

# ON THE PASSIVENESS OF ONE PATTERN IN JEWISH BABYLONIAN ARAMAIC – A LINGUISTIC AND PHILOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

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## Abstract

In this paper I discuss the passiveness of one pattern in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, the pattern which consists of the passive participle and the preposition 'ל' followed by a pronominal suffix. I will demonstrate that this pattern is indeed a passive construction. For this purpose I will deal with the definition of what a passive construction is in general, then apply this definition to the construction under review, and conclude my discussion by treating some of the possible objections that could be raised against this analysis. As will become clear, this pattern, like similar patterns in other languages, raises the crucial question whether it is possible to have a passive sentence without a clear active partner. This paper will endorse a positive answer to this question.

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the passiveness of one pattern in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (henceforth: JBA), namely, the pattern which consists of the passive participle and the preposition 'ל' followed by a pronominal suffix (henceforth: *qtīl lî*). This pattern appears all over the eastern dialects of Aramaic (including Syriac), and scholars widely accept that synchronically this construction expresses the perfect aspect. Since Kutscher (1965) it is the common

\* I delivered major parts of this paper at Harvard's Semitic Philology Seminar, April 2005, and a slightly different version is a chapter in my dissertation (Bar-Asher 2009). I wish to thank Wolfhart Heinrichs, Yaar Hever, Larry Horn, John Huehnergard and Malka Rappaport Hovav for reading and commenting on early versions of this paper, as well as the audience of the Harvard workshop for their fruitful remarks; and finally to thank the anonymous readers for some productive suggestions.

opinion among scholars that this is a possessive construction borrowed from Persian. In Bar-Asher (2007) I refuted both the hypothesis about the origin of this construction and about its typology, arguing that this is a regular passive construction,<sup>1</sup> which could have developed naturally within Aramaic.<sup>2</sup> In that paper I concentrated mostly on the reasoning behind why this is not a possessive construction, and in this paper I would like to complete the discussion by treating the other side of this topic, by demonstrating that *qtīl lī* is indeed a passive construction. I will begin by defining what a passive construction is in general (§2), then apply this definition to the construction under review, and conclude my discussion by treating some of the possible objections that could be raised against this analysis (§3).

## 2. Definition of Passive

### 2.1

A discussion as to whether a specific pattern is passive clearly assumes passiveness to be a distinct, cross-linguistic phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> We must determine the characteristics of this attribute. Even more fundamentally we must identify to what this attribute applies: should we speak about passive sentences or passive forms?

A full account of the definition of passiveness that I am about to use in the following discussion would require a separate study. For the purpose of the present discussion, it must suffice to summarize its basic elements.

Among the different definitions for the phenomenon of the passive, some believe that it is primarily a grammatical category, realized mostly by morphology and, in some languages, by syntax. Therefore,

<sup>1</sup> Kutscher's conclusion has been widely accepted by scholars. For a survey regarding the literature about this topic, see Bar-Asher 2007, n. 8.

<sup>2</sup> In Bar-Asher 2007: 15–17 I have discussed the structural parallels between the Persian and the Aramaic construction. Since the publication of this paper, Haig 2008 proposed a more detailed description of the Iranian construction which revealed a much deeper structural affinity between the languages. Compare especially his discussion of the use of the genitive (Haig 2008: 55–81) to my discussion of the dative expression in JBA (Bar-Asher 2007: 380–6). Despite these similarities I still believe that these are merely typological similarities and do not attest a borrowing from one language to the other.

<sup>3</sup> For justifications of such an approach see *inter alia* Keenan 1975 and Perlmutter and Postal 1983. Compare Siewierska 1984 who took passiveness in a more general way, and therefore covered more phenomena.

the term ‘passive’ is usually ascribed to a linguistic form.<sup>4</sup> Others emphasize the semantics of the passive sentence, where the subject of a sentence is the patient of the action,<sup>5</sup> or its pragmatic function of defocusing the agent,<sup>6</sup> or focusing on the patient.<sup>7</sup> According to some major theories, passiveness is not an attribute, but rather a process<sup>8</sup> through which one sentence derives from another by the ‘promotion’ of the object to the subject position<sup>9</sup> or the ‘demotion’ of the subject either by relegating it to the periphery of the clause or by deleting it from the clause.<sup>10</sup>

Instead of describing passiveness as a discrete category, some have proposed a prototypical characterization of the passive including all the different levels of analysis mentioned so far: the pragmatic function of these constructions, their semantic properties, the syntactic

<sup>4</sup> For a list of linguists who hold this position, see Andersen 1991: 6–8. It is important to distinguish between those who define passiveness by the morphology and those who claim that, as a matter of fact, passive constructions without passive morphology do not exist (see for example Haspelmath 1990: 27). According to the latter, this is merely a typological fact which has nothing to do with the definition of passive.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Andersen 1991: 112–13.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Givon 1979: 186; for a general discussion about the pragmatics of passive constructions see Siewierska 1984: 217–54. It should be noted that ‘focus’ in this context is not accompanied by a prosodic peak or new information; defocusing here means downgrading or deemphasizing.

<sup>7</sup> This was the common concept in the Prague school; see for example, Mathesius 1939, and later Halliday 1967: 217, who described it in the following way: ‘the speaker selects the option “receptive” in the transitivity system in order to take as unmarked theme a nominal having a role other than that of actor (one of goal, beneficiary or range), the actor either being unspecified or having unmarked focus within the rhem’. Wright (1862 vol. 1: 52) took a similar direction with regard to Arabic. However, it is worth noting different Semiticists who noted that in the Semitic languages other ways to focus on the patient are very common and therefore argued that in these languages pragmatically passiveness is related to defocusing of the agent (on this topic see Bubenik 1979 and Retsö 1983: 33–7 regarding Arabic, and Taube 1995 regarding Modern Hebrew).

<sup>8</sup> In mono-stratal frameworks, such as Lexical Functional Grammar, passive has to do with alternations in mapping from the lexicon to the syntax, and the object of the process is the verb-predicate with its arguments, see Bresnan 2001: 25–30. A similar approach is adopted in Dowty 1982 in the context of Montague grammar. Our approach (below §3.2.3.2) will be close to this position.

<sup>9</sup> Perlmutter and Postal 1983 suggested this in the context of a theory of Relational Grammar.

<sup>10</sup> Comrie 1977 and others pointed out that some passive constructions, for example the so-called impersonal passives, do not involve promotion of the direct object. It was, therefore, suggested that the promotion of the subject should be considered the main mechanism in producing a passive sentence. For a summary of this debate see Siewierska 1984: 117–24.

properties of active and passive sentences and the morphological property of the verbs.<sup>11</sup>

Taking the morphology as the basis of the discussion<sup>12</sup> involves two major problems.<sup>13</sup> First, it is not clear that morphologically speaking passiveness is indeed a distinct feature.<sup>14</sup> Cross-linguistically,<sup>15</sup> most often there is no form exclusively used for this function.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, arguing in favour of passiveness as a grammatical category assumes some content to this category; or that this category is related to one of the other syntactic phenomena mentioned earlier. Either way, we will still need to define passiveness not independently through the morphology, but through semantics or through syntax.

A common semantic characterization of the passive focuses on the fact that subjects of a passive sentence are affected by the action described by the verb;<sup>17</sup> or, using a cognitive terminology and avoiding terms such as ‘subject’, passive sentences are described as clauses with patients as the core, or in functional grammar as the element from whose point of view the situation is described.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>11</sup> One can find this kind of characterization already in Lyons 1971: 375–8. See also Shibatani 1985, who proposed a well-known analysis along these lines. More recently Haig 2008: 37, suggested a similar prototypical characterization, and applied it in the context of the Iranian languages.

<sup>12</sup> This is, for example, the starting point of Taube 1995 in her discussion of Modern Hebrew.

<sup>13</sup> I will leave aside the option of treating syntax as a syntactic process, since this paper is not written within the framework of generative grammar. However, it should be mentioned that the criticism of this approach to passiveness applies whether or not one accepts the general methodology. See *inter alia* Shibatani 1985: 822, and Andersen 1991: 118–36.

