# The Shift from the Biblical Hebrew Far Demonstrative *ha-hūˀ*

# to the Mishnaic Hebrew Object Pronoun *ˀōṯō* Chanan Ariel, Tel Aviv University

**Abstract**

One of the most prominent differences between Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew is the far demonstrative pronoun **ההוא** in the Biblical language (e.g. האיש ההוא – ‘that man’), which in Mishnaic Hebrew becomes **אותו** (e.g. אותו האיש – ‘that man’). Since the mid-nineteenth century, scholars have attempted to offer an explanation for this change. This article reviews the development of the complementary demonstrative pronouns in Hebrew and Aramaic, supporting the suggestion that the dominant factor in this change was Greek influence. The article also offers a possible explanation for the rapid nature of this change and the exclusive use of the new pronoun in Mishnaic Hebrew.

**1. Introduction – The Extreme Change in the Far Demonstrative Pronoun between Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew**

In Mishnaic Hebrew, the direct object marker **את** is used as a demonstrative in two ways:

1. The direct object marker **את** in its undeclined form functions as an independent demonstrative pronoun when used as an antecedent of the relative clause,[[1]](#footnote-1) as for example:

אי זה הוא הדופק? **את ש**הגולל נישען עליו

What is the buttressing stone? **That** against which the stone leans that seals the grave. (Mishnah Oholoth 2:4; Danby 1933: 652)

This paper is devoted to the use of the declined form **אותו** as a demonstrative adjective.

B. The declining form of the direct object marker **אותו** (**אותה**, **אותן**) replaces the distal demonstrative adjective pronoun **ההוא** (**ההיא**, **ההם**) in Biblical Hebrew. I should note here that in terms of syntactical function, both in Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew, the pronouns **הוא** and **אותו** usually express anaphora or identity, and are not indicative pronouns (as distinct from proximal ones).[[2]](#footnote-2)

A good example of the shift that occurred between Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew can be seen if we compare the wording of the law of *‘eglah ‘arufah* (the heifer whose neck is broken) in the Bible and its Mishnaic presentation.

The Torah states:

וְהָיָה הָעִיר הַקְּרֹבָה אֶל הֶחָלָל וְלָקְחוּ **זִקְנֵי הָעִיר הַהִוא** עֶגְלַת בָּקָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֻבַּד בָּהּ אֲשֶׁר לֹא מָשְׁכָה בְּעֹל. וְהוֹרִדוּ **זִקְנֵי הָעִיר הַהִוא** אֶת הָעֶגְלָה אֶל נַחַל אֵיתָן... וְכֹל **זִקְנֵי הָעִיר הַהִוא** הַקְּרֹבִים אֶל הֶחָלָל יִרְחֲצוּ אֶת יְדֵיהֶם עַל הָעֶגְלָה הָעֲרוּפָה בַנָּחַל.

And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of **that city** shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke; And the elders of **that city** shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley… And all the elders of **that city**, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley. (Deuteronomy 21:3-6; KJV)

Whereas the text in the Mishna reads:

זקני **אותה העיר** מביאין "עגלת בקר אשר לא עובד בה (ו)אשר לא משכה בעול"... ומורידין אותה "אל נחל איתן"... זקני **אותה העיר** רוחצין את ידיהן במים במקום עריפתה שלעגלה.

the elders of **that city** brought a heifer from the herd which had not been wrought with and which had not drawn in the yoke (a blemish does not disqualify it) … and they brought it down unto a rugged (etan) valley… The elders of **that city** washed their hands in water at the place where the heifer's neck was broken. (Mishnah Sotah 9:5-6; Danby 1933: 304)

This is a radical change. The declined pronoun **אות-** occurs 67 times in the Mishna (in 56 different *mishnayot*), while the pronouns **היא** and **הם** appear only three times (in two *mishnayot*).[[3]](#footnote-3)

