* (n. 18 above), 176: "But several linguists have argued that the concept is at least partly modal in nature because, according to them, future, unlike past or present, is necessarily speculative".

23 The cohortative is a lengthened form of the *yiqtol* in the first person, whereas the jussive is in some cases a special shortened form of the *yiqtol*. In most cases, the root is not capable of making this distinction. However, there is a strong tendency for jussive forms to be placed first in the sentence, and this goes for the form *weyiqtol* as well, which is most often to be understood as an explicitly modal form. Cf., e.g., Aliviero Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose* (trans. W. G. E. Watson; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 76, 77 and 88–89.
The temporal interpretation of the system is also problematic—as long as it is understood in an absolute manner. Clearly, both basic forms of the system can be used in any time frame, which makes the understanding of qatal as an absolute past tense (always signifying simple past, "he killed") impossible. Thus, a relative temporal interpretation is necessary.\textsuperscript{24}

On this view, the basic function of the forms is to indicate whether the event expressed by the verb happened before (qatal/wayyiqtol) or not-before (yiqtollweqataltī) relative to a point of time indicated by the context. A qatal can signify anything that is anterior to something else, e.g. in a future context a future perfect ("he will have done"), and a yiqtol can signify anything that is not anterior, i.e. either contemporaneous or posterior to the context. This also includes occurrences in the past, i.e. simultaneity with a past context, e.g., durativity, habituality or iterativity.

In this connection, it is very important to recognize the fact that Hebrew only has the two basic forms qatal/wayyiqtol vs. yiqtollweqataltī. Whereas languages like English or most other Germanic languages with a larger repertoire of verbal forms can express the exact time of an occurrence more precisely through the use of specific relative tense forms, this is not possible in Hebrew. Since English, e.g., has separate forms for expressing both absolute and relative times, like "I did, I have done, I had done, I will do, I will have done" etc., the system as such can be called absolute. In Hebrew, on the contrary, there are no specific relative tenses, and the distinction between relative and absolute tense is not expressed by morphological means in Hebrew. Therefore, the forms can be used both in an absolute and a relative way (speaking from the point of view of English or similar languages), i.e. a qatal is always interpretable as simple past as well as present or past perfect etc. Hence, the system as such is called relative.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Relative tense is also called \textit{taxis}. On absolute vs. relative tense as well as a general introduction to tense as such, cf., e.g., Bernard Comrie, \textit{Tense} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Bhat prefers the terms "deictic" and "non-deictic" tense instead of absolute and relative (Bhat, \textit{The Prominence} (n. 18 above), 14). Proponents of an analysis of Hebrew along the lines of relative temporality include Rogland, Gropp, and Kuryłowicz.

\textsuperscript{25} If the relative temporal view of the system is accepted, the so-called stative verbs mentioned above should probably be interpreted in this framework as well. In the qatal, these verbs can have the present tense stative sense ("I know", "I am old"), but they can also be treated like non-stative verbs with a past meaning, either in a stative or eventive sense ("I knew or came to know", "I was old or became old"), cf. Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, \textit{A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew} (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2006), 332,§112b. One could assume that when *qatala developed into a tense form in the West Semitic languages, the relics of the originally atemporal nominal construction were reanalyzed as part of the newly developed system, and thus reinterpreted as derived from, e.g., "I have become old", "I have come to know" etc., even though this is not their origin. In this way, the connection between stative and fientive verbs is basically the same as that between the present perfect and the simple past function of the qatal form in general.
Supposed non-past uses of qatal

This view of the semantics of the basic opposition in the verbal system potentially faces some severe difficulties when confronted with certain interpretations of specific sentences in the OT. There are instances where qatal forms are translated as present or absolute future or in a modal sense, like a yiqtol, at least in the translations proposed by some scholars. If they are right, it is highly problematic for any view of the language that sees the basic opposition as one of tense. Furthermore, if the simple qatal can be used with these functions, it would be an argument in favour of weqatalti being a continuation of this usage.

As it turns out, however, all these supposed non-past uses of qatal can be interpreted differently. It can be shown that none of these cases poses any threat to the relative temporal view of the system, and since this is the case, another explanation for the development of the Hebrew weqatalti must be sought. Here I will first look at the major groups of alleged non-past uses of qatal.