<sup>14</sup> See among many others Keenan 1981; Shibatani 1985: 822–30; and Haspelmath 1990: 32–7.

<sup>15</sup> Among the Semitic languages, for example in Hebrew and in Arabic, there are forms which are exclusively used for the passive (for example in Hebrew the *pu‘al* and *hup‘al*) and some which are not used exclusively for the passive (for example in Hebrew *nip‘al*; for discussion concerning Biblical Hebrew see *inter alia* Jenni 1973; Siebesma 1991; and for Modern Hebrew see Doron 2003, Arad 2005; for a discussion on Modern Arabic dialects see Retsö 1983).

<sup>16</sup> In order to deal with the fact that passiveness is not a distinct use of any grammatical category, Andersen 1991: 19–20 suggested using a Peircean theory of semiotics, to treat passiveness as ‘interpretantia’ or a specific use/meaning of a morpheme among its other uses. On the other hand, talking about the use or the meaning entails a clear semantic or pragmatic definition of the passive.

<sup>17</sup> In the context of the Semitic languages, this is the approach taken by Reckendorf 1895–8.

<sup>18</sup> Dik 1997.

However, focusing merely on such a definition can result in the inclusion under the umbrella of the passive of all sentences with subjects affected by the action of the clause, including even some which do not seem to be passive at all. Most grammars will not consider (1) as a passive sentence, despite the fact that the ‘suffering’ subject is affected by the action.

- (1) John is suffering from a disease.

Similarly we could mention the well-known fact that in some languages the expression for ‘to be killed’ is not passive but active, as ἀποθνήσκω in Greek.<sup>19</sup> For this reason the semantic criterion, at least in the way it has been presented here, does not seem to be productive for the current discussion.<sup>20</sup>

Prototypical characterizations suffer from the regular theoretical problems of mixing different levels of analysis, and the vagueness of descriptions such as ‘partial passive construction’. Moreover, doubts have been raised about the criteria by which the prototype was formulated as it seems to be ‘accidentally’ too close to English grammar.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the fact that it is hard to pin down the nature of passiveness, nevertheless traditionally there is a common notion of passiveness, applied in the *identification* of passive sentences. Therefore, it would be preferable to distinguish between two different questions:

- (2)  
 (a) How do we identify a ‘passive’?  
 (b) What is a ‘passive’?

While linguists may argue at the level of (2b) and dispute whether we should speak about passivization as a syntactic process or as a pragmatic tool, they seem to agree, to a large degree, about the extent of the phenomenon and to share an answer to (2a). The type of dis-

<sup>19</sup> This is a well known argument against ‘semantic characterization’. See for example Jespersen 1924: 165, who speaks about the lack of correlation between the ‘syntactic’ and the ‘notional’ categories of passive. For a similar line of argument see Siewierska 1984: 255.

<sup>20</sup> I assume that a sentence like (1) is not passive. Of course, one can be consistent and claim that it is passive, but such an argument will clearly involve a different notion of passive than the regular one. Being consistent Andersen 1991: 123, claims that since we can add an initiator to these sentences, they are indeed passive, although the form of the verb is active.

<sup>21</sup> See, Andersen 1991: 136–49. In fact the centrality of the Indo-European languages in the cross-linguistic typological discussion was criticized in other contexts as well, see *inter alia* Siewierska 1984: 23.

cussion relevant to (2a) can be found either in the typological literature or earlier in the literature of European and American Structuralism. As this paper is aimed at examining the inclusion of a specific pattern under the umbrella of the ‘passive’, we should focus on the criteria of identification (2a) and then examine possible ramifications for the phenomenon itself (2b). For this purpose a safe place to start is the commonly agreed idea that the passive is relevant to discussing *relationships* between sentences; or, in other words: a passive sentence should have an active partner. Thus, the reason why sentences similar to (1) should be excluded from the passive category has to do with the fact that (1) is not the passive partner of any active sentence. Thus considering a sentence to be passive cannot simply rely on finding its features (morphological or semantic), but only on contrasting it with its active partner.

Before continuing it is important to clarify that talking about active and passive as a pair does not necessarily assume a derivational relation between them. In the context of our discussion, we refer merely to a structural, systematic, *synchronic* relationship between the pairs. In addition, from a historical linguistics point of view, certain sentences might, diachronically speaking, derive from one construction, and be the passive partner of another on the synchronic level.

## 2.2

In order to complete our criteria for defining the passive we have two more tasks ahead of us:

- (3)
- (a) To give a clear account of the reasoning behind considering two sentences as a pair of this sort.
  - (b) To define the structural relationship between active and passive sentences.

I will start by proposing an approach to dealing with (3a) and the consequent problems that it generates, and then will return to a standard answer to (3b).

Talking about the relationship between sentences, it seems clear that neither syntagmatic nor paradigmatic relationships are relevant. Apparently, this relationship, as opposed to the other two, is not between the signifiers but between the signified of these expressions — their common reference, and in the context of sentences, the reference is to the state of affairs which provides the truth-conditions of

the sentence.<sup>22</sup> In other words, a pair of sentences which hold the relation of active:passive will have the same truth value. Although it is clear that there will be differences in terms of their ‘conventional implicature’, using Gricean terminology, the truth-conditions of the active-passive pair are the same, and the differences are pragmatic.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, we should consider that having the same truth-conditions is a necessary condition<sup>24</sup> to constitute a passive-active pair.<sup>25</sup>

After establishing an approach to what determines a pair of sentences, I return to the second task (3b): defining the relation between the active and the passive.

### 2.3

In (4) we find a close approximation to a ‘relational description’ commonly found in the literature:<sup>26</sup>

(4)

A construction is called passive if:

- (i) the active subject corresponds either to a non-obligatory oblique phrase or to nothing; and
- (ii) the active direct object (if any) corresponds to the subject of the passive; and

<sup>22</sup> This is, for example, the way Parsons 1990: 91–2 treats the relation between active and passive sentences; Dik 1997: 64–5 speaks about sharing the ‘core predication’ which is representing the *state of affairs*.

<sup>23</sup> Such an idea can already be found in the work of the German philosopher Gottlob Frege (see Frege 1918–19: 295–6). For the connection between Frege and Grice, see Horn 2007.

<sup>24</sup> This is also the assumption in a formal semantics approach to the passive. See for example Dowty 1982.

<sup>25</sup> The truth value is, however, not always the same, as can be seen in pairs of sentences like ‘Everyone on Comorant Island speaks two languages’, and ‘Two languages are spoken by everyone on Comorant Island’ in which only the second sentence entails that everyone knows the same two languages. This has been considered for a long time an argument for only a weak semantic relation between the two members of the pair (Chomsky 1957: 101). This type of problem, however, should be treated in a different way. Dealing with the semantics of quantifiers is, however, beyond the scope of the current discussion. See also Parsons 1990: 295 n. 19 who eliminates this problem by speaking about the parts which are prior to quantification. For a more general discussion on this see Siewierska 1984: 30–1.

<sup>26</sup> Traditionally many definitions of passiveness include a ‘relational’ component regarding the relation between the active and the passive sentences. But these definitions always add another parameter. See for example Jespersen 1924: 164; Lyons 1971: 376; Siewierska 1984: 3, who added, for example, a morphological parameter; later in her book Siewierska 1984: 75 proposed a more ‘relational-only’ definition for the passive. In the context of discussions on Semitic languages, Retsö 1983: 44–6 proposed a somewhat relational definition for the passive in Arabic.

- [(iii) the construction is somehow restricted vis-à-vis another unrestricted construction (the active), e.g. less frequent, functionally specialized, not fully productive.] (Haspelmath 1990: 27)

Haspelmath's third condition is put in parenthesis, since this is not a definition but rather a hypothesis which should be examined empirically. As a matter of fact in the following discussion we will encounter a construction, which perhaps fulfils only the first two conditions, but not the last one.<sup>27</sup>

Although this is a good relational definition, it seems to be too general, since it does not give any account of how to choose a pair of sentences. As a result, it covers examples which are not passive such as the factitive relation, as can be seen in the following example from Modern Hebrew:

(5)

(a) המורה לימד את הילד

*hammore limmed 'et hayyeled*  
 DA+'teacher' 'learn' fact pt 3<sup>rd</sup> sg m AM DA+'child'  
 'The teacher taught the child'

b) הילד למד

*hayyeled lāmad*  
 DA+'child' 'learn' pt 3<sup>rd</sup> sg m  
 'The child learned'

Since Haspelmath's criteria do not include morphological aspects, applying (4), the two sentences in (5) could be analysed as an active-passive pair. Apparently, Haspelmath provides only some of the necessary conditions, but not all of them; and therefore, some type of addition is required.