**2. Documentation of the Change in Sources Preceding the Mishnaic Literature**

The shift from **ההוא** to **אותו** is not documented at all prior to Mishnaic Hebrew – neither in the Bible, nor the documents from the Judean Desert. Józef Milik suggested that this shift is seen in a disjointed fragment from an Aramaic astronomical work found at Qumran. Milik read the relevant words as **ובאותה בימ֯[מא]** ‘and on [the] same da[y]’ / ‘and on that da[y]’ (4Q211 [*4QAstronomical Enochd* ar], Frag. 1 iii, Line 4).[[4]](#footnote-4)

Jan Joosten (2002: 14–16) noted two verses in Numbers (6:13; 33:8) where the Septuagint documents the independent demonstrative pronoun אותו. In Numbers 6:13, the object pronoun in the phrase יָבִיא אֹתֹו (one shall bring him) is translated as αὐτοῦ ‘he himself’. Similarly, in ibid. 33:8 the place name אֵתָם is translated αὐτοὶ ‘they themselves’. Joosten argues that this translation reflects the influence of the spoken Hebrew of the period of the authors of this translation, which already had the **independent** demonstrative pronoun "אותו". However, the use of the pronouns אותו,אותם as independent demonstrative pronouns is first documented in a Hebrew text only in the language of the Palestinian Amoraites, some five hundred years later, and is completely absent from the Tannaitic language (see note 1 above).

Accordingly, it would seem that we should consider other possible explanations for these surprising translations. As Joosten himself notes, there is a syntactical difficulty in the first of these verses (the verse has no antecedent to which the anaphoric object pronoun אֹתֹו could refer); this difficulty was resolved in a similar manner in the Tannaitic Halakhic Midrash, *Sifrei*. [[5]](#footnote-5) In the second instance, it is not impossible that the translators had a version before them with the form אותם with a *vav*, rather than the defective אתם in the Masorah; at least, they may have had such a reading tradition, as can be hypothesized in light of the transliteration in onomasticon of Eusebius. [[6]](#footnote-6)

**3. The Research Question and Review of Previous Studies**

The replacement of the structure **האיש ההוא** by **אותו האיש** raises three key questions:

1. Why does the word order change in Mishnaic Hebrew, so that the demonstrative pronoun now precedes the noun it complements?
2. Why was the distal demonstrative pronoun **ההוא** replaced by the object pronoun **אותו**?
3. Why was this change so rapid and absolute?

The first two of these questions have been discussed in the research literature since the mid-nineteenth century, but to the best of my knowledge the third question has not been examined. I will briefly review the main opinions in the literature:

Abraham Geiger (1845: 36) argued that the change reflected Aramaic influence. He noted that the third person plural pronoun **אִנּוּן** is used both as an object pronoun and as a demonstrative adjective.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Geiger also noted, that the use of the declined forms of **ית-** instead of the distal pronoun is documented in Christian Palestinian Aramaic and in Samaritan Aramaic.[[8]](#footnote-8) The same use is found in a small number of cases in Galilean Aramaic (such as **יתהון כפתיה** - “those knots”).[[9]](#footnote-9) Following Geiger, Nöldeke (1868: 471) and Wright (1890: 13) suggested that dialects such as Samaritan Aramaic and Christian Aramaic influenced the Mishnaic Hebrew.

The flaw in the comparison to the object pronoun **אִנּוּן** is that its use as an object pronoun and a demonstrative adjective pronoun is found only in the plural, and not in the singular. It is less likely that the plural pronoun, which is relatively rare, would influence the singular pronoun, which is several times more common. The suggestion that the Aramaic dialects that have a declined form of **ית** influenced Hebrew is also problematic, since these dialects are later than Mishnaic Hebrew. Moreover, they use the declined form of **ית** alongside distal demonstrative pronouns and in Galilean Aramaic, which has a strong affinity to Rabbinic Hebrew, this form is extremely rare; in Mishnaic Hebrew, by contrast, **אותו** is the sole form and the grammatical norm.

Isaac Hirsch Weiss (1867:4) developed Geiger’s argument, claiming that phrases such as **באותו היום** ‘on that day’also have their origin in the Biblical Aramaic phrases **בַּהּ שַׁעֲתָא** (‘at the same moment’ Daniel 3:6); **בֵּהּ זִמְנָא** (‘at the same time’ ibid 4:33). However, Weiss fails to explain why, instead of the expected structure **בו ביום** ‘on that day’(which is common in Rabbinic Hebrew and parallels **בֵּהּ בְּלֵילְיָא** ‘in the same night’ Daniel 5:30), or instead of the untestified structure **\*בו היום**, Rabbinic Hebrew developed a structure with the object pronoun – **באותו היום**.