"Precative perfect"

This is a usage of qatal that allegedly signifies prayers, commands, wishes etc. A few examples from a proponent of the existence of this type of qatal in the OT follow:

Ps 22:22. "Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save/may you save me from the horns of the wild oxen". 27

Ps 71:3. "Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress". 28

Ps 7:7. "Arise, O LORD, in your anger; rise up against the rage of my enemies. Awake, my God; decree justice". 29

27 Ibid., 10.
28 Ibid., 11.
29 Ibid.
Ps 31:6. "Into your hand I commit my spirit; may you redeem me! O lord, faithful God".  

Ps 10:16. "The LORD is King for ever and ever; the nations may perish from his land".

As can be seen, all these examples are from the Psalms, and that is in fact the case with the majority of the proposed instances. In total, Andrason has 18 cases, of which he considers 12 to be the most evident and convincing. Often, he bases his precative interpretation on the fact that an overt deontic form, e.g. an imperative, precedes the form in question, but in other "very sporadic and still controversial examples", there is no preceding modal form, and then the precative interpretation stems from "the meaning of the whole situation". However, the fact is that "the meaning of the whole situation" is seldom completely clear-cut, and that is the problem with the entire assumption of a precative qatal, also in the instances with preceding modal forms. Since most of the cases occur in poetry, we need to consider the general style of biblical poetry, especially the tendency to switch between different temporal planes. Alviero Niccacci has argued for the same basic verbal system in poetry and prose, explaining the differences by pointing to the fact that poetry conveys its meaning through "segments of information in parallelism", rather than in a continuous temporal sequence. This segmental style includes, on the one hand, a limited use of syntactic markers (definite article, object markers, relative pronouns), and on the other hand, a tendency to shift between different actors and settings, including temporal frame. When we encounter a qatal, we should first try to make sense of the passage by reading the form as it is usually read in other cases, i.e. as a past tense or a present perfect—we should respect "the verbal forms for what they are and try to interpret them accordingly, even when one finds abrupt transitions".

Such transitions can be explained as parallelism between a qatal of a stative verb or a present perfect use of a qatal of a fientive verb on the one hand, and a yiqtol of a fientive verb on the other hand, all of which can be used in a present time frame. Alternatively, we can have a real switch between hope or prayers for the future and statements about what has happened in the past, God's

---

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 14.
32 Ibid., n. 13.
33 Ibid., 11.
35 Ibid., 117.
previous acts of mercy etc. In poetry or songs, this kind of shift of reference is not unexpected. The opposite view is of course possible—that there is an entirely different grammatical system in poetry. This, however, needs to be argued, and not just assumed. If we can understand the texts without proposing very rare uses of forms, then we ought to consider this first.

With this approach, all the passages quoted above can be explained without recourse to the dubious category of precative qatal. In Ps 22:22, instead of reading the two halves of the verse as parallel, "עֲנִיתָנִי" can be understood as a separate exclamation ("you have answered me!"—cf., e.g., the authorized Danish version). This would mark a turning point in the poem from a description of the troubles faced by the psalmist to praise of God for his help. 36

In Ps 71:3, "צִוִּיתָ" can be read as part of what Driver calls a "concealed" relative clause describing the "מָעוֹן צִוִּיתָ". Another possibility is simply taking it as a short independent sentence, in which case it would be a statement of the fact that the ultimate salvation of the psalmist has been decreed by Yahweh a long time ago. There are other instances of a similar type of interweaving of past events and the present/future in this psalm (vv. 5–6 "from my youth" and 17 "from the womb"). In Ps 7:7, something similar may be the case. We can understand מִשְפָּט צִוִּיתָ as an independent sentence with a present perfect interpretation, stating that God has decreed justice long ago. Alternatively, we can follow Driver, who sees this as another case of a "concealed" relative clause. 38

In Ps 31:6, it is also possible to see the verb (פָּדִיתָ) as an expression of a previous act of God, stressing the belief of the Psalmist that he is among the redeemed, no matter how hard he suffers in the present. There are other instances of such previous events as part of the present prayers in vv. 8–9. In Ps 10:16, we can detect a clear break in the structure of the poem in v. 16 with a declaration about the way Yahweh is king, as opposed to the second person forms in vv. 14–15 and 17. Thus,