The obvious addition to our definition would be to add the requirement that the pair of sentences which stand in the active:passive relation will share the same predicate. Despite the fact that whenever (5a) is true (5b) should be true as well, this is not enough to regard them as a pair in such a relation.

The fact that the two verbs share the same root in Hebrew (in the morphological sense) is not enough for them to constitute the same predicate as well. It can be revealed that they have different predicates by applying the test proposed in Bar-Asher 2009 (§2.3.1) for identi-

<sup>27</sup> Haspelmath speaks about 'frequency', in line with his approach which rejects the use of 'markedness' (see Haspelmath 2006). In my discussion, I will not distinguish between the two options, as it is not directly relevant to the current discussion.

fying the structure of the lexical predicate. In sum, this test relies on the idea of the lexicon as ‘a mental storage’ in which all lexical entries are stored, with the concept of context-free ‘mental storage’ defined by the potential uses of the predicate. If we wish to explore the ‘core meaning’ of a predicate and its argument structure we should reveal the *minimal entailments* (i.e. whatever is true in all of the applications of a specific lexical entry). Thus, it becomes clear that the two sentences in (5) do not share the same predicate:

Considering the second sentence of the factitive relation by itself, there is no reason to assume that there is another argument, i.e. the teacher. By expressing the factitive sentence, the valency increases as the number of the arguments participating in the predication increases (*lamad* ‘study’ [*Studier*<sub>1</sub>, *Studied*<sub>2</sub>], *limes* ‘teach’ [*teacher*<sub>1</sub>, *studier*<sub>2</sub>, *studied*<sub>2</sub>]). In comparison with this, at the semantic level, there is no change in the number of the arguments moving from active to passive and vice versa.<sup>28</sup> Even if it is not expressed, or cannot be expressed, the existence of an agent is entailed to be present in the passive sentence.<sup>29</sup> We should not let the morphology mislead us. Although the root (in this context in the phonological/morphological sense)<sup>30</sup> in (5a) and (5b) is similar, nevertheless the verbs in each of the sentences are representative of different predicates in the lexicon.

This last condition is very important, since it also excludes the ‘middle’ from the category of the passive, since the middle involves a reduction of the number of participants. The fact that the passive and the middle often share the same morphology might indicate that the morphology encodes something other than passiveness.

In conclusion, in this paper a construction is identified as passive if:

(6)

I. At the syntactic level:

(a) the active subject corresponds either to a non-obligatory oblique phrase or to nothing; and

<sup>28</sup> For a similar discussion, see Siewierska 1984: 77–9. She did not use the notion of different predicates, which seems to be crucial in this context.

<sup>29</sup> It is worth clarifying that even if the agent is not overtly mentioned in a passive construction, its existence is assumed. Both grammarians and linguists have noted that this is the case in Arabic, that although the agent is never mentioned in a passive construction, it is covertly in the semantic level present in the sentence. See for example Fleisch 1979: 311–15, who also mentioned the fact that Arabic dictionaries tend to bring alongside the passive sentence its active partner with the indication of the agent. I wish to thank Prof. Wolfhart Heinrichs for providing me with the literature on this topic. See also Bubenik 1979. Retsö 1983: 25–8, 169–97 demonstrated that in fact manifestations of the agent in passive sentences in Arabic do exist.

<sup>30</sup> Concerning the status of this root in linguistic theory see recently Arad 2005.

(b) the active direct object (if any) corresponds to the subject of the passive.

II. At the semantic level:

(a) the pair of sentences have the same truth conditions; and

(b) share the same predicate.

Later we will examine whether (6 IIa) is valid, and to what extent. Tentatively, following this definition, it seems reasonable to consider the following sentences (7 a–b) as a pair which stands in the active:passive relation, and by this to demonstrate the passiveness of the *qtīl lī* pattern:

(7)

(a) ר' מאיר סבר לה כרבי יעקב<sup>31</sup>

*R. Meir sāḇar lāh k-rabbī Ya<sup>u</sup>qob*  
 PN 'think' Aptc m sg AM + dem f sg 'as' PN

'R. Meir agrees in this matter with R. Yaqov'

(b) סבירא לר' מאיר הא דרבי יעקב<sup>32</sup>

*sḇīrā lrabbī Meir hā drabbī Ya<sup>u</sup>qob*  
 'think' Pptc 3<sup>rd</sup> sg f AgM + PN this f sg 'of PN

'There is an agreement (in this matter) between R. Meir and R. Yaqov'

### 3. Is the *qtīl lī* pattern a passive construction?

#### 3.1

Before discussing the reasons for supposing that this construction ceased to be passive in JBA, it is worth mentioning the motivations behind the doubts concerning the passiveness of this construction. The primary reason for these doubts has to do with the fact that in JBA this pattern became a regular way for expressing the perfect, and later on, in the north-eastern dialects of Neo-Aramaic (NENA), it became the pattern for the preterite. Based on these facts, and in comparison with similar grammaticalization processes in other lan-

<sup>31</sup> The transliteration of the JBA sentences is according to classical Aramaic. Much of our knowledge of the phonology of JBA is still uncertain. For example, it is not clear whether JBA distinguished phonologically between /ā/ and /a/, and whether final /h/ was pronounced at all.

<sup>32</sup> In Bar-Asher 2007: 377–9 it has been demonstrated that, in fact, we would find in JBA only sentences like 'סבירא ליה לר' מאיר הא...'.

guages,<sup>33</sup> linguists expected that it would lose its passiveness. For example, the perfect in many languages, which consists of the possessive verb such as ‘to have’ and the passive participle, was originally ‘object oriented’ and later became ‘subject oriented’ — a process close in character to losing the passive features;<sup>34</sup> or in other languages such a phenomenon raised ergative constructions for specific tenses only.<sup>35</sup>

It should be mentioned that regarding the relevant NENA dialects themselves, it is controversial whether the descendents of this pattern are still passive constructions, or whether they have lost their passiveness.<sup>36</sup> In fact not all the dialects behave in the same way with regard to this feature.<sup>37</sup> We should however clearly distinguish between two different inquiries: (1) The relation between the old and the new dialects with respect to the *qīl li* pattern; (2) the passiveness of the pattern for each stage of the language at the synchronic level.

The first question is fascinating in itself, and since I already discussed it elsewhere,<sup>38</sup> I will proceed to the second inquiry, and examine whether this pattern in JBA is indeed a passive construction. As was clarified earlier, on the face of it it fits the typological criterion of passiveness, established in (6). However, in the past literature several considerations were raised for not seeing it as a passive construction. I turn now to examine each of these considerations separately.

### *3.2 Three main arguments for the claim that this pattern was no longer passive in JBA*

#### *3.2.1*

The first argument has been mentioned in the context of Syriac, but it could have been equally presented with regard to JBA.

<sup>33</sup> Within the Semitic languages one can think about the preterite in West-Semitic which derives from a verbal adjective in Proto-Semitic, as is still the case in Akkadian. While *dūrum našir* means in Akkadian ‘the wall is guarded’, its morphological equivalent in West-Semitic means ‘the wall guarded’ and can take a direct object. This is a very common phenomenon in Indo-European languages: it is sufficient to mention modern French and many of the modern German dialects. See Bubenik 2001 and Haig 2008 for the development in the Iranian languages.

<sup>34</sup> Bybee and Dahl 1989: 70–3.

<sup>35</sup> Dik 1997: 284–9. For more about this see below §3.2.3.1.