Moshe Zvi Segal (1927: 202) suggested that this phenomenon has its origins in Hebrew, rather than in the Aramaic dialects. He suggested that the use of the object marker **את** in its undeclined form emerged first as an independent demonstrative pronoun marking the subject, and that the use of the declined form of **אות-** then developed as a demonstrative adjective.

The flaw in Segal’s explanation is that in Tannaitic Hebrew there is a sharp formal and syntactic separation between these two pronouns: the former always appears in an undeclined form as the antecedent of a relative clause, while the latter always appears in a declined form as an attribute not followed by a relative clause. Had the latter form developed from the former, we would expect to find some overlap between the syntactical functions of the two pronouns.

Waltke and O’Connor (1990: 178) followed a similar line of argument, suggesting that the Mishnaic use is the result of the use of **את** in Biblical Hebrew as an emphatic form. However, the claim that **את** indeed serves as an emphatic form in Biblical Hebrew is in itself controversial. Moreover, it is difficult to explain how the use of undeclined **את** as an emphatic form in a few exceptional instances in Biblical Hebrew could have totally changed the grammatical rules of the Mishnaic Hebrew.

Aaron D. Rubin (2005: 123) suggested that this structure emerged due to a reanalysis of sentences such as ראיתי **אותו**, האיש שראית (“I saw **him**, the man you saw”), which was reanalyzed as ראיתי **אותו האיש** שראית (“I saw **that man** you saw”). Through a process of grammaticalization, the declined object pronoun **אותו** then became a demonstrative pronoun. The problem in Rubin’s explanation is that there is no documented instance in Mishnaic Hebrew showing the structure **object pronoun + definite noun + relative clause**, which according to his reconstruction forms the starting point for this process.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Azzan Yadin-Israel (2015: 339) offers a convincing solution. He suggests that the complementary demonstrative pronoun developed due to the syntactical and sonorous similarity to the Greek word αὐτός, which serves as an anaphoric pronoun and pronoun of identity, in a manner similar to the object pronoun אותו in Mishnaic Hebrew. Yadin-Israel did not offer any evidence for his suggestion. I shall seek to examine his proposal below in light of the developments in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the contact with Greek, and aim to substantiate his argument, while offering an alternative explanation for one of the Mishnayot he discusses.

**4. Discussion**

**i. Aramaic Influence on the Position of the Complementary Pronoun**

In Late Biblical Hebrew, we find several examples of the use of the distal demonstrative pronoun **הוא** before a proper noun. I shall mention two examples here:

וַיְהִי לִיחִזְקִיָּהוּ עֹשֶׁר וְכָבוֹד הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד ... **וְהוּא יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ** סָתַם אֶת מוֹצָא מֵימֵי גִיחוֹן הָעֶלְיוֹן.

And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour … **This same Hezekiah** also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon (2 Chronicles 32:27,30 KJV)

עֶזְרָא בֶּן שְׂרָיָה ... **הוּא עֶזְרָא** עָלָה מִבָּבֶל וְהוּא סֹפֵר מָהִיר בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה.

Ezra the son of Seraiah … **This Ezra** went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses (Ezra 7:1,6 KJV)

במקרה אחד לפחות ה- demonstrative pronoun **הוא** בא לפני שם עצם:

בְּאָמְרִי לָרָשָׁע רָשָׁע מוֹת תָּמוּת וְלֹא דִבַּרְתָּ לְהַזְהִיר רָשָׁע מִדַּרְכּוֹ **הוּא רָשָׁע** בַּעֲו‍ֹנוֹ יָמוּת וְדָמוֹ מִיָּדְךָ אֲבַקֵּשׁ.[[11]](#footnote-11)

When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, **that wicked man** shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. (Ezekiel 33:8, KJV)

