

BIBLICAL GRAMMATICAL ELEMENTS IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY HASIDIC HEBREW TALE*

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A. Introduction

This paper constitutes the first systematic examination of the biblical morphological and syntactic elements attested in Hasidic Hebrew hagiographic tales composed in mid-to-late nineteenth-century Eastern Europe. No detailed linguistic study of the Hebrew employed in these tales has thus far been conducted, and this lack of thorough analysis has enabled the perpetuation of the frequent generalization, first promulgated by the fiercely anti-Hasidic contemporaneous Maskilim (adherents of the Jewish Enlightenment) and subsequently adopted in scholarly circles, that nineteenth-century Hasidic Hebrew is nothing more than a fusion of corrupt Rabbinic Hebrew and influence from its authors' Yiddish vernacular (see Rabin 2000: 79-80 for an example of this view). The present paper seeks to counter this facile perception through a systematic description and analysis of biblical grammatical elements appearing in Hasidic Hebrew tale texts. The aim of the paper is threefold. Firstly, it will demonstrate that a large selection of prominent morphological and syntactic features drawn freely from a diverse range of biblical texts actually comprise a significant and widespread component of the Hasidic Hebrew idiom. Secondly, it will elucidate the ways in which these elements are employed in the Hasidic Hebrew tales, arguing that while some correspond precisely in function to their counterparts in the Hebrew Bible, others were adapted by the Hasidic Hebrew authors and used in ways lacking direct biblical precedent. Thirdly, it will consider the authors' possible motivations for utilizing these features, proposing that in many cases they were not selected randomly but rather serve the important purpose of helping to establish the tales' status as heirs to the tradition of biblical historical narrative. These points will be illustrated with

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examples drawn from a corpus of Hasidic Hebrew tales published by the prominent collectors M.L. Rodkinsohn, M.M. Bodek, J. Kaidaner, E. Shenkel, I.M. Bromberg, and F. Munk, in comparison with appropriate Biblical, Rabbinic, and Medieval Hebrew extracts.

B. Morphology

1. 1cs, 1cp, and 3mp personal pronouns

The Hasidic Hebrew tale corpus exhibits a substantial range of typically biblical morphological features. The first of these features to be examined here constitutes the 1cs personal pronoun **אֲנִי** 'I', 1cp personal pronoun **אֲנַחְנוּ** 'we', and 3mp personal pronoun **הֵמָּה** 'they'. Examples of these pronouns appearing in the Hasidic Hebrew corpus are shown in (1)–(3) respectively. These pronominal forms are all commonly employed in the Hebrew Bible, as shown in (4)–(6) respectively, but in rabbinic literature they have been almost completely supplanted by the variants **אָנִי**, **אָנוּ**, and **הֵם** (Pérez Fernández 1999: 18), as shown in (7)–(9) in turn.

These characteristically biblical pronouns are not employed universally in the Hasidic Hebrew corpus; rather, they appear alongside their rabbinic equivalents, with each variant attested with roughly equal frequency. This fluctuation may indicate that the authors regarded the variants as fully interchangeable synonyms and either did not perceive, or did not regard as significant, the diachronic difference between them. Such a possibility is supported by the fact that the variants **אָנִי** and **הֵם** are not confined to post-biblical literature but rather appear in the Hebrew Bible alongside the strictly biblical **אֲנִי** and **הֵמָּה**. The distinctions between any of the forms in the minds of the authors. In more general terms, this phenomenon may be interpreted to suggest that the Hasidic Hebrew authors did not consciously distinguish between biblical and post-biblical forms at all, but rather drew liberally on all varieties of Hebrew familiar to them in the composition of their literature.

However, evaluation of this phenomenon in conjunction with many of the other biblical elements to be discussed below suggests instead that the authors did distinguish between the strictly biblical variants **אֲנִי**, **אֲנַחְנוּ**, and **הֵמָּה** on the one hand, and **אָנִי**, **אָנוּ**, and **הֵם** on the other, and that their selection of the former was not as haphazard as one might think but rather serves an important stylistic function: when they chose to employ **אֲנִי**, **אֲנַחְנוּ**, and **הֵמָּה**, they may have done so precisely because they strongly associated these forms with biblical

literature. When composing hagiographic narrative in Hebrew, it is possible that the authors sought to some extent to emulate the Bible because that was their most revered and comprehensive model of Hebrew historical narrative; employing certain forms that they perceived as typically biblical would have been a way of achieving this aim. The authors may not actually have been fully cognizant of this motivation; rather, it could have stemmed from an instinctive association between strikingly biblical forms and historical narrative, in contrast to markedly rabbinic forms, which they may have been more likely to associate with halakhic and exegetical writing. The subconscious nature of this tendency, as well as the inconsistent use of *אני*, *ונחנא*, and *המה* in the Hebrew Bible itself, may explain the fact that the authors' employment of these pronouns was not universal.