36 Of course, this would entail disregarding the masoretic accents.
37 Driver, "Some Uses of Qtl" (n. 8 above), 55. He translates: "be thou to me a rock of help, (to which) ever thou hast hidden me come that thou mayst save me".
38 Ibid., "thou who dost command", though with a general present tense verb. The LXX also renders this as a relative clause, but with an aorist verb; also, the antecedent of the relative clause is different from the one in Driver's proposal (ἐν προστάγματι οὗ ἐνετέλω).
there is no reason to let the imperatives and jussives influence the interpretation of the qatal form, which can be rendered as "the nations have perished from his land". 39

The same kinds of explanation fit all the other proposed cases of precative qatal, and the conclusion must be that, while a precative reading often does make sense, the same goes for the non-precative reading. Since it is possible to understand all the cases as instances of the ordinary relative past meaning of qatal, it seems unnecessary to claim the existence of a very restricted use of the form, with a meaning that is the exact opposite of the meaning found in the vast majority of occurrences of the same form.

"Prophetic perfect", "gnomic perfect", "performative perfect"

These three groups of supposed non-past uses of qatal have been treated convincingly by Rogland. 40 He finds that the so-called "prophetic perfect", i.e. qatal used as a real future tense, can be interpreted as ordinary past tense, either a past relative to a future reference point (future perfect), or as a regular past event, or sometimes things seen in a vision or dream. 41 If the author wants to give the impression that he has seen the events in a vision, it makes sense to render them in the past tense, since the vision is past, even though the content is future. In short, there is no need to assume a special future usage of qatal, but rather this is a case of a stylistically determined use of ordinary past tense.

The "gnomic perfect" is a use of qatal to express general statements, usually in proverbs and sayings. Again, according to Rogland, there is no need to interpret this as a non-past use of qatal as such. Rather, this usage should be understood as "the report of a particular, and often extraordinary, experience or observation", or as generalizations from the way "things have typically occurred in the past". 42

The explanation offered by Rogland for the "performative perfect" (i.e. actions which are performed through the utterance itself, like "I hereby give you...") is not very clear. He simply calls it a

39 It is not necessary to identify the וֹיִם from v. 16 with the evil and godless people who are the focus of the preceding part of the psalm. If the וֹיִם are foreign peoples thought to have been eradicated from the land in the past, this might serve as a good basis for the belief that Yahweh will also deal with the interior enemies, the wicked in his own people. In the LXX, the form is rendered as a plural imperative, which could be the intention of the Hebrew consonantal text as well. In this case, וֹיִם would be a vocative, understood to be people living in Yahweh's land in the present.
41 Ibid., 131.
42 Ibid.
convention without any consequence for the analysis of qatal.\textsuperscript{43} However, considering the fact that Hebrew only has a very restricted set of forms to choose from, the qatal is probably the most obvious choice for the expression of a performative utterance. The participle would stress the event as ongoing and the yiqtol would have future and/or modal implications, while the qatal is well suited to represent something that has occurred right now through the speech event itself.

The evidence from other Semitic languages

Andrason uses the supposed occurrence of "prechative perfect" in other Semitic languages to argue for the existence of this usage in Hebrew.\textsuperscript{44} In fact, such a usage is attested in some of the languages (Arabic is the best example), while in others the evidence is more problematic. In Ugaritic, e.g., scholars are deeply divided over the proposed instances, while in classical Ethiopic, the latest treatment of the matter concludes that there is no such use of the form in question.\textsuperscript{45}

Firstly, the fact that there is such a usage, at least in some related languages, does not constitute any kind of argument for the existence of the same usage in Hebrew. The evidence merely suggests that it would not be odd if we could find such a usage in Hebrew, and it might be expected that there actually was one at some stage of the language. However, whether or not this usage is actually there in the Hebrew texts at our disposal, must be decided by an analysis of these texts, and not by exterior arguments. Secondly, in the languages where the prechative use is attested, it is very restricted, and in many cases the prechative meaning clearly derives from different particles used in connection with the form, rather than from the verbal form itself.\textsuperscript{46} This is especially clear in Akkadian where the prechative particle lū is always present when this meaning is intended.\textsuperscript{47} This particle is used with the stative, just as it is used with adjectives and nouns in general. In the West Semitic languages, where *qatala developed into a real verbal form with relative past tense