<sup>36</sup> The first to claim that this is a ‘passive construction’ was Nöldeke 1868, 104§: 219–20; on this topic see also Polotsky 1979: 208; Hoberman 1989: 112–18; Goldenberg 1991: 170–2; Goldenberg 1992: 123.

<sup>37</sup> For a recent discussion on some of the NENA dialects see Doron and Khan forthcoming.

<sup>38</sup> Bar-Asher 2007: 375–80.

Following Brockelman,<sup>39</sup> Gluskina<sup>40</sup> argued that the *qtīl lī* pattern became active, since sometimes these verbs have a direct object.<sup>41</sup> She adduces the following example:

(8)

כַּדְּ אֲסִירִי לְ לֵהּ יִשְׁטָן שָׂטָן  
*kaḏ* 'asīr Pptc sg m *leh* AM+prn 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg *lsāṭānā*  
 'when' 'bind' 'with chains' or: refprn 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg  
*bššaltā*  
 'with chains'

According to Gluskina this sentence should be translated: 'when Satan bound him with chains'. In this translation the verb agrees with the object of the sentence which appears after the preposition *l*. However, it seems that this is an example of a different phenomenon. This confusion has to do with the fact that the preposition *l* in Eastern Aramaic had multiple functions: it marks *inter alia* direct objects, indirect objects and agents of passive sentences. In addition, it can also be the reflexive pronoun which refers to the subject of the sentence. I believe that the *leh* in (8) does not refer to the object, but rather it is a reflexive pronoun dubbed *dativus ethicus* by Jan Joosten (1989), who has defined this phenomenon<sup>42</sup> and described its uses.<sup>43</sup> For this reason it would be better to translate this sentence as: 'when he is/was bound by Satan'. This *dativus ethicus* is used also in JBA, as can be seen in (9):<sup>44</sup>

(9)

עד דמתידע ליה לכוליה עלמא (Pes. 81b)  
*'ad dmityadda'* *leh* *lkulleh*  
 until rel + 'know' Pptc ms sg refprn 3<sup>rd</sup> sg m AgM 'entire'  
*'almā*  
 'world'  
 'Until it will be known by/to everyone'

<sup>39</sup> Brockelman 1913: 127–8.

<sup>40</sup> Gluskina 1965: 23.

<sup>41</sup> For examples of this phenomenon in modern dialects, see already Nöldeke 1868, §156: 118.

<sup>42</sup> Joosten 1996. On pp. 373–4 he gives four formal features of this pronoun, and all of them occur here: 1. it consists of the preposition *l* + pronominal suffix; 2. the pronominal suffix refers to the subject of the verb; 3. it is used with intransitive and passive verbs; 4. it always immediately follows the verb-form, no other element can be inserted between the two.

<sup>43</sup> Joosten 1996: 138–42.

<sup>44</sup> See also Schlesinger 1928, §86: 128–9.

By referring to this pronoun as *dativus ethicus*, we imply that these sentences are still passive. There are, however, some examples in the Babylonian Talmud which seem to exhibit the same problem that Gluskina raised.

(10)

לא שמיעא לכו להא דא"ר חנינא בר יוסף א"ר הושעיה (B.Q. 112b)

<i>lā</i>	<i>šmī'ā</i>	<i>lku</i>	<i>lhā</i>	<i>d'amar</i>	<i>R. Ḥaninā</i>
neg	'hear'	AgM prn	A+	rel + 'say' pt	PN
	Pptc f sg	2 <sup>nd</sup> m pl	dem f sg	3 <sup>rd</sup> m sg	

<i>bar</i>	<i>Yosef</i>	<i>'amar</i>	<i>R. Hoša'yā</i>
'son' gen	PN	'say' pt 3 <sup>rd</sup> m sg	PN

'It was not heard by you this thing which R. Ḥanina the son of Yosef said that R. Hoša'yā said'

In this example, the subject of the verb (*lhā*) is also marked by the preposition *l* as the direct object. Since accuracy is very important in this context, it is necessary to provide the different versions found in the manuscripts for this phrase:<sup>45</sup>

(10') B. Q. 112b

Hamburg 165	א"ר הושעיה	להא	דא"ר חנינא בר יוסף	לא שמיעא לכו
Florence 8	אמ' ר' אושעיא	להא	דאמ' רב יוסף בר חמא	לא שמיע להו
Vatican 116	א"ר אושעיא	להא	דרב יוסף בר חמא דאמר רב יוסף בר חמא	לא שמיע' לכו
Escorial G-I-3	הושעיא אמ' רב	הא	דרב חמא בר בר יוסף דאמ' רב חמא בר יוסף	לא שמיעא ל' לר' אבין
Munich 95	א"ר אושעיא	הא	דרב חמא בר יוסף	לא שמיע להו

The version in the Escorial and the Munich manuscripts is also attested in the versions of some medieval interpreters of the Babylo-

<sup>45</sup> So far there is no account regarding the genealogical relation of the different manuscripts for this chapter of the Babylonian Talmud. Friedman 1996b dealt with the relation between these manuscripts in the sixth chapter of tractate *Bava-Metzia*, but he informed me (p.c.) that his conclusions are relevant only to that specific chapter and are irrelevant to other chapters in the same tractate. Concerning the value of MS Hamburg 165, which Kutscher 1962: 174–7, believed to be an 'Ur Text', see Morgenstern 2005 who reassured Friedman's 1996 conclusions that it is not an 'Ur Text' but rather a secondary source, which is a result of many linguistic changes.

nian Talmud.<sup>46</sup> According to the first three manuscripts, the preposition *l*, as an accusative marker, precedes the subject of the sentence. Similarly, in the following examples we find the preposition *l* before the grammatical subject in some of the manuscripts:

(11) Giṭ. 6b

Vatican 127	להא אטו כל דלא שמיע ליה
Vatican 130	להא אטו כל דלא שמיע ליה
Vatican 140	לר' יצחק אטו כל דלא שמע ליה
Munich 95	הא דר' יצחק אטו כל דלא שמיע ליה

(12) B.M. 93b

Florence 8	סבירא להו להא דרבה דאמ' לא רב חסדא וברה בר רב הונא
Hamburg 165	דרבא לא (ח) סבירא להו הא רב חסדא ורבה בר רב הונא
Munich 95	דרבא דאמ' סביר' להו הא לא רב חסד' ורב' בר רב הונ'
Escorial G-I-3	דרבא דאמ' סבירא להו רב חסדא ורבה בר רב הונא לא

(13) B.B. 33a and 33b (the same sentence occurs twice)

Paris 1337	אביי ורבא לא סבירא להו להא דרב חסדא
Escorial G-I-3	הא דרב חסדא אביי ורבא לא סביר' להו
Oxford 369	הא דרב חסדא אביי ורבא לא סביר' להו
Hamburg 165	הא דרב חסדא אביי ורבא לא סבירא להו
Florence 9	הא דרב חסדא אביי ורבא לא סבירא להו
Vatican 115	הא דרב חסדא אביי ורבא לא סבירא להו
Munich 95	הא דרב חסד' אביי ורבא לא סביר' להו

So far I have not found any other examples of this phenomenon with the roots שמע and סבר, which appear very often in the *qtīl li* pattern in JBA, and even in these four examples we saw that it occurs only in some of the manuscripts. Therefore, it is very hard to conclude which of the manuscripts accurately preserved the original version. In addition, the fact that in all the examples this pattern has been found only before pronouns suggests that these are local scribal errors.

If the manuscripts without the preposition *l* have the original version, then it is indeed a regular passive construction, and the manuscripts with the preposition *l* failed to notice that this is a passive construction and followed the active pattern, which is very common in this corpus.<sup>47</sup> If the original version had the preposition *l*, and the manuscripts without it were corrected according to regular grammar, we must explain why there is a 'direct object' marker before the subject in the first place. In other words, we have to deal with the pos-

<sup>46</sup> See DS *Bava-Qama*: 136. For a discussion regarding the interpreters' versions of the Talmud versus the manuscript, see Freidman 1997: 45–6.

<sup>47</sup> See for example Sanh. 14a: 'דשמע להא דאמר ר' אלעזר...'

sibility that the *qtīl lī* pattern was no longer perceived as a passive construction.