- (1) כי הוצרך **אנכי** לגלות לו סוד גדול
 '[...] For I was forced to reveal a great secret to him [...]'
 (Bromberg 1899: 26)
- (2) **אנחנו** בודאי בסכנה גדולה
 '[...] We are surely in great danger [...]' (Kaidaner 1875: 12b)
- (3) **והמה** לקחוהו על חברתם
 And they took him into their company (Bodek 1865: 1)
- (4) ויאמר יהוה אל־לִינוּ אי הִבֵּל אֶתְּךָ ויאמר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי הַשְׁמֵר אֶתִּי **אֲנֹכִי**:
 And the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' And he said, 'I do not know – am I my brother's keeper?' (Gen. 4:9)
- (5) נִסְעִים | **אֲנֹחֵנוּ** אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה אֵתוֹ אֶתֶּן לָכֶם
 'We are setting out for the place of which the Lord has said, "I shall give it to you" [...]' (Num. 10:29)
- (6) **הַמָּה** בָּאִים בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וְהִגָּה שְׂמוֹאֵל יֵצֵא לְקִרְאָתָם
 As they were entering the town, Samuel came out towards them (1 Sam. 9:14)
- (7) שליח בית דין **אני**
 I am the emissary of the court (*m. Gittin* 3:6)
- (8) אין **אנו** יודעין לשם מי נדרנו
 We do not know in whose name we vowed it (*m. Nidda* 5:6)
- (9) הרי **הם** עובדין לחמה
 Indeed they worship the sun (*m. 'Avoda Zara* 4:7)

2. 3fp *yiqtol* form

While biblical morphological features in the Hasidic Hebrew tale corpus are distributed among the parts of speech, they are particularly highly concentrated in the verbal system. One typically biblical verbal element is the 3fp *yiqtol* form, which the authors employ extremely consistently with feminine plural subjects; this applies whether the subjects are logically feminine, as in (1), or grammatically feminine, as in (2). This practice identically mirrors Biblical Hebrew, in which the feminine plural *yiqtol* forms are typically employed in conjunction with feminine plural subjects, as illustrated in (3). This Hasidic and biblical convention can be contrasted with Rabbinic Hebrew, in which the feminine plural *yiqtol* forms have with few exceptions been replaced by their masculine equivalents (Schwarzwald 1981: 15; Pérez Fernández 1999: 106), as shown in (4).

The fact that the Hasidic Hebrew authors consistently employed the biblical 3fp variant with feminine plural subjects instead of its 3mp equivalent is noteworthy, given that the 3fp form is almost entirely absent from the vast body of rabbinic literature with which they would have been intimately familiar and with which their writing is traditionally linked. This raises the possibility that, as in the case of the pronouns discussed above, they selected the 3fp variant precisely because of its strong biblical resonances, in order to root their own compositions within the hallowed tradition of biblical historical narrative. The fact that the authors employed the 3fp *yiqtol* so consistently, in contrast to the biblical pronouns, which they utilized only haphazardly, may indicate that they were conscious of their motivation for selecting it, and this element of intention could in turn indicate that they associated the 3fp form more clearly and strikingly with biblical literature than they did the pronouns. Such a strong association is most likely rooted in the fact that, in contrast to the biblical pronouns *המה* and *אנכי*, the biblical 3fp *yiqtol* is used with feminine plural subjects almost to the exclusion of its 3mp counterpart; moreover, the form would have been deeply embedded and linked to the Hebrew Bible in the consciousness of the authors because of its high concentration in the Book of Ruth, with which they would have been familiar from its annual recitation on the festival of Shavuot.

- (1) והיה כבואם הביתה **תבואנה** אמותם להגיש מאכלים
 And when they came home, their mothers came to serve food
 (Bodek 1865: 21)

- (2) בודאי כל עצמותי תשברנה
 '[...] Surely all of my bones would break [...]' (Kaidaner 1875: 15a)
- (3) אָז תְּבִאֲנָה שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים זָנוּת אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ וַתַּעֲמִדְנָה לְפָנָיו
 Then two women, prostitutes, came to the king and stood before him (1 Kings 3:16)
- (4) רבי יהודה אומר הנשואות יתארסו
 Rabbi Yehudah says that the women who were married can get engaged (*m. Yevamot* 4:10)

3. Cohortative

The cohortative is another characteristically biblical verbal form employed by the Hasidic Hebrew authors. It appears in direct speech and is most commonly attested in the singular, as in (1) and (2), though it is occasionally found in the plural, as in (3). The singular and plural cohortatives are both standard features of biblical literature, as illustrated in (4) and (5) respectively, but are unknown in Rabbinic Hebrew (Bar-Asher 1999: 9; Pérez Fernández 1999: 105; Sharvit 2004: 48), in which the *yiqtol* would be used instead, as in (6) and (7).

The uses as well as form of the Hasidic Hebrew cohortative seem to overlap to a considerable degree with those of their biblical antecedent. In the plural, the Hasidic cohortative seems to indicate mutual encouragement, equivalent to the English 'let's'. This can be seen in (3). This has clear precedent in the Hebrew Bible, in which the plural cohortative typically signals mutual encouragement (Joüon and Muraoka 2006: 346). By contrast, the meaning of the singular cohortative in Hasidic Hebrew is somewhat less transparent, as it appears in settings that seem to overlap with those in which *yiqtol*s with future force might be found. This lack of clarity also has precedent in Biblical Hebrew, in which the singular cohortative often seems on initial inspection to be relatively interchangeable with the *yiqtol* in non-past settings. That said, there is widespread scholarly agreement (e.g. Waltke and O'Connor 1990: 573-4; Shulman 1996: 196-7; Joüon and Muraoka 2006: 345-6) that the biblical singular cohortative, like its plural counterpart, is a volitional form indicating a heightened element of desire or personal involvement in the action on the part of the speaker. This interpretation could be applied to the singular cohortatives in the Hasidic Hebrew corpus as well, and as such the meaning of the form in the two corpora may be regarded as identical.

However, it is doubtful whether the Hasidic Hebrew authors were conscious of and sought to emulate the volitional force of the biblical singular cohortative. Rather, it seems more likely that they regarded it simply as a variant of the first person common singular *yiqtol* with no particular semantic overtones, but that they incorporated it into the direct speech portions of the tales alongside the plural cohortative because, as in the cases discussed above, they recognized (whether consciously or otherwise) both forms as characteristic elements of biblical dialogue, the replication of which would add historical weight to their own writing.

