

One of the most interesting aspects of G. R. Driver's Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System¹ is his explanation of the waw consecutive phenomenon in Hebrew. In Driver's opinion the phenomenon arises as a result of a conflation of the East Semitic (Akkadian) and West Semitic (Aramaic) verbal systems within Hebrew. Thus, the regular imperfect יקטל corresponds with the Aramaic imperfect

יקטל, but the imperfect consecutive ויקטל corresponds with the Akkadian preterite iplus. On the other hand, the regular perfect קטל corresponds with the Aramaic perfect קטל while the perfect consecutive וקטל corresponds with the Akkadian stative paris which, according to Driver, originally had a universal meaning - past, present or future.²

Of course, it is only the latter meaning that could explain the perfect with the waw consecutive and, in Driver's opinion, relics of this future meaning of the stative are preserved in Akkadian. As a corollary, Driver maintains that there are also relics to be found of a stative having precative or optative meaning analagous to the Arabic precative perfect.³ It is our contention, however, that the

¹ Edinburgh, 1936; hereafter = Problems.

² Driver's thesis is presented in abbreviated form in J. Weingreen, A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew (2nd. ed; Oxford, 1959), pp. 252-53.

³ By precative perfect we mean a perfect which is used in wishes, prayers and curses, for example šalāy allāhu šalayhu wasallama "May God bless him and give him peace!" dāma mulkuhu "May his reign be long!" lačanaka allāhu "God curse thee!" etc., cf. W. Wright, Arabic Grammar II (Reprint: Cambridge, 1962), #1D. In the other Semitic languages the

stative in Akkadian does not have a future meaning and that only if the proclitic lū is prefixed to the stative can it have precative or optative meaning.

In this study we shall analyze the examples which Driver presents in support of his thesis. The following, then, are the examples cited by Driver in his Problems accompanied by his translations:

(a) turrat: turrat amassa ana pîša (Maqlû I:28) "her words shall return into her mouth" (p. 116). But turrat here has a definite past meaning as is clearly shown in M. Held's translation of lines 27-28 tūša ša kaššapti lemutti turrat amassa ana pîša lišānša kašrat "(My counter-magic is so strong that) it is as if the word of the evil sorceress had been turned back into her mouth (and) her tongue had been tied."⁴

(b) balṭāta: ammīni lā tākul lā taltīma lā balṭāta (Schrader's KB VI/I 98-99:31-32 = EA 356:67-68 [Adapa]) "Why didst thou not eat (and) not drink indeed? Thou shall not live" (p. 94). Since Adapa does not in fact die but is simply returned to earth, this rendering requires the interpretation that balātu must mean "to live eternally."⁵ But no such meaning for balātu

precative perfect is found only in the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud. Attempts to find such a construction in the other Aramaic dialects, Akkadian, Phoenician and Ugaritic are very questionable and will be discussed in detail in the writer's Ph.D. dissertation. As regards Akkadian, it is well known that one of the ways in which it forms its precative is by prefixing the proclitic lū to the preterite and less often to the stative, cf. GAG, #81b,81c. The question why Akkadian uses the preterite for its precative forms has puzzled many scholars. For example, Driver assumes two separate iṣrus forms which had different origins (Problems, p. 33), while H. Bauer thought that there was a time when iṣrus was universal and had not yet developed into a preterite tense (BA 8/1 [1910], pp. 20-21). The question has lately been discussed by Robert Hetzron, "The Evidence for Perfect *yáqtul and Jussive *yaqtúl in Proto-Semitic," JSS 14 (1969), pp. 1-21, who is of the opinion (like Driver) that the preterite and jussive had different origins but were distinguished by stress. But, whatever its origin may be, the use of the preterite and stative with lū to indicate the precative can in no way be equated functionally with the Arabic precative perfect. There are two reasons for this, firstly, one of the cardinal features of the precative perfect is that it begins a sentence whereas the Akkadian precative, like the verb in general, goes at the end. Secondly, the precative perfect in Arabic stands alone whereas the Akkadian precative must be preceded by the proclitic lū.

⁴ JCS 15 (1961), p. 22b.