The very fact that we have only a few examples of this phenomenon leads to another explanation, as it can be parallel to a phenomenon found in Biblical and in Mishnaic Hebrew. In these dialects we encounter several examples in which the subject is preceded by *'et* the direct object marker. For example:

(14)

את-ארבעת אלה ילדו להרפה (2 Sam. 21:22)  
*'et* 'arba'at 'elle yulldū lhārāpā  
 AM 'four' dem pl 'bear' pss pt 3<sup>rd</sup> pl m 'to' AgM PN  
 'These four were born to Harafa'

(15)

הפסח שנורק את דמו (Pes. 7, 7)  
*happesah* šennizraq 'et  
 DA+'Passover's offering' rel+'pour' pass pt 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg AM  
*dāmô*  
 'blood' + Ps 3<sup>rd</sup> ms sg  
 'The Passover's offering whose blood was poured'

As Blau noted,<sup>48</sup> this *'et* occurs (almost) only with passive and intransitive verbs, and Khan added that in all of these examples the subject is a non-volitional one.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, Azar reached the same conclusions in the case of Mishnaic Hebrew.<sup>50</sup> According to Blau, these examples should be regarded as cases in which the two constructions, the active and the passive, were confused, and that the speaker/writer had in mind one construction, while expressing the verb in the other. This explanation works better for the passive examples and less well for the ones with intransitive verbs. Khan, therefore, suggested that these clauses 'evince traces of "active"-type (quasi ergative) morphology'.<sup>51</sup>

Returning to our examples, if these are not just scribal errors, it seems that we are facing the same phenomenon in JBA. If we follow Khan's explanation, then this is an "'active-type" morphology', and in our case perhaps it is not a 'trace', but rather the beginning of a

<sup>48</sup> See Blau 1954; Brockelman 1913: 126–8.

<sup>49</sup> Khan 1984: 496–7.

<sup>50</sup> Azar 1995: 63–4.

<sup>51</sup> For other explanations of this phenomenon see *inter alia* Brockelman 1913: 126–8, Blau 1978, Macdonald 1964, Saydon 1964, Hofstijzer 1965, Andersen 1971, Muraoka 1985; Waltke and O'Connor 1990: 177–85, Garr 1991, 63–4, Zewi 1997.

new process. However, since we have only a few examples, it is more likely that these examples are confusions between the active and the passive constructions, a common phenomenon, especially in spoken manifestations of languages.<sup>52</sup>

Another explanation is to assume that in these examples the same NP is both the subject and the object and hence it is marked with both markers (accusative marker and verbal agreement). This option is possible within the context of a theory of grammatical relations developed elsewhere by Bar-Asher (2009), and is beyond the scope of the current discussion.

### 3.2.2

We can move now to the second type of problem pertaining to the passiveness of this construction. Schlesinger, in his discussion about the *qtīl lī* pattern in JBA, noted that in many of its occurrences, there is a lack of agreement between the verb and the subject.<sup>53</sup> Due to the lack of cases in Aramaic, the only clear way to distinguish between subjects and objects and consequently between the active and the passive constructions is by the agreement of the verb. Therefore, lack of agreement of the verb in the ‘passive’ construction with the ‘object’ of the active construction can be a strong sign that this construction was no longer perceived as passive.<sup>54</sup>

For example, in the next phrase, the subject of the sentence *hā milltā* ‘this thing/matter’ is a feminine noun, and the verb is a passive participle in the m sg form:

(16)

הא מילתא מפירקיה דגברא רבה שמיע לי (B.Q. 42b)  
*hā milltā mippirqeh dgabrā*  
 dem f sg ‘thing’/‘word’ ‘from’+ ‘public lecture’ rel + ‘man’  
 + prn 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg

<sup>52</sup> See Sridhar 1979.

<sup>53</sup> Schlesinger 1928: 45, mentioned this fact immediately after his claim that JBA reflects the beginning of the process which ended in modern dialects. He did not explicitly argue that this is the beginning of the diachronic process mentioned earlier.

<sup>54</sup> This phenomenon is mentioned in the grammar books only with regard to JBA and not in the context of Syriac. While reading in Syriac manuscripts I came across few examples where agreement was lacking. For example in the story of *Mar Eulog/Eulogis*, I found the following example in the two manuscripts that we have for this story [Harvard Syriac Collection, MS 38 p. 213, MS British Library Add. 12174]:  $\text{ܠܗ ܚܒܘ ܠܗ ܚܒܘܐ}$ . So far, we do not have enough information about the extent of this phenomenon, and therefore we cannot determine whether it is only in late manuscripts, and perhaps under the influence of later stages of Aramaic.

<i>rabbā</i>	<i>šmi'</i>	<i>li</i>
‘great’	‘hear’	AgM 1 <sup>st</sup> sg
	Pptc m sg	

‘This matter was heard by me / I have heard this thing in the public lecture of a great person’

We can tackle this problem in two ways. First, the disappearance of contrast between masculine and feminine in other forms of the verbal system is a well known feature of JBA, presumably due to a phonetic change, the loss of non-stressed final vowels.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, assuming that the stress in the passive participle was also on the penult, it is reasonable to believe that the same process happened here as well.<sup>56</sup> According to this account, there is no lack of agreement. On the contrary, there is indeed an agreement, but there is a lack of contrast between the masculine and the feminine forms of the passive conjugation (with the strong verbs).

Second, it is possible to take a different approach and to suggest three additional reasons to explain whether the evidence we have for a syncretism reflects the original situation or, perhaps, is merely a late distortion at the hands of scribes to whom Aramaic was no longer a mother tongue. Relevant considerations here are:

- a. By using good manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud the number of instances in which there is no agreement decreases immensely (apart from the examples which will be discussed later on).
- b. By examining manuscripts, we realize that the feminine singular form of the participle was often written in a shorthand way. Instead of writing the *Aleph* at the end of the word, which helps distinguishing between this form and the masculine form, we find hundreds (!) of examples in which an apostrophe is written instead. It is important to emphasize that this apostrophe does not indicate any phonetic change, but is only an orthographic convention.

In this case, it is easy to assume that scribes who copied the manuscripts, no matter how familiar they were with the language, dropped this apostrophe and left the feminine form of the passive participle exactly like the masculine form. In example (10'), we saw how some manuscripts have the full form, some have an apostrophe, and others lack any indication of this final vowel, so that the feminine and masculine forms seem the same.

<sup>55</sup> See Kutscher 1962: 246–7; Ben-Asher 1970: 279–81; Kutscher 1971; Morgenstern 2000: 152–3.

<sup>56</sup> Juusola 1999: 203–4, proposed a similar explanation regarding the Aramaic of the Babylonian incantation bowls which are presumably from the same dialect.

It should be noted that this phenomenon occurs in almost every type of manuscript (according to the typology suggested by Friedman [1996]).<sup>57</sup>

- c. Scrutinizing the examples in which there is lack of agreement, it is striking that even in the printed editions and naturally in the good manuscripts, most of the examples are with the verb שמע<sup>58</sup> 'to hear', and especially in the idiom: 'לא שמיע ליה הא ד...' 'this thing, that... was not heard by him'. If this reflects an original phenomenon, then the many examples of lack of agreement with this specific verb might be explained by the fact that this is a very common root. I would like to propose, however, that in the case of the verb שמע there is a potential phonetic explanation for the discussed phenomenon, and it has to do with the fact that the last consonant of this root is a pharyngeal. It is a well-known fact that the pharyngeal consonants in JBA went through one of two processes: either they are turned into a laryngeal or are syncopated. Morgenstern already noted that the loss of contrast between the masculine and feminine forms is more common in roots with a pharyngeal third radical.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Ashknaz: Meila, MS Florence 7: (יא ע"א) רישא פסיקא ליה סיפ' לא פסיק' ליה (יא ע"א); Spain: RH, MS JTS 1608: (ז ע"ב) ליה פסיק' ליה; Manuscripts from the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea ("the fourth group): BB MS Escorial G-I-3: לא שמיע' לי (קסה ע"א) לי סבריא לא סבריא לי (קסה ע"א); AZ MS Paris 1337: (גא ע"ב) ליה משכילתא ארישיה (גא ע"ב); So far I have not found this shorthand in Yemenite manuscripts. Besides five examples of the root שמע, in a specific idiom (see C below), I did not encounter any examples of lack of agreement.