- (1) לכן אציגה לכם סיפור ברור כסולת נקי
Therefore I shall present to you a story as clear as pure choice flour (Kaidaner 1875: 6b)
- (2) ויאמר הבישאף להעם חכו נא עוד מעט ואשובה אליכם
And the Bishop said to the people, 'Please wait a bit more and I shall return to you' (Rodkinsohn 1865: 19)
- (3) לכה ונשיבה
'Come on, let's go back' (Bodek 1865: 14)
- (4) ועתה אם־זרע בעיניך אשובה לי
'[...] And now, if it displeases you, I shall go back' (Num. 22:34)
- (5) נלכה ונעבדה אלהים אחרים
'Let us go and worship other gods' (Deut. 13:7)
- (6) אלך ואשתחוה
'Let me go and bow down to it' (*m. Sanhedrin* 7:10)
- (7) נלך ונעבוד ע"ז
'Let's go and worship idols' (*m. Sanhedrin* 7:10)

4. Masculine singular imperative with ה suffix

Another typically biblical volitional form appearing in the direct speech portions of the Hasidic Hebrew tale corpus is the masculine singular imperative with ה suffix. That these Hasidic Hebrew forms are best considered to be biblical elements is relatively clear because, although the suffixed imperative is not completely unknown in Rabbinic Hebrew, in that form of the language it is a very marginal phenomenon, restricted to a few forms appearing in liturgical and intentionally biblicizing contexts (Pérez Fernández 1999: 151), such as that shown in (5). Most of the Hasidic suffixed imperatives are not

attested in Rabbinic Hebrew and therefore cannot have been directly inspired by that form of the language. By contrast, all of the Hasidic Hebrew suffixed imperatives have precise equivalents in the Hebrew Bible; this correspondence can be seen by comparing the Hasidic extracts in (1) and (2) with the biblical citations in (3) and (4).

The function of the suffixed imperative in the Hasidic Hebrew tales is uncertain, as is the precise relationship between the Hasidic and biblical understanding of the form. This uncertainty is in part attributable to the fact that the role of the suffix in Biblical Hebrew is itself disputed: for example, Van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze (1999: 150) state that its role is unclear, while Waltke and O'Connor (1990: 571) argue that it is most likely no different in meaning from its unsuffixed counterpart, as both occur in similar settings; by contrast, Fassberg (1994: 33; 1999: 13) and Shulman (1996: 250) propose that the suffixed variant is usually employed when the command is directed towards or for the benefit of the speaker, whereas the unsuffixed form indicates action directed towards others. Interestingly, the Hasidic Hebrew use of the suffixed form seems to correspond to Fassberg's and Shulman's interpretation of its biblical predecessor, as it is used in contexts indicating that the command will somehow affect the speaker.

However, it is unlikely that the nineteenth-century Hasidic authors consciously understood the biblical suffixed form according to an explanation first articulated by late twentieth-century grammarians. Rather, as in the case of the singular cohortative, it is more likely that they did not employ it in order to convey a specific semantic notion but rather selected it because they viewed it as a typical element of biblical dialogue to be reproduced in their own writing in order to anchor it within the biblical tradition of historical narrative.

- (1) **הגידה לי מה מבוקשך**
'[...] Tell me what you want.' (Rodkinsohn 1865: 12)
- (2) **גשה הלום**
'Come here [...]' (Bodek 1865: 14)
- (3) **אם-תגאל־גאל ואם-לא יגאל־הגידה לי**
'[...] If you will redeem, then redeem; but if you will not redeem, then tell me [...]' (Ruth 4:4)
- (4) **ויאמר אליו יצחק אביו גשה־נא ושקה־לי בני:**
And Isaac his father said to him, 'Please come close and kiss me, my son' (Gen. 27:26)

- (5) רבי יהודה אומר אני והוא הושיעה נא אני והוא הושיעה נא
 Rabbi Judah says, ‘I and he! Please save us! I and He! Please save us!’ (*m. Sukka* 4:5; suffixed imperative derived from Ps. 118:25)

5. Infinitives construct without ל prefix

The infinitive construct without ל prefix constitutes another common biblical verbal element in the Hasidic Hebrew tale corpus. This form is widely used throughout the Hebrew Bible (see Waltke and O’Connor 1990: 600-605 for details) but is not a feature of Rabbinic Hebrew, in which the infinitive construct invariably appears with the ל prefix (Pérez Fernández 1999: 144).

Hasidic Hebrew infinitives construct without ל appear in a wide range of positions and constructions. Firstly, they are frequently attested unprefixated by other prepositions. In such cases they may play a variety of syntactic roles. They may function nominally and in such cases frequently appear in construct, as in (1). Alternatively, they may function as the complement of a finite verb, as in (3). They also appear in purpose clauses introduced by the particle למען ‘in order to’, as in (5), or in temporal clauses introduced by an independent preposition, as in (7). When serving nominally, as complements, or in temporal clauses they may take subject suffixes, as in (7); when in purpose clauses they may take object suffixes, as in (5). All of these uses have precise equivalents in the Hebrew Bible, as shown in (2), (4), (6), and (8) respectively.

In addition, Hasidic infinitives construct without ל may take other prefixes. The most common of these are כ and כ, which are very commonly employed in the corpus in the formation of temporal clauses meaning ‘when’, ‘while’, or ‘just after’. Such cases are shown in (9) and (11). In this type of setting the infinitives typically have a subject suffix, as in (9), but may be unprefixated and followed by an independent subject, as in (11). Moreover, somewhat less frequently the infinitive construct may be prefixated by the preposition מ in order to convey a separative clause, as in (13). Again, all of these uses and forms are identical to their biblical predecessors, as shown in (10), (12), and (14).