The structure in Late Biblical Hebrew is reminiscent of the use of the demonstrative adjective pronoun **הוא** in Biblical Aramaic:הוּא צַלְמָא רֵאשֵׁהּ דִּי דְהַב טָב ‘As for **this image**, its head was of fine gold’ (Daniel 2:32; World English Bible).[[12]](#footnote-12)

The phenomenon of placing the pronoun before the noun to which it refers (prolepsis or cataphora) is well documented in Aramaic. From as early as the Imperial Aramaic of the sixth century BCE, we have documentation of an independent construct pattern with a proleptic possessive pronoun preceding the construct; this is also documented for Biblical Aramaic in the phrase **שְׁמֵהּ דִּי אֱלָהָא** (‘the name of God’. lit. ‘his name of God’ Daniel 2:20). In Biblical Aramaic there is a single instance where the demonstrative pronoun appears before the noun – **דְנָה בִנְיָנָא** ‘this building’ Ezra 5:4.[[13]](#footnote-13)

However, in most of the instances in which **הוא** is used as a demonstrative adjective pronoun in the Aramaic dialects preceding Mishnaic Hebrew, it appears after the noun, rather than before it. Moreover, it is even difficult to find nominal clauses containing **noun +** **demonstrative adjective הוא** functioning as an object. It is true that in the Nabatean Aramaic, this structure appears in the object function, as for example: אסמלך בר עבדי כרז **גנתא הי** ופרע **דמי כרוזא הו** *ʼsmlk* son of *ʽbdy* proclaimed that (same) grove and paid off the price of that same (writ of) proclamation (Papyrus Starcky [P. Yadin 36], Lines 17-18; Yardeni 2001:132)

Still, even in Nabatean Aramaic **הוא** is not used as an object pronoun (contrary to the plural demonstrative adjective pronoun **אִנּוּן**).[[14]](#footnote-14) Accordingly, it is difficult to suggest that the use of the demonstrative adjective pronoun **אותו** in Mishnaic Hebrew can be explained solely by reference to Aramaic.

**ii. Support for the Hypothesis of Greek Influence**

Muraoka (2016: 74) noted with extreme brevity that the use of the Greek αὐτός as a pronoun of identity reminds us of the use of the object pronoun **אותו** in Mishnaic Hebrew. He added that the phrase **בַּהּ שַׁעֲתָא** ‘at the same moment’ in Biblical Aramaic (Daniel 3:6, 5:5) is translated by the Septuagint as αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ, ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐξῆλθον.

We may add to this that even the instances in which **הוא** serves as a pronoun preceding proper nouns – such as וְהוּא יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ and הוּא עֶזְרָא, as mentioned above, were translated by the Septuagint as αὐτὸς ᾿Εζεκίας and αὐτὸς ῎Εσδρας.

The proleptic pronoun preceding the indefinite noun in Ezekiel 33:8 mentioned above **הוּא רָשָׁע** ‘that wicked man’ was also translated (with the addition of the definite pronoun that is absent in the Masoretic version) αὐτὸς ὁ ἄνομος.

The use of αὐτός both as an anaphoric pronoun and a pronoun of identity and as an independent pronoun in the oblique cases is known from classical Greek,[[15]](#footnote-15) and is documented extensively in the Greek documents uncovered in Wadi Murabbaʽat and in Naḥal Ḥeḇer, which reflected the contemporary Greek of the Tannaitic period.

Here are two examples from the Greek Judean Desert documents:

1. ὅταν δὲ παρα̣νγείλει Σελα<μ>ψιοῦς τῷ **αὐτῷ Ἰούδατι**, τευχιζ{ζ}ει **αὐτὴν** διὰ δημο-σίων.