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid., 126.}
\footnote{Andrason, "Prechative" (n. 26 above), 15–18.}
\footnote{Cf. Driver's conclusion: "[…] restricted for the most part to stereotyped expressions (in which it commonly, though not always, stands at the head of the clause) and decreases in frequency as time goes on […]", Driver, "Some Uses of Qtl" (n. 8 above), 52.}
\footnote{E.g. lū dannātunu, "may you be strong".}
\end{footnotes}
meaning, the question is how to connect the precative meaning attested in some languages with the general past tense usage. Several scholars have argued that the precative usage can be derived from the hypothetical or irrealis use of *qatala, which is attested in all the West Semitic languages, and which is attributable to a stage of development where the form had already developed the past tense meaning. Thus, while the precative use of the form with stative/intransitive verbs might be seen as a relic from the stage attested in Akkadian, the transitive/active usage could have evolved from an unreal/hypothetical line of thought, e.g., originally, "would that God would bless…".

Regarding the development of Hebrew weqataltí, the evidence seems clear: Neither in Hebrew itself nor in the related languages is there any sign of qatal or its cognates ever having an actual future tense and/or modal meaning as such. The next question is: What about equivalents of the composite form in other languages? Is there any evidence of a use of waw plus a form corresponding to Hebrew qatal with a meaning similar to the Hebrew one in other Semitic languages?

In all West Semitic languages, the forms developed from *qatala can be used in conditional sentences—including in contexts that would be more naturally rendered by future tense forms in a language like English. However, in the Semitic languages, the idea seems to be that the condition (the protasis) is past relative to the consequence (the apodosis), and thus a relative past tense form can be used. The fact that Akkadian does not use the stative in such sentences, but rather the past tense forms available in its own grammatical system, supports this analysis. In some of the languages, the use of *qatala in conditional contexts has been extended so that the form can also be used in the apodosis, which can in some cases be introduced by waw, and in this case we seem to be close to a future sense. This use, however, is clearly determined by a distinct syntactic environment where the future sense derives from the conditional particles and is not inherent in the form itself.

In contrast, the Hebrew weqataltí is not restricted to conditional sentences or other specific contexts, but rather determines the context with its own future/modal meaning. The only languages where we might find a usage corresponding at least a little more closely to the Hebrew system, is Amarna Canaanite and possibly Phoenician. These languages are, of course, among the ones most


closely related to Hebrew, so this situation is not unexpected. At least in the Amarna letters, we seem to have some instances of a use similar to the one in Hebrew, outside of clearly conditional contexts, and Moran states that we have here "an early stage of the far more developed Hebrew usage".  

Summing up this overview of the evidence, which has by necessity only touched upon the most significant points, I will refer to Smith's conclusions that the basis from which the Hebrew weqataltít developed was most likely the use of the ancestor of qatal in conditional sentences, and that the Hebrew system as such is "an inner Hebrew development". To the latter point, however, Moran's observation about the beginnings of the development in Amarna Canaanite should be added.

The analogical development

Following this, it seems to be clear that some kind of analogical development must be assumed as the background for Hebrew weqataltít, possibly beginning already in the pre-Hebrew Canaanite stage of the language, but only having its full effect on the overall functioning of the verbal system in Hebrew itself. Such an analogical explanation has been defended by several scholars. The general idea is that weqataltít developed as a new part of a system that already included the relationship between simple yiqtol, wayyiqtol and qatal. However, exactly how this development could take place is a complicated matter. Contrary to the widespread assumption that the special final stress in weqataltít in the first and second person singular in several types of verbs is a late

---

50 Much of the evidence is interpretable in different ways, and the same goes for supposed future tense instances of waw plus qatal in Ugaritic. See the detailed discussions in Mark S. Smith, The Origins and Development of the Waw-Consecutive (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1991), 8–12.
52 Smith, The Origins (n. 50 above), 14.
53 Ibid., 14–15.
54 The extent of this use in the Canaanite language reflected in the Amarna letters is impossible to ascertain. If we had a corpus of texts in this language comparable to the OT, the similarity to the Hebrew usage might be much clearer. The same can be said about other Canaanite languages like Moabite, Ammonite and Edomite. While the Moabite Mešar-stone contains many examples of a form corresponding to Hebrew wayyiqtol, the preserved texts in these languages do not allow us to draw any conclusions about the development of weqataltít.
55 Andersen, who opposes the analogical explanation, gives a long list of proponents of the idea, Andersen, "The Evolution" (n. 7 above), 33: Ewald, S. R. Driver, Bergsträsser, Blake, Hetzron, Fenton, Buth, Sáenz-Badillos and Smith. Smith himself also mentions Joüon, Finley, Lawton and Williams (Smith, The Origins (n. 50 above), 6). Other scholars defending a variation of this view are Birkeland, Bobzin, Gruntfest and Holst.
development, I will argue for a version of the analogical view that includes the stress as a major part of the development.\textsuperscript{56}

