FIRST PERSON IMPERFECT FORMS WITH WAW CONSECUTIVE

by

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First person imperfect forms with waw consecutive have recently received some attention in connection with the question of the authorship of the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.1 A few details of these forms were overlooked in that discussion. It seems worth while to present these, in case similar interest in these forms is aroused in some other connection.2 Forms with pronominal suffixes, which show no variations that might give clues to date or authorship, are not included in the following description.

(1) Where alef is the final root letter, the same 3 ms. form is regularly used with waw consecutive as without. This is also true for 1st person forms in 56 cases (including the qere in Josh. xxiv 8). The four exceptional forms, wJ)e¡J)Jh (Neh. ii 13), wJ)e¡J)Jh (1 Sam. xxviii 15), and the ketib forms w lbh (Josh. xxiv 8), and w)w))h (Ezra viii 17), all appear to reflect the use of the affix -oh. This affixed form of the imperfect thus occurs in waw consecutive forms from roots with final alef much less frequently than in forms from any other roots except those with final he. This is to be expected, since this use of the affix is late (see below), and the differences between the two types of final weak root had been lost by the end of the biblical period.3

1 The debate was initiated by S. Japhet in “The supposed common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemia investigated anew”, VT 18 (1968), pp. 330-71. The linguistic components of this and subsequent arguments on the question were evaluated in M. A. Throntveit “Linguistic analysis and the question of authorship in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah”, VT 32 (1982), pp. 201-16.

2 Any increase in the accuracy of this description of forms over others is due to the use of a list of forms beginning wô- or wônn- provided by “Promotion biblique et informatique” of Maredsous. A few forms were noticed which had not been included, however, so it cannot be asserted that this description is complete.

3 The affixed 1st person form is also much less common in forms from roots III than from other roots where a modal is expected. The affix occurs in 1 of 6
(2) Where the final root letter is he, the 3 ms. waw consecutive imperfect form is typically apocopated, although forms retaining the final vowel also occur. The corresponding 1 s. form is apocopated in 49 cases, but retains the final vowel in 57. The corresponding 1 pl. form is apocopated in 8 cases, but retains the final vowel in 6.

(3) The 3 ms. waw consecutive imperfect form regularly differs from the ordinary imperfect in stress position or vowel pattern in forms from hollow roots (except bw), geminate roots, many forms from roots with initial alef or yod, and in hif'il forms from other roots. The corresponding 1 s. form shows the affix -ṣh in 41 cases. Where this affix is not used, 1 s. forms with waw consecutive differ from ordinary imperfect forms in stress position only through nesiga (retraction of the stress, as in 1 Kgs xxi 6; Isa. xli 9; Ezek. xvi 6, 6). The 1 s. form differs from the ordinary imperfect in vowel quality in ṻ̄bōlek (Lev. xxvi 13; Dt. xxix 4; Josh. xxiv 3; Amos ii 10), also ṻ̄bōṣeb (Josh. xiv 7, but not ṻ̄bōṣīb in Neh. vi 4, and other similar forms) and ṻ̄bōṣed (Jer. xxxii 10, but not ṻ̄bōṣid in 1 Kgs ii 42). The 1 s. form with waw consecutive is the same as that of the ordinary imperfect in 158 cases. The corresponding 1 pl. form shows the affix -ṣh in Ps. xc 10; Ezra viii 23. Where this affix is not used, the 1 pl. form with waw consecutive shows the same vowel and stress pattern as the 3 ms. form with waw consecutive in 25 cases. The vowel and stress pattern is the same as that of the ordinary imperfect only in wannāʾāmid in Neh. iv 3.

(4) With other roots and stems, the same 3 ms. imperfect form is typically used with waw consecutive as without. This is true of expected cases where the alef was preceded by short *a (the ambiguous Ṿερפָּה, Jer. iii 22, is not included), 2/6 where it was preceded by short *i, and in 8/12 qal forms from BW. The affix is “expected” before n, after ḫ, or in sequence with another modal form. (The rule established by H. M. Orlinsky in “On the Cohortative and Jussive after an Imperative”, JQR N.S. 31 [1940-41], pp. 371-82; 32 [1941-42], pp. 191-205, 273-7, is true for modal imperfects as well as imperatives.) The affix might also be expected in some cases where markers of this sort do not occur, but even this conservative assessment shows that the use of the affixed form with these roots was progressively lost under phonological conditioning. It must be said, however, that affixed forms occur less regularly than do short forms with other roots also, as is shown by the exceptions listed in Orlinsky’s article (pp. 194-201). Such difference also occurs in some forms with open penultimate syllable from the nif'al, pī'eīl, or hitpa'el stem, but this is not regular. Forms from these stems are included in category (4) to keep the situation in (3) as clear as possible, as are 1st person forms corresponding to 3rd person forms in which penultimate stress might be expected, but does not occur, as wayyiqäs, watteqal.