And whenever Shelamzious summons the **said Judah** he will register **it** with publc authorities. (Papyrus Yadin 19, Outer text, Lines 25-27; Lewis 1989:75)

1. ὃ ἀργύριον ἀποδ̣ώσω σοι κ̣αλάνδαις Ἰαναουαρία̣ις τῷ **αὐτῷ ἔτει̣** [τῆς] **α̣ὐτῆς̣ ὑ̣π̣α̣τ̣είας**, τὸν δὲ τόκον χορηγήσω σοι τοῦ **αὐτοῦ ἀργυρίου** κα̣τ̣ὰ μῆνα ὡς τ̣ῶ[ν] ἑκατὸν δ̣η̣[να]ρων δ[η]ν̣αρον. ἕν κατὰ μῆνα.

which money I will repay to you on the kalends of January in the **same year** during the **said consulship**, and the interest of the **said money** I will deliver to you monthly at the rate of one denarius per hundred denarii per month. (Papyrus Yadin 11, Outer text, Lines 19-22; Lewis 1989:45)

The syntactical analogy to the Greek is complete in all respects – both in the position of the pronoun and in its double function as an independent object pronoun and a pronoun of identity. Accordingly, this seems to us to offer the best explanation for the change in Rabbinic Hebrew. It is even possible that the similarity between the sound of the Greek and Hebrew words facilitated the influencing of the Hebrew structure by the Greek one.

**iii. Additional Instances of Greek Influence on Function Words in Rabbinic Hebrew**

A similar example of Greek influence on Hebrew in the area of pronouns has been indetifed elsewhere. The influence of the Greek pronoun ἄλλος on the use of the pronoun **הלה** in Tannaitic Hebrew to mark a change in the subject of the sentence was noted by Musaphia (1655) and discussed by Breuer (2002: 215 n. 257). This instance shows that Greek pronouns may have penetrated, or at least influenced, Mishnaic Hebrew.

Scholars have noted additional function words that show Greek influence. Lieberman (1950: 298-299, after Benveniste 1754; 39a) clarified the phrase **בפרוס הפסח** (‘before Passover’) in Tannaitic Hebrew in light of the Greek πρός (‘before’). Bendavid 1971:148 argued that the meanings of the conjunction **אֶלָּא** (‘but’) in the Mishna were influenced by the identical-sounding Greek word αλλά. The common feature linking all these four words is the sonorous similarity between the Greek word and a Hebrew word.

**5. The Extreme Character of the Change**

We now face the question: why was this shift so rapid and extreme? I will seek to offer two complementary avenues of research that may resolve this problem – genre and morphosemantics.

**i. The Legal Genre**

Crystal and Davy (1961) noted that legal documents are careful to repeat the identification of the characters and of the assets to which they refer in an excessive manner in order to prevent any possibility of ambiguity. An example of this can be found in Papyrus Starcky, mentioned above, which is written in Nabatean Aramaic; the same phenomenon is found in Greek, Palestinian-Aramaic, and Hebrew documents of the period. The heightened use of the pronoun of identity in the legal genre, with which Mishnaic Hebrew has an affinity, may have led to the routine use of the common Greek pronoun.

**ii. Omission of Definiteness in the Phrase Nucleus + Demonstrative Pronoun**

Perhaps we should liken this shift to another change between Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew in the field of the definiteness of pronouns. The structure **indefinite noun + indefinite demonstrative adjective pronoun** appears just once in the Bible (Psalm 80:15): וּפְקֹד **גֶּפֶן זֹאת** (“and be mindful of **this vine**”), but it is, of course, the standard structure in Rabbinic Hebrew. Based on the set of proximal pronouns – **איש זה**, **אישה זו**, **אנשים אילו** – we would anticipate the following distal set – \***איש הוא**, **\*אישה היא**, **\*אנשים הן**. However, the absence of the definite article from the demonstrative adjective pronoun is liable to create confusion between **הוא** as a demonstrative adjective pronoun, **הוא** as a independent demonstrative pronoun, and **הוא** as a copula. The use of the new pronoun **אותו** removed this ambiguity and permitted a distinction between the anaphoric pronoun and pronoun of identity and the independent demonstrative pronoun.