An argument often used in favour of the idea that the position of the stress is late and artificial is the long vowel in the first syllable, both in simple qatal and weqataltí.\textsuperscript{57} Since this is an instance of the so-called pretonic lengthening, it follows that the stress must have been on the second -\textit{a}- at that time—if it had been on the final syllable, the result should have been the un-attested uqtaltí. However, since we have already stated that the whole development is an analogical one, i.e. a new creation in the history of Hebrew based on other parts of the system, there is nothing odd about assuming that the vowel length was taken over from the simple qatal. Anyway, there is no evidence that the pretonic lengthening must necessarily be a young development. Therefore, there is no need to assume that the final stress must be so late that it was never a part of the real spoken language.\textsuperscript{58}

In Birkeland's words, it can be assumed that "die eigentümliche Form einer linguistischen Realität entspricht".\textsuperscript{59} Since the final stress is only observed in a restricted number of forms, one could argue that this is in fact an indication that it represents a relic of an old, possibly originally more widespread phenomenon from the real history of the language. Bauer and Leander argue that if the stress position was a late, artificial invention for readings in the synagogue, like Brockelmann suggested, there is no reason why the distinction was not made in every person and in all types of verbs.\textsuperscript{60} In fact, the occurrence of final stress is restricted to the first and second person, and it does not occur with some types of verbs, e.g. III-h, in pause or often before another stressed syllable in the following word (nesiga).

McFall uses this state of affairs to argue that the stress does not signify any difference in meaning between non-past weqataltí and simple past weqataltí.\textsuperscript{61} He claims that there are cases of weqataltí

\begin{itemize}
\item[57] In the standard designations used here, the length of the vowel is not indicated. More precise designations would be gātal, gātalì, wogātalitì etc.
\item[58] Another argument, put forward by Revell, is that the stress movement must be later than the retraction of stress caused by a following stressed syllable in the next word (nesiga)—a development which, according to Revell, had not yet occurred in Qumran Hebrew, thus indicating that the stress distinction was not made there (Revell, "Stress and the Waw 'Consecutive'" (n. 56 above), 439–440). However, the arguments for this view are hardly convincing. The Qumran material does not tell us anything about nesiga, which in any case must be probably assumed to have been in effect for a long period of time.
\item[59] Birkeland, \textit{Akzent und Vokalismus} (n. 12 above), 72.
\item[60] Bauer and Leander, \textit{Historische Grammatik} (n. 8 above), 313 (§42z).
\item[61] McFall, \textit{The Enigma} (n. 1 above), appendix 2, 189–210.
\end{itemize}
having simple past meaning and cases of *weqatáltí* having future meaning. However, many of his future *weqatáltís* can be explained either by the phonetics of the roots themselves (by being III-h etc.) or by their position in the sentence (pause or *nesiga*). Others are actually preterital. Regarding his supposed examples of *weqatáltís* with preterital meaning, all of these are in fact ordinary non-past *weqataltís*.\(^{62}\) McFall further argues that a trait which marks a distinction in meaning, but which only does so sometimes, is absurd.\(^{63}\) Such a situation, however, is extremely common in many languages, including in other parts of the Hebrew system itself, e.g. the gender distinction is neutralized in pause in certain pronominal forms (תִּנְסָ, תִּגַּרְפָּ).