<sup>58</sup> Among the examples which were given by Schlesinger the only one in which there is clearly a lack of agreement is also with the verb שמע. Another possible example is: 'ולא קטיל לכו כינא אמנא' (Sb 82a, Hu 105b). In regard to this example it should be noted that in MS Vatican 120–1 the version is 'ולא קטילתה'. And see also Rashi's text in Shabbat 82a, in the preceding clause. Regarding the relation between the different versions of this paragraph see Wajsberg 1997: 51. (For his own discussion, see MS Vatican 120–212). כינא 'a louse' is usually feminine (see Zev. 19a), and compare Sokoloff 2002: 575. In any case, even if the original version was קטיל, and כינא is feminine, it is possible to suggest that in this specific example the lack of agreement is due to a local attraction, since it is in a sequence of clauses in the *qtil li* pattern in which all the grammatical subjects are masculine. This attraction could happen especially in a word like כינא, which does not contain a clear feminine morpheme and appears exactly similar to a masculine noun.

<sup>59</sup> Morgenstern 2002: 63, 153, suggests that the form 'מרע' should be read as [marra] and that this form is a result of the following phonetic process: [marr<sup>h</sup>'a] > [marr<sup>h</sup>'a] > [marr<sup>h</sup>'a]. It is not clear, however, that these are indeed the stages of that process. First, as far as we know, verbs with /r/ as the third radical were conjugated like those with /y/ as the third radical. That is to say, there was a shift of the entire paradigm (see Kara 1984: 69). Second, it is not clear on what base he established the movement from the second to the third stage, since an intervocalic guttural stop /r/ does not necessarily drop. Despite this minor problem, I think that we should accept Morgenstern's general suggestion that in verbs with a pharyngeal

How was this form of the verb שמע pronounced? So far, there is documentation of only one example of a complete loss of the pharyngeal in a feminine singular passive participle of a root with a pharyngeal as the third radical, in a Yemenite manuscript.<sup>60</sup> For the root רבע we encounter the form רביא, probably pronounced as [rḇīyā]. Hence it is plausible to assume that שמיעא was pronounced [šmīyā]. Once we assume this was the pronunciation, the spelling שמיע for שמיעא is understandable.<sup>61</sup>

These three factors strengthen the possibility that the lack of agreement between the subject and the verb in the *qtīl lī* pattern does not represent the original language of JBA, and therefore should not lead to a re-analysis of the grammatical relations in this construction.

### 3.2.3.1

The last two considerations regarding the passiveness of this pattern have more to do with its own structure. In the previous two discussions it was verified that the ‘patient’ is indeed the subject of the sentence and that as such the verb agrees with it, and it does not have any direct object marking. Finally I will examine an issue that will lead us back to the beginning of this paper, regarding the definition of passive.

In Bar-Asher (2007: 374–5) I explained the parallel between the *qtīl lī* construction and the *manā krtam* construction in Old Persian differently from the way it was previously described by Kutscher (1965) and consequently by other scholars. It is worth mentioning again that the similarity between the languages is both in syntax and in use. More specifically both employ their respective constructions to express the perfect. Based on this resemblance, a discussion of the Persian construction might be relevant to our investigation concerning the *qtīl lī* construction in JBA.

Both Gilbert Lazard<sup>62</sup> and P. Oktor Skjærvø<sup>63</sup> in their respective discussions of this pattern in Old Persian argued that it is hard to refer to this pattern as a passive construction. They assert this argument despite the agreement of the verb with its ‘patient’, since this pattern is used to express the perfect, and there is neither an active

third radical it is hard to know how these words were pronounced by orthography alone.

<sup>60</sup> Kara 1984: 239; Sokoloff 2002: 1057.

<sup>61</sup> Interestingly enough, we often find the same ‘mistake’ in Modern Hebrew, in words where the pharyngeal consonants are not pronounced as such.

<sup>62</sup> Lazard 1984: 241–3.

<sup>63</sup> Skjærvø 1985: 221–2, and more recently Haig 2008: 42–4.

partner nor another passive pattern to express the perfect.<sup>64</sup> Since we defined passiveness in terms of a relation between two sentences, this observation should be considered carefully. Leaving Persian aside,<sup>65</sup> let us discuss whether the same argument would be true in the context of JBA. Since *qtīl li* functions in JBA to express the perfect, and there is apparently no ‘active’ way to express the perfect, it might be a crucial factor in the characterization of this pattern.

Clearly JBA is not like some of the Indo-European languages in which the perfect has both active and passive voices. English, for example, has active-passive pairs, such as (17a–b):

(17)

- a. John has eaten the apple
- b. The apple has been eaten by John

Likewise in classical Greek, the perfect has two different conjugations according to the different voices, one for the active and another for the middle-passive. Based on the criteria we proposed in (6), this seems to be a crucial problem for defining this construction as passive. Since the identification of passive sentences relied on a relation between ‘the pair of sentences having the same truth conditions’ (6 IIa), this absence of an equivalent active sentence is very significant.<sup>66</sup>

This question leads us to leave momentarily the question of ‘identification’ (2a) and to approach the ‘bigger’ question of ‘what is “passive”?’ (2b). But before approaching this question, I should explain the motivation for arguing that this is a passive construction. Clearly one could simply stop here and come to the conclusion that, since we cannot identify a pair of sentences, this is not a passive as has been argued in the context of the Old Persian construction.

<sup>64</sup> In order to clarify what I mean by another passive pattern, I would like to briefly recall the fact that in some NENA dialects the *qtīl li* pattern has a periphrastic partner to express the passive.

<sup>65</sup> For a similar discussion concerning the Persian construction, see Bubenik 2001, esp. 97–8; Haig 2008: 54.

<sup>66</sup> As noted in n.3 a lot of this discussion depends on what is included under the phenomenon of passive. If, for example, ‘impersonal passives’ are included in the phenomenon then it will be difficult to justify the requirement of an equivalent active sentence. The distinction made in (2), however, might be useful, as we are talking in the current discussion only about the identification; thus it might be the case that as a result of such an identification, other constructions with similar morphology (as is the case with impersonal passives) will be included under the discussion as well.



eaten apple’, for example, describes the situation of ‘an apple’ in the present based on an action of ‘eating’ which occurred in the past. Thus, it is clear how a sentence such as ‘the apple is eaten’ can be interpreted both regarding the present situation or the past event.

This, however, can be true only with ‘result predicates’ which express an action with high transitivity,<sup>68</sup> i.e. an action causing changes. This, of course, cannot be the case with transitive verbs which do not express this type of predicate. For example, the verb סבר ‘to think’ in JBA with a direct object means ‘to believe or agree on a specific issue’ (depending on context). We can find then the following pair of sentences:

(19)

ר' מאיר סבר לה כר' יעקב  
*R. Meir sāḇar lāh krabbî Ya<sup>a</sup>qov*  
 PN ‘think’ Aptc m sg AM – prn 3<sup>rd</sup> sg ‘as’ + PN  
 ‘R. Meir agrees with R. Yakov’

(20)

ר' אליעזר כסומכוס סבירא ליה  
*R. Eliezer k-Summaḵos šḇīrā leh*  
 PN ‘as’ + PN ‘think’; Pptc 3<sup>rd</sup> sg AgM prn 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg  
 ‘In this matter R. Eliezer is in agreement with Summaxos’

In the second sentence ‘R. Eliezer’ is dislocated and, for this reason, is not preceded by the preposition *l*.<sup>69</sup>

For the reason mentioned above, there does not seem to be any difference in tense or aspect between the two sentences, and this becomes even clearer when the two patterns come in the same context:

(21)

לא, רבי אליעזר כסומכוס סבירא ליה דאמ': 'צרורות - נזק שלם משלם, וסבר  
 (B.Q. 18a) 'לה כר' יהודה, דאמ': 'צד תמות במקומה עומדת  
*lā R. 'Eli'ezer k-Summaḵos šḇīrā*  
 neg PN ‘as’ + PN ‘think’; Pptc 3<sup>rd</sup> sg f  
*leh d-'amarî ... usāḇar*  
 AgM prn 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg rel+ ‘say’ pt 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg ‘and’ + ‘think’ Aptc m sg  
*lāh krabbî yehuda d'amar ...*  
 AM prn 3<sup>rd</sup> f sg ‘as’ PN rel+ ‘say’ pt 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg  
 ‘No, in this matter R. Eliezer is in agreement with Summachos who  
 said that... and he also agrees with R. Yehuda who said that...’

