CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE ARCHAIC HEBREW VERB AND SIGNS
OF LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

14.1. The Archaic Hebrew Verb: Typology

Allowing for some signs of linguistic heterogeneity (some of which will be treated below, §14.2), all the phenomena mapped out above (see table 16 in chapter 13 above) are arranged systematically, and the restored system of verbal tenses can be identified as typologically archaic.

14.1.1. Indicative Forms

The system has three main indicative forms: preterite קָטַל, imperfective קָטֵל, and perfect קָטַל; the concrete distribution of these forms in different parts of the corpus can differ depending on discourse mode and other factors.¹ Preterite קָטַל (<yaqtul) is attested as the main past perfective tense in the discourse mode of narrative.² It seems to be used sporadically as a past sequential in the discourse mode of report.³ It is mainly clause-initial.

Imperfective קָטֵל (<yaqtulu) is attested in all the relevant imperfective usages: progressive aspect in different temporal frameworks, immediate future, past circumstantial, historical present, iterative and habitual aspect, and simple future tense.⁴ The possible scope of its modality is hard to establish due to the meager amount of data, but there are clear indications that this category was not used as a volitive modal, but did function as a conditional and epistemic modal. The form is commonly non-initial in the clause, but clause-initial position is likewise attested.⁵ Strikingly, the morphosyntactic status of different forms of the prefix conjugation

¹ See §14.2.1 below.
² More details on the use of preterite קָטַל in the archaic language type may be found below in §14.2.
³ See §§4.2.2.2.2 and 6.2.2.2.4 and cf. exs. 1b–1d in §13.1.1 above.
⁴ Cf. the discussion in §13.1.2 above.
⁵ See ex. 3 in §13.1.2 above.
and the different clause types associated with them are not marked by a specific word-order.\(^6\)

The texts that reflect the archaic type of verb system consistently attest to the use of the perfect tense קָטַל in its typical functions: as a static and resultant perfect or as a performative perfect.\(^7\) The gnomic perfect or prophetic perfect are occasionally attested, but discourse conditioned.\(^8\) Moreover, the perfect קָטַל is used as a simple past tense in reference to speech time, particularly in the discourse mode of report;\(^9\) conversely, its usage in the discourse mode of narrative is very limited.\(^10\) It commonly denotes an anterior event in a subordinate clause. It is often non-initial within its clause, but clause-initial position, with or without conjunctive וָו, is explicitly attested.

The modal usages of perfect קָטַל are of special interest: on the one hand, קָטַל is occasionally used as an irrealis form in conditional sentences;\(^11\) on the other hand, קָטַל for conditional, future purposive, or other modal uses is consistently missing from the archaic type of verb system.\(^12\) There are no examples of the preceptive perfect in the present corpus. It is also worth noting that the lack of modal and non-modal perfect קָטַל with conjunctive וָו, particularly in the report discourse mode; moreover, וָו+jussive is attested for conditional and subjunctive\(^13\) and וָו+imperfective קָטַל is used as a present habitual.\(^14\) Thus described, the distribution of the uses of perfect קָטַל in correlation with the jussive, on the one hand, and imperfective קָטַל, on the other, deserves more attention in future research.

In addition to the three forms that shape the general scope of the indicative mood (preterite יָקְטַל, imperfective קָטַל, and perfect קָטַל), the passive predicative participle is sporadically attested for the present passive tense; although the active participle is not attested in predicative use, participial phrases are used in attributive or circumstantial functions.\(^15\)

---

\(^6\) Cf. the discussion and the examples in §§13.1.7 and 13.1.10.

\(^7\) See the examples and the discussion in §13.1.4.

\(^8\) On these discourse-conditioned usages see §12.1.1 above and the examples there.

\(^9\) See §§6.2.1.2.1 and 7.2.6.3, and cf. the discussion in §13.1.6 above; for relevant cases in Gen 49 and Deut 33 see §§8.2.2.2.2 and 10.2.2.2.3 correspondingly; and cf. also below in §14.2.1.

\(^10\) See §4.2.2.2.1.2 and cf. the discussion in §13.1.4 above.

\(^11\) See §§4.2.3.2.3 and cf. 13.1.5 above.

\(^12\) Cf. the discussion in §13.1.5 above.

\(^13\) See §§4.2.5.2 and 9.2.4.1.2 and cf. the discussion in §13.1.9.

\(^14\) See §4.2.4.2.3 (about Deut 32:9).

\(^15\) Cf. in §13.1.3 and the discussion there.