Thus, there is no reason to disregard the stress when treating these verbal forms. In fact, the attempts at explaining the development of *weqataltí* without considering the stress pattern tend to be rather vague. E.g., Smith explicitly states at the outset that he will not address the question of the morphology itself,\(^{64}\) and this approach leaves him with only the general idea of an "inner Hebrew development", without further explanation.\(^{65}\) Contrary to this, Birkeland describes the development of *weqataltí* to a real, new category with a specific meaning marked by a special stress as an analogy based on the entire system, including the stress. Thus, just like the simple *qatal* (with stress on the penultimate syllable in the second and first person singular forms) interchanges with *wayyiqtol* (also with penultimate stress in some forms), so *weqataltí* (with final stress) enters into the same kind of interchange with the simple *yiqtol* (also with final stress).\(^{66}\)

The statement that *wayyiqtol* had penultimate stress, of course, touches on another issue over which scholars are divided. Birkeland assumes that *wayyiqtol* and the jussive had the same ancestor, with penultimate stress (*yāqṭul*). However, Hetzron has argued—in my opinion, convincingly, though all the details cannot be presented here—that Proto-Semitic made a distinction between a past *yāqṭul* and a jussive *yaqṭūl*.\(^{67}\)

There is good reason for assuming a general penultimate stress in at least one stage of Proto-Semitic, so the odd thing here is really the presumed final stress in the jussive, which is not given

---


\(^{63}\) McFall, *The Enigma* (n. 1 above), 194.

\(^{64}\) Smith, *The Origin* (n. 50 above), xi.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 15.

\(^{66}\) Birkeland, *Akzent und Vokalismus* (n. 12 above), 72.

any real explanation by Hetzron.\textsuperscript{68} Thus, to improve on Hetzron's fine observations, one could point to the fact that the imperative in Proto-Semitic was probably *qətu, and having only one syllable, this of course carried the stress (*qətu). The consonant cluster was resolved in different ways in the different languages, e.g., with Arabic adding a vowel in front of the first consonant. Hebrew (and other languages) added the supporting vowel between the two consonants (*qətu > הָעַטַּל), thus creating a form with an exceptional final stress.\textsuperscript{69} This final stress in a form with a very clear semantic content could be the pattern after which the final stress in the jussive developed, and later, \textit{weqataltî} entered the same group of forms.\textsuperscript{70}

Thus, there seems to be a connection between the final stress in the imperative, the jussive and \textit{weqataltî}. Furthermore, when Hebrew lost the final short vowels, more forms with final stress and non-past/modal meaning developed (e.g., לְטִט < *taqūlu), whereas the second singular form of the corresponding qatal kept the stress on the penultimate syllable presumably because that syllable was a closed one followed by an open one (qatāltī), even when the language experienced a general shift to final stress.\textsuperscript{71} At the same time, the non-final stress was also present in \textit{wayyiqtol}, in some cases being protected by a specific phonetic environment against the general movement of the stress to the final syllable. Hence, there was a correspondence between stress and meaning.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{68} Another point in Hetzron's article that deserves elaboration is the development of the \textit{wa}- with doubling of the initial consonant in \textit{wayyiqtol}. Hetzron assumes that this is not really an "and", but rather a reduced form of the verb *hawaya "to be" (with \textit{way}+C- > \textit{waCC}). However, Birkeland has a better explanation that sees the development as a purely phonetic one. On this view, \textit{waCC} is a result of the ordinary Hebrew pretonic lengthening, or rather the "gleichwertige Vortonverdoppelung", Birkeland, \textit{Akzent und Vokalismus} (n. 12 above), 71. A sequence of short vowel plus double consonant is also in other cases the equivalent of long vowel plus single consonant. In the later development of Hebrew, the stress moved in most cases towards the end of words, and only stayed on the non-final syllables under specific phonetic circumstances. In this way, the special form of the \textit{wa} would in most cases be left as the only marker of the past tense meaning, since the rest of the form would be the same whether it came from *\textit{yiq̄tul}, *\textit{yaq̄tul} or *\textit{yaq̄tul}. However, if the jussive also originally had the stress on the prefix, the same phonetic development would have happened there, and there would be no reason whatsoever for making the special \textit{waCC}-form a marker for only the past tense form. Thus, if one adopts this explanation of \textit{waCC}-, it could be a further argument in favour of Hetzron's position that there was an early distinction between past *\textit{yiq̄tul} and jussive *\textit{yaq̄tul}.

\textsuperscript{69} Of course, it should be noted that at this period, all the words that at a later stage would have final stress still had the original final vowels of the case endings etc. (the later רֶפּ ה with final stress comes from an earlier *\textit{dabāru}).

