

## Introduction to Hebrew linguistics

April 28, 2011

Assignment for week 13

Deadline: May 12

This assignment prepares you for discussing the (pre-)history of Hebrew morphology. Morphology is probably the best known domain of Hebrew grammar, and most of what you learn in your Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew courses concerns morphology.

Yet, putting Hebrew morphology into the context of Semitic languages is not so simple. In fact, one understands the phenomena in Hebrew much better if you know some other Semitic languages. Classical Arabic is a very good starting point to decipher proto-Semitic, and to understand how Old Canaanite turned into Biblical Hebrew, which developed further into... finally into Israeli Hebrew.

We shall first focus on nouns and pronouns, possessive suffixes, as well as verbal prefixes and suffixes. Bennett's book (Paradigm B, available on the website) contains a short sketch of – among many others – Biblical Hebrew (pp. 80-81) and Classical Arabic (pp. 82-83). The description of Biblical Hebrew must be not new to you, even though the way of presenting it is certainly surprising. Therefore, I suggest to you to spend quite a time understanding pp. 80-81, to familiarize yourselves with it, and to compare it to your textbook(s) of Modern Hebrew and Biblical Hebrew.

Subsequently, I ask you to turn the page, and look at the description of Classical Arabic morphology. There will be quite a few familiar facts (after all, Hebrew and Arabic are closely related), but also quite a few novel details.

Your assignment is to describe your observations: all similarities and differences that you notice between the morphology of the two languages.

Explanation of a few notations and abbreviations:

Cases: N = nominative (*eerste naamval*),

A = accusative (*vierde naamval*),

G = genitive (*tweede naamval*).

Genders: m = masc. = masculine,

f = fem. = feminine, c = common.

Numbers: s = singular, d = dual, p = plural.

Pref. conj. = prefix conjugation (including imperfect, iussive and cohortative)

Poss. = suffix denoting the possessor, Obj.= suffix denoting the object.

Broken plurals: many Arabic words form their plural by changing the vowels, for instance, *kitāb* 'book' → *kutub* 'books', *ʿaqrab* 'scorpion' → *ʿaqārib* 'scorpions'.

As usual, send your answers (approx. 1 page) in an email to me ([t.s.biro@uva.nl](mailto:t.s.biro@uva.nl)) by Wednesday noon.