**iii. Mishna Bava Batra 5b**

A good illustration of the syntactic ambiguity created due to the omission of definiteness in the demonstrative pronoun ha-hūˀ > hūˀ can be found in the chain of versions and interpretations relating to a single Mishna in the tractate Bava Batra. In this Mishna, R. Judah discusses the question as to whether someone who sells an ass to his fellow also sells the ass’s trappings. He distinguishes between two instances:

המוכר את החמור, לא מכר את כליו. נחום המדי או': מכר את כליו. ר' יהודה אומ': פעמים מכורים, ופעמים שאינן מכורין. כיצד? היה חמור לפניו וכליו עליו, אמ' לו: "מכור לי חמורך זו!" – כיליו מכורים. "חמורך הה(י)[ו]א" – אין כליו מכורין.[[16]](#footnote-16)

If a man sold an ass he has not sold its trappings. Nahum the Mede says : He has sold its trappings also. R. Judah says: Sometimes they are sold with it and sometimes not ; thus, if the ass was before him and it bore its trappings and he said, 'Sell me this ass of thine', all the trappings are sold too; [but if he said, 'Sell me] that ass of thine', its trappings are not sold with it. (Danby 1933: )

In all the Mishnaic manuscripts from the Palestinian branch, the form is חמורך **ההיא/ההוא**, with a definite pronoun on the complementary demonstrative pronoun. [[17]](#footnote-17) Conversely, all the manuscripts from the Babylonian branch (where the text of the Mishna is embedded in the Babylonian Talmud) show the form חמורך **הוא**. [[18]](#footnote-18) The omission of the definite article from the pronoun in the versions of the Babylonian branch (perhaps under the influence of the absence of definiteness in the demonstrative pronoun in the preceding phrase חמורך זו) created a difficulty in understanding the text.

The coinage חמורך ההיא is an elliptical one – it contains only the object of the sentence, and does not include the principal component מכור לי. As long as the definite article remains on the demonstrative pronoun in the phrase חמורך **ה**הוא, it was evident that this was not an independent sentence, but rather a nominal phrase forming part of the preceding sentence. However, the form חמורך הוא has the appearance of a regular nominal sentence, and accordingly this led the Babylonian Amoraim, and subsequently many Mishnaic commentators, to parse the form here as an independent sentence, which in context must be a question sentence[[19]](#footnote-19) – the buyer asks the seller whether the ass belongs to the seller.

"ר' יהודה או': פעמים מכורין". מאי שנא רישא ומאי שנא סופא? אמ' רבא: רישא דידע דחמרא דידיה הוא, והאי דקאמ' ליה "זה" משום כליו קא אמ' ליה. סופא דלא ידע דחמארא דידיה הוא, והכי קאמ' ליה: "חמורך הוא שתמכרנו לי?"

Rava said that when the buyer says: **Sell me this donkey of yours, he knows that the donkey** **belongs to** the seller, **and** as for **that which he said to him: This, he said** that **to him due to its vessels**. By contrast, when the buyer says: **Is the donkey yours**, this indicates **that** the buyer **does not know that the donkey belongs to** the seller, **and this** is what **he is saying to him: Is the donkey yours that you can sell it to me?** In this case, he is interested only in the donkey and not its vessels. (Davidson Talmud)

R. Ishmael Ben Hakhamon (prob. Egypt, thirteenth century), who was familiar with the versions in both the Palestinian and the Babylonian branches, offered two interpretations:

"כיצד היה חמור לפניו וכליו עליו, אמ' לו מכור לי חמורך זה, כליו מכורין" – שכיון שידע הלוקח שהיא חמורו, ואמר לו "זה" – לקנות כלים שעליו נתכוין, וקנה כליום שעליו. "חמורך ההוא" – כלומר, חמור פלוני שיש לך. ובקצת נוסחאות של תלמוד כתוב "חמורך הוא זה", שנמצא כמי שלא ידע שהוא חמורו ושאל עליו – אין כליו מכורין, שלא נתכוין זה לקנות הכלים.

‘When the ass was before him and its vessels upon it, he said to him: Sell me this ass of yours, its vessels are sold’, for since the buyer knows that it is his ass, and he says to him זה, he intended to buy the vessels on it, and he bought the vessels on it. חמורך ההוא – that is, a particular ass belonging to you. Some versions of the Talmud have חמורך הוא זה, which indicates that he did not know that it was his ass, and asked him ‘are the vessels not sold’, since he did not intend to buy the vessels.