\textsuperscript{70} Cf. Gerard Janssens, \textit{Studies in Hebrew Historical Linguistics Based on Origen's Secunda} (Leuven: Peeters, 1982), 52, for similar ideas—he, however, assumes that the original imperative had two syllables. On the general idea, cf., e.g., also Blake, who sees the stress specifically in \textit{weyiqtol}-forms as the reason for the stress movement in \textit{weqataltî}, Frank R. Blake, "The Hebrew Waw Conversive", \textit{JBL} 63.3 (1944): 271–295 (284).

\textsuperscript{71} One could point to a further instance of stress marking a semantic difference of the same type. In \textit{wa}-verbs, the qatal in the third feminine singular has penultimate stress as opposed to the participle in the feminine singular. This distinction, of course, goes back to an original regularity with both forms having at one time had penultimate stress, the participle, however, with a case ending that later disappeared, i.e. *qāmātu > הַכָּפָר, while the qatal was *qāmat > הַכָּפָר.

\textsuperscript{72} Some scholars have seen a form of iconicity here with the final stress pointing forward into the future, and the non-final stress pointing back into the past, cf. Mcfall, \textit{The Enigma} (n. 1 above), 48. It must be noted that a lot of levelling
When the language developed a general final stress on all forms that were not protected by their specific phonetic environment (like first and second singular qatal, wayyiqtol of certain roots etc.), there was no longer any distinction between original *yáqtul, *yaqtúl and *yaqtulu. The entire form wayyiqtol with waw plus doubling of the initial consonant became the marker of past meaning. Consequently, whenever an initial "and" was not needed, it became difficult to use the descendent of *yáqtul, as one would have done at an earlier stage of the language, since it would now be liable to be interpreted as a non-past form. Instead, one would have to use the alternative, younger past tense form qatal—and in this way, the characteristic interchange of wayyiqtol and qatal became obligatory. From this basis, and given the fact that wayyiqtol differed from simple yiqtol in both meaning, and often in the stress, the next step could be to introduce a similar interchange between yiqtol and weqataltí, differing from simple qatal both in meaning, and (where phonetically possible) in the position of the stress.73

Conclusions

Summing up, historically speaking, there is no question of a "conversion" between simple yiqtol and wayyiqtol, since they derive from different backgrounds. However, if one looks at the situation synchronically, there is indeed the clear impression of "conversion". This perceived relation between the forms must have been a factor in the development of weqataltí, where, in fact, a "conversion" does take place, since it has been shown, 1) that weqataltí and simple qatal do not express the same meaning, and 2) there is no evidence for an ancestor of qatal or weqataltí with a

---

73 As stated above (p. 16–17), weqataltí as a non-past form is opposed to weqataltít, which is used in more or less scattered instances in the OT with a simple past tense meaning, presumably as the equivalent of a wayyiqtol. Of course, the difference in stress can only be seen in the first and second person singular, and only in certain roots under specific circumstances. Thus, penultimate stress in weqataltí can be caused by different types of pausal phenomena, the presence of an immediately following stressed syllable in the next word, or the structure of the root itself—apart from signifying past tense meaning. However, when one leaves out all the cases with possible interference from the environment, there is still a list of ca. 16 instances in the entire OT with a clear link between penultimate stress and past meaning. There are, of course, many more cases of weqatalts that are unable to express the distinction in stress, though still with simple past meaning—and significantly, there are no instances where a form with final stress needs to be interpreted as simple past. As is well known, the simple past type of weqatal replaced the wayyiqtol as the way to express past tense in a continuous narrative in the later phase of the language attested in the rabbinic literature. Exactly how this later development took place, including the extent of the use of simple past tense weqatalts in the OT, is outside the scope of this paper, but it is a question that I will treat in detail as part of my project.
specific non-past/modal meaning. Thus, the development can be described as a sort of analogical conversion of the simple qatal.

The starting point, as noted above, was probably the use of the ancestor of qatal in conditional environments. Specifically, there already were instances of waw plus the precursor of qatal as the apodosis of a conditional sentence. In these cases, any non-past notions derive from the conditional surroundings, while in Hebrew (possibly with the first beginnings attested at a pre-Hebrew stage), this usage was turned into a new separate verbal form, with a specific meaning including a special form when allowed by the phonetic environment. Thus, both the inherited background and the special analogical development should be taken into account when explaining the origins of the form.