<sup>68</sup> In the sense in which Hopper and Thompson 1980 use this term.

<sup>69</sup> See, Bar-Asher 2007: 379.

What, therefore, is the use of the passive construction in this context? In order to answer this question, I examined all 17 occurrences of this root in the Hamburg 165 manuscript of the tractate *Bava-Qama*,<sup>70</sup> which is considered to be a relatively good manuscript,<sup>71</sup> and this investigation has shown that aside from one example<sup>72</sup> they can be divided into two main groups:

(22)

- a. In four examples, this construction appears in the protasis of a conditional sentence: 'אי סבירא לך'.<sup>73</sup>
- b. The other twelve sentences have one argument in extraposition (in most cases the agent, but not always),<sup>74</sup> just as we saw in the last example.

The use of the *qtīl lī* pattern in the protasis of a conditional sentence (22a) can be related to its perfective use. This is also the case in other languages where the protasis of a conditional sentence is in the perfect tense and the apodosis refers to the present or to the future, as it is, for example, in Akkadian in *šumma* clauses.<sup>75</sup> So it seems to be the case in JBA as well.<sup>76</sup> Thus, even if with this specific verb, there is no 'perfective' sense, it is possible to speculate that once the *qtīl lī* pattern was grammaticalized as the 'perfect', it became the tense for such conditional sentences.

A different reason can account for the use of this pattern in the second group (22b). While examining carefully all the sentences which have a dislocated argument, we realize that they all have something in common in terms of their discourse role. They all stand in contrast to an earlier claim in the context. It should be noted that the

<sup>70</sup> 18a; 18b; 24a; 27a; 28a; twice in 51a; 72b; 73a; 88b, 93b; 94b; 97a; twice in 100a; 106a; 118b.

<sup>71</sup> For the discussion about the quality of this manuscript see above, n.44.

<sup>72</sup> The example which is in neither groups occurs in a question: 'מיכדי דרב לא סבירא לך'. In this regard we should also mention that three out of four occurrences of the *qtīl lī* pattern in the root שמ"ע in this manuscript are also in a question.

<sup>73</sup> Twice in 51a; 73a; 118b. Many other examples of this phrase are found in the Babylonian Talmud, and the same is true also of the root שמ"ע.

<sup>74</sup> The exceptions are in 28a, and two examples in 100a in which it is the adjunct: 'ר' מאיר ולא סבירא לך כותיה! לא, ר' מאיר וסבירא לך כותיה'.

<sup>75</sup> In Old Babylonian for example, the perfect, as oppose to the preterite, is used in *šumma clauses*, when they do not refer to the past, especially in those which refer to the future. On this topic see Maloney 1982: 214–61, (and especially what 231f); and more recently Loesov 2004: 140–6.

<sup>76</sup> Currently there is no exhaustive account of the tenses which are used in conditional sentences in JBA, apart from the general survey made by Schlesinger 1928: 269–80.

element in the sentence which is the focus of the contrast is neither the element that is dislocated nor the subject, but it seems that the dislocation still emphasizes the contrast. This is not surprising considering the discourse role of dislocation in many of the Semitic Languages.<sup>77</sup>

For example in the context of (20), we find the following argument (similar to the second part of 20):

ורבי אליעזר סבר לה כר' טרפון

And later when this claim is attacked, it is said:

לא, רבי אליעזר - כסומכוס סבירא ליה דאמ': צרוות - נוק שלם משלם, וסבר לה כר' יהודה, דאמ' ...

In the first part, when rejecting an earlier hypothesis the 'narrator' of the Talmud uses the *qtīl lī* pattern with the subject of the active construction in dislocation, but in the second part, in the unmarked construction, it is again in the active pattern.

We have to admit that the relation between dislocation and the choice of the *qtīl lī* construction is not completely clear. We can speculate though that the choice of this pattern had to do first and foremost with dislocation, and the passive pattern was chosen for the sake of clarity, as a secondary consideration. Putting the agent in dislocation in an active sentence could only be something like (23):

(23)  
'ר' אליעזר הוא סבר להא...'

And thus it would not be distinct enough.

It should be also noted that it is not common cross-linguistically to dislocate the agent of a passive construction, but this might only indicate that this was not the unmarked construction anymore.

The importance of the last discussion lies in the fact that with this verb, sentences with passive participle in the *qtīl lī* pattern clearly have an active variant which together establish an active:passive relationship, and therefore this pattern should be classified as a passive construction. If this is the case, it seems natural to consider all sentences in this pattern as passive sentences, but this brings us back to the problem that when the *qtīl lī* pattern is used to express the perfect it does not have an equivalent active sentence to express the same tense.

<sup>77</sup> See Khan 1988: 132–40, who claims that dislocation is used in critical points of the narrative. I believe that our examples might also be classified under this category.

## 3.2.3.3

Once again, in the context of Persian it has been proposed that the perfect is still passive since it constitutes an active:passive pair with active sentences of other tenses.<sup>78</sup> But, if having the same truth-value is a condition for constituting an active:passive pair this seems to be a problem since difference in time can affect the truth value of sentences.

Since, as we saw in the previous section, there are good reasons to consider the *qtil li* pattern as a passive construction, ultimately, we should revisit the requirements mentioned in 6. In fact we should ask two related questions:

(24)

- a. Is it necessary to have an active counterpart in order to be a passive sentence?
- b. If condition (a) is necessary, must they have the same truth value?

As for (24a) cross-linguistically there are languages in which some passive sentences do not have a corresponding active.<sup>79</sup> For example, in Nitinaht (Klokeid 1976: 311) sentences with a 3<sup>rd</sup> person agent and 1<sup>st</sup> person patient, the active construction is ungrammatical, and they can be expressed only in a passive construction.

Regarding (24b) as mentioned earlier (n.25) and repeated here (25), it is a well-known fact that with modifiers the active and the passive sentences may have different truth values.

(25)

- a. Everyone on Comorant Island speaks two languages
- b. Two languages are spoken by everyone on Comorant Island

Only the second sentence entails that everyone knows the same two languages. Chomsky considered this fact as an argument for a weak semantic relation holding between the two members of the pair;<sup>80</sup> but as we saw without such a criterion it is hard to decide what constitutes a pair of sentences.

<sup>78</sup> Bynon 1980: 152 who proposed it, suggested that the equivalent active sentence is the imperfect — since there is no semantic difference between the two constructions, as they both cover the past tense. In the case of Aramaic, it would be possible to think of the suffix conjugation as the equivalent. However, it seems that occasionally there is an aspectual difference in Aramaic, and also the suffix conjugation has its own passive form in one of the t-stems. See also Haig 2008: 44.

<sup>79</sup> For a survey of the phenomenon see Siewierska 1984: 30–4.

<sup>80</sup> Chomsky 1957: 101.