In my opinion, this example offers a good example of the advantage of using the pronoun אותו rather than the indefinite pronoun הוא.

**iv. Comparison to the Development of the Demonstrative Pronouns in Palestinian Aramaic**

This explanation may, perhaps, be supported by an analogous development in the Aramaic dialects used in the Palestinian translations for all the demonstrative pronouns, both proximal and distal. A distinction began to emerge between the demonstrative adjective pronoun, which was preceded by **ה** – such as **באורחה הדין** ("that way"), and the independent pronoun, which remained without **ה** – as for example in **דין סימן קיימה** ("This is the sign of the covenant"). The addition of the **ה** in Aramaic was presumably intended to create a distinction between these different syntactical functions – an independent pronoun as opposed to an adjective pronoun. In Rabbinic Hebrew, which removed the definite article from the demonstrative adjective pronoun, the adjective pronoun **הוא** was replaced by **אותו** in order to distinguish it from the independent pronoun. In any case, the very dramatic change in the field of the definiteness of pronouns that undermined the Biblical pronouns system certainly facilitated the absorption of the new pronoun from Greek.

**Conclusion**

The change from *ha-hūˀ* to *ˀōṯō* is the result of language contact. Aramaic encouraged the prolepsis, but the change in the pronoun reflects the influence of a Greek pronoun with a similar sound and similar syntactical functions, as scholars have shown regarding other function words in Mishnaic Hebrew.

In light of this conclusion, it would seem that we should separate the discussion of the development of the pronoun **את ש** in Tannaitic Hebrew from that of the declined pronoun **אותו**+ noun, contrary to the prevailing opinion in earlier studies.

The conclusion reached by this article may also have ramifications regarding the question of the definiteness of the nucleus for which the pronoun **אותו** serves as the complement. In light of the situation in Greek and Aramaic, it might have been expected that Mishnaic Hebrew would also show definiteness in the nucleus, contrary to the accepted view in the literature that this definiteness was added due to the need to separate two consecutive stressed syllables. This question should be reexamined in light of all the selected witnesses of the Talmudic literature. However, such a clarification goes beyond the scope of the present article; I hope to discuss it elsewhere.

1. This structure may have some limited precedents in the Late Biblical Hebrew, such as וְטוֹב מִשְּׁנֵיהֶם **אֵת** אֲשֶׁר עֲדֶן לֹא הָיָה ‘and happier than either are **those** **who** have not yet come into being’ (Ecclesiastes 4:3; NJPS). For a comprehensive review of the literature and an updated discussion on the distribution of this structure in the Bible, see Samet.

   את as an independent demonstrative pronoun appears in the Tannaitic literature only in its undeclined form, and always before a subordinate clause. The use of the declined form of את (ot-) as the nucleus of a clause began only in Amoraitic Hebrew (Breuer 2002: 211–213). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See: Azar 1995: 212–213; Oron 1990: 28–30; Kaddai 1991: 212–213; Breuer 2002: 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Apart from the fact that in 95.5% of the instances the pronoun **אות-** is used, in the three instances in which the Biblical pronoun appears, its use may be regarded as demonstrative (rather than anaphoric or identity-related) (Kaddari 1991: 213). An example is הרי המעות ההם מחוללין על הפירות האילו (‘Let that money be rendered free for common use by [exchange with] this produce’ Ma’aser Sheni 3:4; Danby 1933:76). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Milik 1976: 296. Alexey Yuditsky argues that the word should be read as **ומאיתה**; if this is correct, we should perhaps parse it as an infinitive form of the root **את"י** (cf. the infinitive form **למתה/למתא**, ibid. 79, and the form **בְמֵיתֵי** אֲחוּכוֹן זְעֵירָא in the Onkelos for Genesis 42:15**בְּבוֹא** אֲחִיכֶם הַקָּטֹן ‘by your young brother coming’ [Young's Literal Translation]). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Sarfatti 1992: 342. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Notley and Safrai 2005: 91, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In Biblical Aramaic, **אִנּוּן** serves as an independent demonstrative pronoun (Ezra 5:4); some scholars have argued that it also serves as a separate object pronoun (Daniel 6:25; see, for example, Bauer & Leander 1927: 70; Fugat 2008: 107). A good illustration of the use of **אִנּוּן** as an object pronoun can be found in the Genesis Apocryphon 20:20: **ואשכח אנון** ... **ותבר אנון** ‘and found them … and defeated them’. An example of its use as a complement may be found in the Bible: **מַלְכַיָּא אִנּוּן** (‘those kings’ Daniel 2:44). The pronoun הִִמּּוֹֹ usually serves in Biblical Aramaic as an object pronoun (as in Ezra 4: 10, 15), though it also appears as an independent subject pronoun (ibid. 5:11). See Bauer & Leander, ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Sokoloff 2014: 168; Tal 2000: 366; idem 1980: 62–63; Stadel 2013: 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Sokoloff 1969: 138; idem 1992: 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. It should be added that in a similar instance in Biblical Hebrew, we find the repetition of the direct subject marker: וְהָיָה הַגּוֹי וְהַמַּמְלָכָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא יַעַבְדוּ **אֹתוֹ אֶת** נְבוּכַדְנֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל (“And it shall come to pass, that the nation and the kingdom which will not serve **him, the same** Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon” Jeremiah 27:8).