Again, the Hasidic Hebrew authors’ use of these typically biblical infinitives construct may be rooted in a desire to give their hagiographic writing a stamp of historical weight by mimicking the style of biblical narrative through the use of certain easily identifiable biblical forms (though in fact the authors do not seem to have made a

distinction between chronological or genre divisions in the biblical source-texts, drawing on legal and poetic material as well as narrative).

- (1) מקום אשר עמד שם חיל נורא לפי ראות עיני
A place on which an awesome power stood, according to what my eyes saw (lit: the seeing of my eyes) (Rodkinsohn 1864: 43)
- (2) ויאמר הן עוד היום גדול לא-עת האסף המקנה
And he said, 'It is still the middle of the day; it is not yet time for the cattle to be gathered' (Gen. 29:7)
- (3) איש נכבד אחד ממרחק בן תורה והיה יודע נגן
'[...] a respectable man from far away, a Torah scholar, and he knew how to play [an instrument] [...]' (Bromberg 1899: 26)
- (4) ולא ידעו עשות-נכחה נאם-יהוה
'They do not know how to do right', says the Lord (Amos 3:10)
- (5) להתראות עם הגאון למען המשיכו אליו
To meet with the Gaon in order to draw him to himself (Rodkinsohn 1864: 25)
- (6) כִּי־הִקְשִׁיחַ הַיְהוָה אֶת־רוּחוֹ וְאִמְץ אֶת־לִבּוֹ לְמַעַן תִּתְּנוּ בְיָדְךָ פְּתוּם הַיְהוָה:
For the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand, as on this day (Deut. 2:30)
- (7) ויתן לו הרב על הוצאת הדרך שיספיק לו הוצאות עד בואו שמה
And the Rabbi gave him [enough] for the expenses of the journey that would suffice for him for expenses until he arrived there (Rodkinsohn 1865: 12)
- (8) והשיב מלשה את-המסוה על-פניו עד-באן לדבר אתו
Moses would put the veil back on his face until he went in to speak with Him (Exod. 34:35)
- (9) אבל בראותי הגובה מהחלון עד לארץ אחזני פלצות
'[...] But when I saw the height from the window to the ground, terror gripped me [...]' (Kaidaner 1875: 15a)
- (10) ויהי בראותי אני דניאל את-החזון ואבקשנה בינה והנה עמד לפני פמראה-הגבר
While I, Daniel, saw the vision and sought to understand it, there appeared standing before me one with the appearance of a man (Dan. 8:15)

- (11) וכשמוע ה"ר וואלצי שהוא חשוב הוטב בלבו יותר משתיית היין
And when Rabbi Woltzie heard that he was respected, it
gladdened his heart more than drinking the wine (Munk 1898:
4)
- (12) כשמוע עשוֹר את־דברי אביו ויצעק צעקה גדלה ומרה עד־מאד
When Esau heard his father's words, he let out an exceedingly
great and bitter cry (Gen. 27:34)
- (13) לא אשקוט מדבר מהאיש הקדוש
I shall not refrain (lit: be silent) from speaking of the holy man
(Kaidaner 1875: 16a)
- (14) כִּי־הָיָה רְכוּשָׁם רַב מִשָּׁבֶת יַחְדָּו
For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together
(Gen. 36:7)

6. *Qal* infinitives construct of I-י and I-נ roots

The morphology of Hasidic Hebrew infinitives shows further biblical influence, most clearly visible in the form of *qal* infinitives construct of I-י and I-נ roots. Such forms frequently appear in the corpus with the first root letter missing and a final ת, as in (1)–(4). Such forms may appear with the ל prefix, as in (1) and (2), or without, as in (3) and (4). This way of forming the infinitive construct of such roots is identical to that found in the Hebrew Bible, as shown in (5)–(8). This pattern contrasts sharply with that used in rabbinic literature, according to which the *qal* infinitive construct of I-י and I-נ roots resembles the 3ms *yiqtol* form, with an initial י and no final ת. Such forms are illustrated in (9)–(12).

In the case of infinitives construct with ל, the Hasidic authors do not employ the biblical variants exclusively but rather make use of their rabbinic counterparts as well. Like the personal pronouns discussed above, the biblical and rabbinic infinitive variants seem to be interchangeable, appearing with similar frequency and in similar syntactic conditions. Again as in the case of the pronouns, this may indicate either that the Hasidic Hebrew authors did not perceive a difference between the biblical and rabbinic forms, or alternatively that when they selected the former it was because of a desire (in this case in this case inconsistently applied and thus possibly not completely conscious) to incorporate identifiably biblical elements into their writing. Conversely, in the case of infinitives without the ל prefix, the Hasidic authors invariably follow the biblical model, given that these forms have no rabbinic counterpart; the use of such

infinitives constitutes one aspect of the more widespread phenomenon discussed in section 5 above.