Parsons (1990: 295 n. 19) proposed to eliminate this problem by saying that the same truth value is relevant to the parts which are prior to quantification. The idea of distinguishing between different levels of the sentence with regard to the passive suggests that passiveness is relevant not to the actual sentence, but rather to another level of the derivation. One should clarify in what sense we are talking about derivation: syntactically or semantically, which finally forces us to approach the big question of ‘what is “passive”?’ (2a).<sup>81</sup>

As we saw, Parsons 1990 and others defend the view that the active and passive sentences share the same ‘core predication’, which is prior to other semantic operations (for this matter quantifiers and tenses are the same). Parsons did not define what exactly the content of this core predication is. Elsewhere (Bar-Asher 2009) I defined this concept more accurately, using the notion of ‘linguistic predication’. For our purposes it is sufficient to say that two propositions share the same ‘core predication’ if they share the same predicate and the same arguments.<sup>82</sup>

Following this direction, it seems natural to consider the passive as relevant to the argument realization of the lexical entry/predicate. In other words, passive sentences do not derive from another, deeper (active) structure, but generate directly from the lexical entry. The difference between active and passive sentences, accordingly, is related to the different ways in which the arguments of the lexical entries are realized. For our purposes, taking a lexical approach to passiveness,<sup>83</sup> the fact that a passive sentence does not have an active equivalent, does not pose a problem, since they are not related to each other directly, but only through the fact that both realize the same predicate. Thus, if we return to the *qṭil lî* construction, or to the Persian construction, the fact that there is no active sentence to express the same tense is not a reason not to consider them as passive.

<sup>81</sup> As Siewierska 1984 noted, while many of the current linguistic theories evolved out of different approaches to passive constructions, most of the discussions were focused in the context of arguments for and against the various models, and were less about the constructions themselves, and very often the passive sentences were considered only in order to advance a specific approach. Therefore, I do not pretend that the facts that were brought here cannot be explained by other approaches as well, but I believe that the direction I take seems to solve the problems that we encountered earlier in a very simple way.

<sup>82</sup> In contrast to Dik’s 1997 notion of ‘core predication’, this is not a representation of any ‘state of affairs’, since a semantic reference to state of affairs requires other indicators, such as time and location.

<sup>83</sup> On the history of the debate of lexical vs. syntactic approaches to the passive, see Siewierska 1984: 7, 76.

## 3.2.3.4

Before proceeding, I wish to comment on the ramifications of this discussion for the larger discussion concerning the typology of passive. Earlier I was doubtful about the third element of Haspelmath's definition of passive (4) stating that the passive is the 'marked' construction in the pair (or the less frequent). Clearly the *qtīl lī* construction is the regular way to express the perfect, thus not necessarily the marked construction. Based on our previous discussion this is not a reason not to consider this construction as passive. As argued earlier, Haspelmath's characterization should be treated as a hypothesis only, and as such it is possible that it may turn out to be wrong because of patterns such as the *qtīl lī* construction in Aramaic.

Having a passive construction as an unmarked construction is indeed not common cross-linguistically, and when it exists one can expect that it will eventually be reinterpreted as an ergative construction.<sup>84</sup> But, being unmarked is not a reason to change the assessment of this construction as passive synchronically.

In conclusion we should change the criterion for the identification of a passive construction, as we should eliminate (6 IIa) and elaborate more in (6 IIb) so that it will capture our observations:

(26)

I. At the syntactic level:

- (a) the active subject corresponds either to a non-obligatory oblique phrase or to nothing; and
- (b) the active direct object (if any) corresponds to the subject of the passive.

II. At the semantic level

The pair of sentences have the same 'core predication', i.e. the same predicate and the same participants.

Returning to the *qtīl lī* pattern, the question whether this pattern is a passive construction is different from the question of whether the perfect can be expressed by both active and passive constructions. The first is formal and the second concerns the use of the forms. Only after identifying the contrast between the two sentences that establishes their relation as active and passive sentences, should we ask what the semantic consequences are. One option might be that there

<sup>84</sup> As Dik 1997: 284–92 predicts. See, also Bubenik 2001 on this matter. See also Andersen (1977: 324–47) regarding unmarkedness of passive sentences as the origin of ergativity, especially pp. 336–47 why it occurs more often in the perfect tense.

is a difference in tense or aspect, and that the passive construction is used for the perfect. Thus, even if there is not a way to express the perfect by ‘active’ voice, we can still argue that the perfect is expressed by the passive voice.

According to this, the *identification* is merely a way to determine between two sentences which is active and which is passive. Once we have a lexical definition to passive, passive has nothing to do with any type of relationship with an active sentence. Therefore it can be the case that in specific constructions the passive will be unmarked, and it can even suggest that constructions such as the ‘impersonal passives’ will be considered as passive, if they fit the conditions of a lexical passive.

### 3.2.4 A Pragmatic note

Finally, a note concerning a pragmatic aspect in the use of this construction. In the classical Semitic languages, as is the case in many languages,<sup>85</sup> the primary pragmatic function of the passive is to express agentless sentences and impersonal constructions.<sup>86</sup> Clearly this distinction is still preserved in the perfect (with the *qtīl lī* construction) as well, in the contrast between sentences without explicit agent (27a, 28a) and those in which it appears (27b, 28b):

(27)

a. פסיקא מילתייהו (Me 21b)

*psīqā*                      *milltayhu*  
‘cut’ Pptc fm sg    ‘matter’ + prn m pl

‘Their matter has been contracted’

b. רישא פסיקא ליה סיפא לא פסיקא ליה (Me 11b)

*rešā*    *psīqā*                      *leh*                      *sepā*    *lā*  
‘head’ ‘cut’ Pptc fm sg    AgM 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg    ‘end’    Neg

*psīqā*                      *leh*  
‘cut’ Pptc fm sg    AgM 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg

‘[The *Tana*] rendered the former part [of the *Mishna*] and did not render its latter part’

<sup>85</sup> See, Siewierska 1984: 35 for a list of linguists and grammarians who claimed that this is the primary function of the passive cross-linguistically.

<sup>86</sup> Regarding Aramaic see Kutscher 1965: 86-7. He also refers to this phenomenon in classical Semitic languages in general. For Syriac, see Joosten 1996: 170-2. In this context it is worth mentioning Retsö 1989: 4, n. 12, who claimed that in Aramaic agents appear in passive sentences more than in other Semitic languages. This is probably also the reason why in Biblical Hebrew when the agent is expressed it is expressed in a variety of ways, as it was never grammaticalized. (For the ways to express the agent in Biblical Hebrew see Sollamo 2003).

(28)

a. נהי דלמטה ידיע למעלה מיהא הא לא ידיע ('A.Z. 69b)

*nbe*                      *dlmattā*                      *ydī'*  
 'be' fut 3<sup>rd</sup> m sg    rel + 'downstairs'    'know' Pptcf sg

*lma'lā*    *mihā*                      *bā*                      *lā*    *ydī'*  
 'upstairs'    'at any rate'    dem f sg    neg    'know' Pptcf sg

'Granted that it is known on earth, at any rate it is not known in heaven'

b. מידע ידיע לר' יהודה. (Pes. 12b)

*meda'*                      *ydī'*                      *lrabbī Yehudā*  
 'know' inf    'know' Pptcf sg    AgM PN

'It's surely known by/to R. Yehuda'

Thus, from the pragmatic perspective the major function of the passive has been preserved in a different strategy in this part of the linguistic system as well.

#### 4. Conclusions

After dealing with the three objections which were raised against its passiveness, and reviewing some of its uses, I believe that we can still consider the *qtīl lī* pattern in JBA to be a passive construction, based, of course, on the definition of passiveness established at the beginning of this paper (6).

In the course of this paper it has become clear that it is important to distinguish between the theoretical explanation of the phenomenon of passiveness and the procedure for identifying a passive sentence. In addition, I have demonstrated that it is crucial to separate the formal question regarding the nature of a pattern, (i.e., whether it is active or passive) and the question of the uses and function of this pattern. Consequently, I have shown that the *qtīl lī* pattern can have different functions depending on the predicate and its textual contexts.

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#### Abbreviations

AM – accusative marker  
 Ag – agent  
 AgM – agent marker

Aptc – active participle  
 JBA – Babylonian Aramaic  
 DA – definite article

dem – demonstrative pronoun	pl – plural
f – feminine	Ps – pronominal genitive suffixes
fact – factitive	PN – proper name
fut – future	Pptc – passive participle
gen – genitive	Prn – pronoun
inf – infinitive	pss – passive
m – masculine	pt – preterit
MS – manuscript	refprn – reflexive pronoun
neg – negation	rel – relative pronoun
PC – prefix conjugation	sg – singular

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