    A partial similarity to the structure reconstructed by Rubin (though without a nucleus in the subordinate clause, cf. note 1 above) can be found in the verse: וַיָּמֶת אֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־הִפְקִיד מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל בָּאָרֶץ. ‘and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land’ (Jeremiah 41:2, KJV). For a detailed discussion of the prolepsis in Biblical Hebrew, see Kogut 1981-1982. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Some scholars argue that all these instances actually entail an appositional structure (‘he, that is to say: an evil one’) rather than a complementary demonstrative pronoun (for example, see Kogut 1981-1982: 104). Even if these verses originally contained appositional structures, however it will become apparent below that the translators of the Septuagint read a complementary pronoun in all three instances. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Compare Bauer-Leander 1927:268, 270. Muraoka (1972: 10; 2011:49; Fitzmyer 2004: 212; Pat-El 2012: 98-99) argues that in the Genesis Apocryphon (20:20) – ארי **הוא רוחא** כתש לכולהון ‘For the spirit attacked all of them’ – there is a demonstrative adjective pronoun before the noun: ‘that spirit’. (They preferred not to parse הוא as a past form of the verb הו"י, since they did not find any other instance where the ancillary verb **הוה** is separated from the main verb by the subject. We should note, though, that equally there is no other instance in Qumran in which the complementary pronoun precedes the noun). However, it seems to me that this can better be parsed as the past form of הו"י: ‘for the wind smote (lit. would smite) them all’ paralleling the form in ibid., line 17: והואת כתשא לה ולכול אנש ביתה ‘and it smote (lit. would smite) him and all his house’. See Yadin & Avigad 1956: 44. The scholars who parsed a pronoun here, rather than a verb, did not address this analogy. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Since Kotscher (971: 104-109), the growth of this phenomenon in Aramaic has conventionally been explained by way of Akkadian influence. For a review of the literature, examples from various Aramaic dialects, and a comprehensive discussion, see Pat-El 2012: 89-132. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. In all the ancient Aramaic dialects we have found only two instances where הי is used as an independent subject pronoun (Muraoka and Porten 1998:156 §d). However, these instances may be parsed as prominence or focus. See Muraoka 2005: 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See Smyth 1920: 92–93 (§328). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. נוסח המשנה לפי Ms Kaufmann A 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. כך בכתבי היד: Munich 95; Paris 1337; Escorial G 1.3.1; Vatican ebr. 115b; Hamburg. 165 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. כך בכתבי היד: Munich 95; Paris 1337; Escorial G 1.3.1; Vatican ebr. 115b; Hamburg. 165 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Yalon 1971: 106 argued briefly in favor of this position, against Segal 1936: 51, who asserted that ‘the Gemara did not interpret… according to grammar’. Yadin-Israel 2015:336-337 also suggested that the interpretation in the Talmud reflects a misunderstanding of the Tannaitic language during the Amoraitic period, rather than a divergence of versions between the Babylonian and Palestinian branches. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)