- (1) מה ראיתם מאתי להעמיס עלי מעמסת העם הרב הזה לשאת אותם עלי
‘[...] what have you seen from me, that you would place upon me the burden of this great people, to bring them to me [...]’
(Bodek 1865: 2)
- (2) ותיכף ראו כולמו לדעת כי צדיק קדוש עליון הוא
And immediately they all came (lit: saw) to know that he was a most elevated righteous holy man (Bodek 1865: 12)
- (3) ועתה אחל תת לפני בני עמינו המעט אשר הזכירוני רעיוני
And now I shall begin to give to the members of my people the little of which my thoughts have reminded me (Kaidaner 1875: 6b)
- (4) והיתה שבתה בשבת בעיר חדש הסמוך לגבול
And on the Sabbath she stayed in the new city close to the border (Bromberg 1899: 5)
- (5) ויפגע מדון לפני בני ישראל ולא יספו לשאת ראשם
Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites, and did not raise its head again (Judg. 8:28)
- (6) ולא נתן יהוה לכם לב לדעת ועינים לראות ואזנים לשמע עד היום הזה:
Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to know or eyes to see or ears to hear until this day (Deut. 29:3)
- (7) היום הזה אחל תת פחדך ויראתך על פני העמים
On this day I shall begin to put (lit: give) the dread and fear of you over all of the nations (Deut. 2:25)
- (8) זָה שְׁבֵתָהּ הַבַּיִת מְעֵט
She stayed in the house [only] a little (Ruth 2:7)
- (9) ר' אליעזר אומר יכול הוא לישא אשה אחרת
Rabbi Eliezer says, ‘He can marry another woman’ (*m. Soṭa* 4:3)
- (10) שהיא חשודה לגלות את קדירתה של חברתה לידע מה היא מבשלת
For she is suspected of uncovering her companion’s cooking-pot in order to know what she is cooking (*m. Tohorot* 7:9)
- (11) אם אמר לו אני אציל את שלך ואתה נותן לי את שלי חייב ליתן לו
If he had said to him, ‘I will save yours, but you must pay me for mine’, he must pay him (*m. Bava Qamma* 10:4)

- (12) שכרה לישב עליה [...] שכרה מותר
 If he hired it to ride upon, its hire is permitted (m. 'Avoda Zara 5:1)

7. *Hitpael*

The Hasidic Hebrew system of verbal stems exhibits biblical elements in that the authors make frequent use of the typically biblical *hitpael* in addition to its rabbinic equivalent, the *nitpael*. However, the relationship between the Hasidic Hebrew *hitpaels* and those appearing in the Hebrew Bible is not always straightforward. For example, it might be expected that the Hasidic Hebrew authors would choose the *hitpael* primarily in cases where an identical form is widely attested in the Hebrew Bible and would therefore have been immediately familiar to them, or where an equivalent post-biblical *nitpael* is rare or unattested. Therefore it is noteworthy that they often select the *hitpael* variant when the form in question appears only rarely in the biblical corpus and the same root appears frequently as a *nitpael* in post-biblical literature. For example, the Hasidic Hebrew *hitpael* shown in (1) mirrors its biblical counterpart shown in (2) despite the fact that this biblical form appears only a few times, while the same root is much more commonly attested as a *nitpael* in tannaitic midrashim and other post-biblical texts, as in (3). In such cases it is possible that the Hasidic Hebrew authors' use of the *hitpael* was influenced not only by the infrequent biblical attestations, but also by the somewhat more numerous appearances of the same form in medieval Hebrew commentaries such as that shown in (4). Even more strikingly, the Hasidic Hebrew authors frequently employ *hitpaels* that are not actually attested as such in the biblical corpus at all. As above, such forms are typically found as *nitpaels* on numerous occasions in rabbinic literature; however, they may additionally appear as *hitpaels* in rabbinic and medieval texts. In such cases it seems that the Hasidic authors' selection of the *hitpael* may be rooted in the existence of these occasional post-biblical *hitpaels*; again, it is notable that they selected this variant when the same root is actually more frequently attested as a *nitpael* throughout post-biblical literature. This phenomenon can be seen in (5): this *hitpael* does not appear in the Hebrew Bible at all, but is found occasionally in rabbinic and medieval texts, as shown in (6) and (7). Finally, some Hasidic Hebrew *hitpaels* lack precedent in both biblical and post-biblical literature and, again, are employed in the corpus despite the frequent attestation of corresponding *nitpaels* in post-biblical texts. Such cases, as illustrated

in (8), seem to constitute instances of the Hasidic Hebrew authors creating original forms based on a characteristically biblical pattern.

The Hasidic Hebrew authors' utilization of both the *hitpa'el* and *nitpa'el* combined with their tendency to fuse biblical and post-biblical forms suggest that they did not distinguish clearly between the two variants. Thus, in this case it appears unlikely that the authors employed the *hitpa'el* in order to lend a biblical feel to their writing; rather, it seems that they did not regard the *hitpa'el* as typically biblical at all. This is most likely due to the fact that the *hitpa'el* is not restricted solely to the biblical corpus but rather appears in post-biblical literature as well. (This phenomenon is the converse of that discussed in section 1 above, whereby both variants of the 1cs and 3mp personal pronouns are employed in Hebrew Bible.)

- (1) ר' שלמה מקארלין התחזק בתפילה
Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin became more resolute in prayer
(Rodkinsohn 1864: 37)
- (2) ובשנה השבעית התחזק יהויָדָע
Now in the seventh year Jehoiada grew strong (2 Chron. 23:1)
- (3) נתחזק אחד על חברו והרגו
One overpowered his fellow and killed him (Midrash Rabba,
Bereshit section 22, para. 9)
- (4) ומפני זה התחזק אברהם ודיבר אל האלהים
And because of this Abraham grew resolute and spoke to God
(Abarbanel to Genesis 17)
- (5) ובמוצאי שבת קדש הסתכל היטב בפני האברך
And at the end of the holy Sabbath he looked closely at the face
of the yeshiva student (Shenkel 1903: 20)
- (6) ואמרו עליו שמימיו לא הסתכל באשת איש
And they said of him that in all his days he never looked at
another man's wife (*Midrash Tanhuma, Huqqat* 1)
- (7) ואחר כך הסתכל בכל אחד והכירו
And afterwards he looked at every one and recognized him (Ibn
Ezra to Gen. 42:7)
- (8) וכל החסידים והרבנים [...] בראותם כי רבינו התאחר מהעת אשר יעד להם
קרבו כולם אצל הפתח
And all of the Hasidim and the rabbis [...] upon seeing that our
Rebbe was delayed beyond the time that he had appointed for
them, all approached the door (Rodkinsohn 1864: 45)