⁵ Cf. P. Jensen, Assyrisch-babylonische Mythen und Epen KB 6/1 (Berlin, 1901), loc. cit.; E. A. Speiser in ANET, p. 102.

is attested in either CAD B, pp. 52ff., or in AHw., p. 99. Alexander Heidel's translation "Art thou not well?"⁶ is much to be preferred both contextually and semantically.⁷

(c) magir: šumma mussa magir šurqa iddan u ipaṭṭarši (MAL 5:63-64 [Middle Assyrian Law]) "If her husband shall be agreeable he shall restore the stolen property and redeem her" (p. 116). Here, there is no need for such a future construction; the text simply means "if her husband agrees."⁸

(d) ablat: širikti ša mutišu itti nudunnišu taliqqīma ablat (Schrader's KB IV 322-323, iv:16-19 [Neo-Babylonian Law]) "The gift of her husband together with his present she shall take and she shall carry away" (p. 94). Apart from the questionable interpretation of abālu as "to carry away," the reading ablat is incorrect as it should be aplat from apālu "to give a person satisfaction on a legitimate claim" as Driver himself later reads.⁹

(e) paṭrāti: u itizib āla u paṭrāti (EA 82:43-44) "I shall leave the city and depart" (p. 94). This Amarna letter from Byblos (under strong Canaanite influence) cannot be considered as evidence for standard Akkadian. It is now recognized that the Amarna letters from Palestine have a construction which resembles the Hebrew perfect with waw consecutive. This is especially true in conditional clauses to which this sentence in its entirety belongs.¹⁰

(f) pattu: qaqqassa pattu (MAL 40:67 [Middle Assyrian Law]) "her head shall be uncovered" (p. 94). The full passage reads qadiltu ša mutu iḥzušini ina ribēte paṣunatma ša mutu lā iḥzušini ina ribēte qaqqassa pattu (lines 61-64) "the qadištu-woman whom a husband has already taken in marriage will remain veiled in the streets, but one whom a husband has not yet taken in marriage will remain unveiled (lit.

⁶ The Babylonian Genesis (Phoenix Edition: Chicago, 1963), p. 151.

⁷ Cf. the common blessing lū šalmāta lū baḷṭāta "keep well and in good health," see CAD B, p. 55.

⁸ Cf. T. H. Meek in ANET, p. 180: "If her husband (so) desires..."

⁹ The Babylonian Laws II (Rep: Oxford, 1960), pp. 330, 342, where Driver interpretes aplat as a perfect "she has been satisfied." Cf. CAD A/2, p. 152b: "She (the widow) takes for her own full satisfaction the gift which her husband made to her together with her dowry."

¹⁰ See W. L. Moran, JCS 2 (1948), p. 245; C. H. Gordon, Orientalia 21 (1952), p. 123.

opened) in the streets."¹¹ This is the only one of Driver's examples of the stative having a future meaning which cannot be other wise explained.

(g) šakin: u aḫiya ina libbika lā šakin (EA 35:15 [Letter from king of Cyprus]) "let it not stick in thy mind" (p. 118; An. Or. 12 1935, p. 50). This line can hardly be used as evidence for the use of the stative without lū to indicate the precative because we are dealing here with what von Soden calls the "Prohibitive of the Stative."¹²

(h) damiq: eli rubî u šarri damiq (Ebeling, Era 36:59) "May it be pleasing to the nobles and the king" (p. 117). But the variant noted by Ebeling (loc. cit., n. 17), liṭîb, is by far to be preferred and should be read here.

Thus, we see that Driver's attempts to assign a future meaning to the stative are only borne out by one of his examples, namely that of (f) above. It is doubtful, though, whether we can derive too much from this solitary example for the following reasons: (1) Middle Assyrian usage can in no way be regarded as normative for Akkadian; (2) Neither von Soden nor Ungnad-Matouš recognizes this use of the stative in his respective grammar; (3) One swallow does not make a summer.¹³ Also, of the two examples which Driver adduces for the stative having a precative meaning without the proclitic lū, one, (g), has a recognizable grammatical explanation while the other, (h), has a variant reading which is to be preferred.

In short, Driver has not proved his case and, thus, we must conclude that the stative in Akkadian does not (and probably never did) have universal meaning so that it cannot be applied, as Driver would like, to explain the enigmatic Hebrew waw consecutive construction.

¹¹ Translation: M. B. Rowton, JNES 21 (1962), p. 241.

¹² GAG, #81k. Cf. lā wašbat in 1 GUR še'am ana ummika idinma er[išš]iša lā wašbat (OB letter from Bismya), "give one gur of barley to your mother, that she need not live destitute" AJSL 32 (1916), p. 280, lines 10-13; cf. p. 272 for Luckenbill's translation.

¹³ In Rowton's study of the use of the stative in classical Babylonian (see note 11) only this same example of some 450 examples cited shows the stative having a future meaning.