A Study on the Historical Change of 'Imperf. 2/3 pers. m. pl. Ending' in Classical Hebrew

The paragogic Nun in Aramaic and Arabic imperfect verbs has a modal function. Imperfect verbs with the paragogic Nun express, in general, the indicative mood while imperfects without it serve in jussive mood. But the paragogic Nun in Biblical Hebrew is considered to lose its syntactical meaning. One may find specific examples of the paragogic Nun not only in the indicative mood but also in the jussive context. Regarding the 'Long Imperfect' which contains the paragogic Nun in Biblical Hebrew, biblical linguists have suggested different explanations – antiquity of the text, archaization, Aramaic influence, meter, etc. The study on this linguistic phenomenon, however, seems to have not been thoroughgoing so far. Conclusions drawn from their investigations seem not complete. There seems

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to be a need of a further research for one to reach clearer conclusions. The present study reinvestigates this linguistic feature. The work limits its study to the usage of paragogic Nun in imperfect 2/3 person masculine plural. It checks the subject in both biblical texts and extra-biblical sources in Classical Hebrew in its wide definition, i.e., Biblical Hebrew (Ancient Biblical Hebrew, Standard Biblical Hebrew, Late Biblical Hebrew), Inscription Hebrew of the First Temple period, Qumran Hebrew, Hebrew of Ben-Sira and Mishnaic Hebrew. The study presents whole occurrences of paragogic Nun in these sources and provides statistic data. It shows that the rapid decrease of the paragogic Nun in Classical Hebrew results mostly from a diachronic factor. The most significant change in the use of the paragogic Nun occurs between the First Temple and the Second Temple periods. The usage of the paragogic Nun reaches 8% in the First Temple period (Standard Biblical Hebrew), but it drops to 3% in the Second Temple Period (Late Biblical Hebrew). This change seems to be reflected in extra-biblical sources of the same periods. One may count about 30% in the First Temple period sources, but in the Second Temple period sources the paragogic Nun is hardly found. The study concludes that this phenomenon should be properly defined as an LBH feature.

[Keywords: paragogic Nun, imperf. 2/3 m. pl. ending, SBH, LBH, Qumran Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew, historical change]

1. 서 론

보편적으로 샴야에서 미완료동사 활용에 사용되는 어미확장형태소 "-n" [-n] (paragogic Nun)은 동사의 법(mood)에 연관된 기능을 하는 것으로 알려져 있다.