C. Syntax

1. *Wayyiqtol*

In addition to biblical morphological elements, the Hasidic tale corpus is replete with biblical syntactic features. One very prominent and frequently attested such feature is the *wayyiqtol*, a verbal construction thought of as typically biblical because it is the predominant vehicle for conveying sequential preterite actions in the narrative of the Hebrew Bible but is not employed in most forms of post-Biblical Hebrew.

As in the case of the *hitpael*, the Hasidic use of the *wayyiqtol* does not correspond identically to that of the Hebrew Bible. Firstly, while in Biblical Hebrew the *wayyiqtol* is as a rule the only verbal form used to convey sequential narrative past actions, in the Hasidic tale corpus it is employed interchangeably with chains of *qatals*, which is a characteristically post-biblical construction. This practice can be seen by comparing the *wayyiqtol* sequence in (1) with the *qatal* sequence in (2). Secondly, Hasidic *wayyiqtol*s are typically introduced by an initial *qatal*, as shown in (1), while their biblical counterparts may begin a narrative sequence, as in (4). Finally, the Hasidic authors tend to use the *wayyiqtol* more frequently at the end of a chain of *qatals*, as in (3), in contrast to Biblical Hebrew, in which such sequences are typically composed solely of *wayyiqtol*s, as in (4).

As the *wayyiqtol* is such a striking hallmark of biblical narrative, it is likely that the Hasidic Hebrew authors gravitated towards the construction because on some level they felt that it would serve to ground their writing within the tradition of this genre. However, the differences in usage between the Hasidic and biblical constructions suggest that while the Hasidic authors viewed the *wayyiqtol* as a quintessential component of past narrative, they did not always correctly interpret the syntactic role of the biblical construction and did not regard it as indispensable in the formation of past action sequences.

- (1) והיה על הבגד הנ"ל כפתורי ופרחי כסף וזהב [...] ותלך תיכף להצורף ותמכור את הכסף
 And the abovementioned garment had buttons and flowers of silver and gold [...] and she went immediately to the silversmith and sold the silver (Rodkinsohn 1865: 2)
- (2) בא הליטוואק והוקשה להרב קושיא גדולה והרב הקדוש נתן לו שלום ושאל אותו מאין אתם

The Lithuanian Jew came and posed a very difficult question to the Rebbe, and the holy Rebbe greeted him and asked him, 'Where are you from?' (Munk 1898: 22)

- (3) החיגר רקע ברגלו וחרק בשיניו ויצעוק בקול מר
The lame man stamped his foot and ground his teeth and cried out in a bitter voice (Rodkinsohn 1864: 46)
- (4) וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים סְדֹמָה בְּעֶרְבַּי וְלוֹט יֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר־סְדֹם וַיִּרְאֵה־לוֹט וַיָּקָם לִקְרֹאתָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַפָּיִם אֶרְצָה:
The two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening, as Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them he rose to greet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. (Gen. 19:1)

2. *Wayehi*

Closely linked to the Hasidic Hebrew use of the *wayyiqtol* is its employment of the related construction *wayehi*. *Wayehi* is commonly used in the corpus to introduce temporal clauses in past settings, as in (1)-(3); this construction is very frequently found in Biblical Hebrew (see Gibson 1994: 157) but is not a feature of rabbinic literature (Bendavid 1971: 577).

In some cases the Hasidic Hebrew use of *wayehi* precisely mirrors that of the Hebrew Bible, as comparison of (1) and (4) illustrates: both forms introduce a temporal clause consisting of the conjunction *כִּאֲשֶׁר* 'when' and a *qatal* followed by a *wayyiqtol*. However, the Hasidic temporal clauses with *wayehi* often differ from their biblical counterparts in that they are frequently followed by a *qatal*, as in (2) and (3), or a periphrastic construction, as in (4) while their biblical equivalents are typically followed by a *wayyiqtol* (Joüon and Muraoka 2006: 608), as in (5).

As in the case of the *wayyiqtol* discussed above, this most likely indicates that the Hasidic authors employed the *wayehi* construction because they were familiar with it from its extremely frequent appearance in narrative portions of the Hebrew Bible and therefore understood it to be an essential element of their own narrative, but did not replicate all of the syntactic properties of the biblical construction.

- (1) וַיְהִי כִּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת דְּבַרֵי הַכּוֹמֵר וַיִּקְצַף הַמֶּלֶךְ מְאֹד
And when the king heard the priest's words, the king grew very angry (Bodek 1865: 16)
- (2) וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַמַּחְרַת הַלֵּךְ ר' לֵיב לַהֲדִירֶעֱקֵטֵר

And the next day Leib went to the director (Rodkinsohn 1864: 13)

- (3) ויהי אחר הדברים האלה ראתה אותו את המלצר החדש
And after these things, she saw him, the new servant (Shenkel 1903: 13)
- (4) ויהי כאשר בא כמו חצי פרסה ממאגלניצא, היה נשאר שוכב בלי תנועה
And when he had come about half a *parsa* from Mogielnica, he was left lying motionless (Bromberg 1899: 27)
- (5) ויהי כאשר נלחמו בני־עמון עם־ישׂראל וילכו זקני גלעד לקחת את־יפתח מ־ארץ טוב:
When the Ammonites made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah back from the land of Tob (Judg. 11:5)

3. *Weqatal*

Just as the Hasidic Hebrew authors employ the *wayyiqtol* construction in past narrative contexts, they likewise use the *weqatal* in consecutive future settings. However, in contrast to the *wayyiqtol*, the *weqatal* is not a productive feature in the corpus. It invariably occurs in instances of *shibbus*, phrases directly taken or very closely adapted from biblical verses. This is illustrated in (1), which is a close adaptation of Isa. 1:19-20 as shown in (2), and (3), which is based on Gen. 17:19 as shown in (4).

The fact that the Hasidic Hebrew authors incorporated the *weqatal* into their writing within the context of *shibbus* clearly indicates that they were aware of the form's biblical associations and may support the suggestion that they sought to strengthen the impact of their compositions by linking them explicitly to the biblical model (though alternatively it may indicate only that these verses were so familiar to them that they employed them instinctively without dwelling on their biblical associations). Moreover, the fact that the *weqatal* appears only in instances of *shibbus* suggests that while the authors recognized the construction, it was not entrenched enough a component of their syntactic repertoire for them to employ it in completely original settings. This relative lack of familiarity is further highlighted by the fact that the Hasidic Hebrew *weqatal* is restricted to future settings, in contrast to its biblical predecessor, which can be found in past habitual, present, and command contexts as well (Joüon and Muraoka 2006: 367-75); thus, the Hasidic Hebrew authors seem to have understood the *weqatal* primarily as the future tense equivalent of the

preterite *wayyiqtol* and avoided, or perhaps even failed to identify, the numerous other biblical uses of the form.

- (1) ואם תאבו ושמעתם טוב הארץ תאכלו: אולם אם תמאנו ומריתם חרב שנאת המחמ"ד תלהט אתכם כי פיהו דבר
 ' [...] And if you are willing and obey, you will eat of the good of the land. However, if you refuse and rebel, the sword of Mohammed's hatred will burn you up, for his mouth has spoken' (Bodek 1865: 9)
- (2) אם-תאבו ושמעתם טוב הארץ תאכלו: ואם-תמאנו ומריתם חרב תאכלו כי פי יהיה דבר:
 If you are willing and obey, you will eat of the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken (Isa. 1:19-20)
- (3) לשנה הבאה כעת חיה את יולדת בן וקראת שמו ישראל
 ' [...] this time next year you will bear a son and call him Israel [...]' (Rodkinsohn 1865: 3)
- (4) אֲבֵל שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ יִלְדֶת לְךָ בֵן וְקָרָאתָ אֶת-שְׁמוֹ יִצְחָק
 Indeed, your wife Sarah will bear you a son and you will call him Isaac (Gen. 17:19)

4. Present states with *qal qatals*

The Hasidic Hebrew verbal system exhibits various other biblical usages in addition to the *waw*-consecutive. One such usage is the *qatal* conjugation in present tense contexts. Typically in Hasidic Hebrew the *qatal* is used exclusively as a past tense marker, while the *qotel* is employed in present settings. However, the *qatal* conjugation is used in direct speech to indicate present ongoing mental and emotional states in the case of a few *qal* stative roots, most frequently *י.ד.ע.* 'know'. An example of this convention is shown in (1) and (2). The Hasidic Hebrew use of stative *qal qatals* to convey present conditions directly mirrors that of its biblical predecessor (see Waltke and O'Connor 1990: 364-73), as in (3). This Hasidic and biblical usage can be contrasted with Rabbinic Hebrew, in which the *qotel* is typically employed in similar cases (Pérez Fernández 1999: 133), as in (4). However, Hasidic and Biblical Hebrew differ in that the Hasidic usage is most commonly found only with the root *י.ד.ע.*, while the biblical convention regularly extends to a wider variety of roots.

As in the other cases discussed above, it is likely that the Hasidic Hebrew authors adopted this usage, which contrasts markedly with the post-biblical use of the *qotel* in similar contexts, in order to place their

writing within the biblical tradition. The fact that the phenomenon is more restricted in the Hasidic tales than in the Hebrew Bible suggests that such usages were not the product of systematic planning but rather were a somewhat intuitive, and therefore sporadic, tendency.

- (1) הנה ידעתי מבוקשך
'You see, I know [what] your request [is]' (Rodkinsohn 1865: 6)
- (2) ידעתי כי אנחנו לא נוכל להתאפק
'[...] I know that we will not be able to contain ourselves [...]'
(Munk 1898: 19)
- (3) ויאמר יהוה אל־לֵוֹן אֵי הַבָּל אָחִיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי הַשִּׁמֶר אָחִי אָנֹכִי:
And the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' And he said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?' (Gen. 4:9)
- (4) קידשתי את בתי ואיני יודע למי קידשתיה
'I had my daughter betrothed, but I don't know to whom I betrothed her' (*m. Qiddushin* 3:7)

5. The particle נא

The last biblical feature to be examined in this paper is the particle נא. The direct speech portions of the Hasidic Hebrew corpus contain numerous attestations of this particle directly following an imperative, as shown in (1), or third person *yiqtol* with command force, as in (2) and (3). The Hasidic use of נא most likely stems directly from the Hebrew Bible, in which the particle is a common and characteristic feature, as illustrated in (4). This can be contrasted with Rabbinic Hebrew, in which it is relatively marginal and restricted to biblicalizing liturgical and poetic settings (Segal 1927: 148), as in (5).

The semantic significance of the Hasidic Hebrew נא is not completely certain. The contexts in which it appears in the corpus generally seem to support the possibility that it is a politeness marker with a translation value of 'please', but it is not entirely clear that the authors employed it with such a sense in mind. This uncertainty is rooted to an extent in the fact that the function of נא in the Hebrew Bible is somewhat unclear and grammarians have interpreted it in various ways, e.g. as a marker of logical consequence (Lambdin 1971: 170-1; Waltke and O'Connor 1990: 578-9; Fassberg 1994: 70-1), and as a particle of entreaty (Joüon and Muraoka 2006: 322-3), as well as a politeness marker (Kaufman 1991; Shulman 1999). However, the rabbis of the Talmud understood the biblical particle to be a politeness marker (see Kaufman 1991: 195), and as the Hasidic authors would

have been familiar with this rabbinic explanation it is plausible that they interpreted and used נא as a politeness marker themselves. Alternatively, however, as in the case of the singular cohortative and masculine singular imperative with ה suffix, it is possible that they did not attach any particular semantic significance to it, but rather employed it simply because they perceived it as a typical element of the direct speech portions of the Hebrew Bible that served as a model for their own dialogue.

- (1) שמע נא את אשר אספר לך
'Please listen to what I am going to tell you [...]' (Munk 1898: 18)
- (2) יאמר נא כבודו אליו שיקח איזה דבר לפיו
'May his Excellency please tell him that he should have something to eat (lit: take something into his mouth) [...]' (Bromberg 1899: 32)
- (3) תיקר נא נפש עבדך בעיני אדוני
'[...] May the life of your servant be valued in your eyes, my lord [...]' (Kaidaner 1875: 10b)
- (4) ויאמרו לו אומר נא שבֹלֶת ויאמר סבֹלֶת
They said to him, 'Say shibboleth', and he said shibboleth (Judg. 12:6)
- (5) אנא ה' הושיעה נא אנא ה' הצליחה נא
Please, Lord, save, please, Lord, send prosperity (*m. Sukka* 4:5)

D. Conclusion

This paper has shown that the nineteenth-century Hasidic Hebrew tale corpus contains a large number of morphological and syntactic elements drawn from the biblical stratum of the language. Biblical morphological features include nominal elements, i.e. the 1cs, 1cp, and 3mp pronouns, but are most prominent in the verbal system, i.e. the 3fp *yiqtol* form, the singular and plural cohortative, the masculine singular imperative with ה suffix, the infinitive construct without ל prefix, *qal* infinitives construct of I-י and I-נ roots without first root letter and with final ת, and the *hitpaal* stem. Biblical syntactic elements include the *wayyiqtol*, *wayehi*, the *weqatal*, the expression of present states with *qal qatals*, and the particle נא.

Analysis of the Hasidic Hebrew authors' use of biblical forms has revealed several trends. In some cases, i.e. the infinitive construct without ל prefix, the Hasidic Hebrew use is identical to that found in

the Hebrew Bible. In other instances, i.e. the *weqatal* and the expression of present states with *qal qatals*, the Hasidic usage similarly mirrors its biblical antecedent but is more restricted in scope. Likewise, the Hasidic singular cohortative and masculine singular imperative with ך suffix seem to correspond in usage to their biblical predecessors, although it is unclear how the authors actually interpreted these forms. Conversely, in the case of the *hitpael* stem, the *wayyiqtol*, and *wayehi*, Hasidic Hebrew usage deviates to a greater extent from that of the biblical model, possibly because of the Hasidic Hebrew authors' lack of understanding of the historical and syntactic properties of the forms in question. With regard to certain *hitpael* forms, the attestation of these 'biblical' elements in Hasidic Hebrew may actually be partially or wholly ascribable to the appearance of the same forms in medieval Hebrew writings.

Examination of the Hasidic Hebrew authors' motivations for employing these features suggests that in many cases they did not select them haphazardly but rather were aware of the biblical associations of the forms in question and selected them out of a desire (in some cases conscious, but in others perhaps more intuitive) to establish their hagiographic tales as stylistic heirs to the biblical tradition of historical narrative. This drive is most clearly evident in the case of the 3fp *yiqtol*, the infinitive construct without ך, and the *waw*-consecutive constructions as well as in the characteristic biblical dialogue markers, i.e. the cohortative, the masculine singular imperative with ך suffix, present states conveyed by *qal qatals*, and the particle ׀. By contrast, in the case of certain features, most noticeably the *hitpael*, such a motivation is less likely and it instead seems that the authors did not distinguish between the biblical and post-biblical variants.

While the presence of this substantial collection of biblical features in nineteenth-century Hasidic Hebrew may seem surprising in that it conflicts with the common perception of this idiom as primarily rabbinic-based, it is actually reasonable when viewed in the light of the fact that the Hebrew Bible was deeply embedded within the consciousness of the Hasidic authors; as such, and given the Bible's central role as the most prominent and substantial model of narrative Hebrew then in existence, it is eminently plausible that the Hasidic authors would have drawn on its linguistic conventions when composing their own Hebrew narrative. In addition, the attestation of some of these elements in medieval Hebrew literature, with which the Hasidic authors were equally familiar, reinforces the logic of their

appearance in the corpus. These findings indicate a need to re-assess the traditional understanding of Hasidic Hebrew as little more than an amalgamation of rabbinic elements: rather, it should be regarded as a much more complex linguistic system exhibiting a rich array of features drawn from various historical and literary forms of the language including a significant biblical component.

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