(For fuller discussion of the lexical field as a whole see the ‘Overview of SAHD entries for “Deliverance” words’ on this site)

**Introduction**

Grammatical Type: vb qal and niph.

Occurrences: Total 104x OT (THAT says 103x, but this seems to be an error), 1(2?)x Sir, 16x Qum, 1x inscr. (?)

Sir 51.8 (and 12?)

Qum: 4Q158 14 i 5; 4Q176 3.2, 8-11.4, 7, 10; 4Q185 1-2 ii 10; 4Q251 14.2, 16.5; 4Q266 10 i 9; 4Q367 3.7 [2x]; 4Q381 24a+b.5, 4Q385 2.1; 4Q411 1 ii 8; 4Q471a 3; 11Q5 18.15

Inscr: 15.006.2 Khirbet Beit Lei Burial Cave Inscription A (uncertain)

**Text doubtful:**

**A.1** Sir 37.19 MS B and C have the qal pt. but Bmg and D have נאיל as נאיל, as follows: ‘a person may be wise and be a source of wisdom to many, yet for himself be foolish’, which may make better sense. This can be explained simply by MS B and C misreading נאיל as נאיל and could be supported by ἀχρηστός in the LXX, although the first part of the verse is different, and similarly by skl’ in the Peshitta. The Vg is different again: vir peritus multos erudivit et animae suae suavis est (reading נאול? Cf. Song 6.3), although there are variant readings, insuavis and inutilis. which align themselves more with the LXX.

**A.2** Qumran:

a) CD 14.16 [נאול] seems likely and is supported by the parallel passage in 4Q266 10.9.

b) 4Q168 1.4 [ניל] seems to be a citation of Mic 4.10 where יהוה is the subject.

c) 4Q284a 1.7 is a passage on harvesting and it is unclear whether נאיל means ‘redeem’ or ‘defile’. Abegg lists this passage under נאיל (I) ‘redeem’, which is supported by Martinez and Tigchelaar who translate the verse as ‘He may not redeem them with […].’ The direct object is also unclear, due to missing text, but could be figs (םאדות from line 4). DJD XXXV, p.132 argues that the passage describes olive-pressing and the extraction of olive oil: ‘let him b[y] no [mean]s defile them by opening them before he pours [them into the press].’ The argument is dependent to a large extent on the analysis of the previous lines, which are also unclear. But the context of this passage does support the idea of purity and the issue of insiders and outsiders, which would suggest that this is not a case of ‘redeem’.

d) 4Q420 1a ii-v 6 seems to be a niph. […] occurring with זךמ occurring with זךמ ‘by righteousness he is redeemed’, the subject being זךמ ‘one who is reliable’. From the context this seems likely.

e) 4Q504 22.3 is another case where the meaning is indeterminate: […] who redeems/defiles her’ (DJD VII, p.166). Both the ו and the ל are also partially effaced.

**A.3** It is interesting to note that in Sir 51.12(ε) Geniza MS B has an instance of נאיל ישאלו ‘redeemer of Israel’. Although the passage of which it forms part is not in the Greek, it may nevertheless be ancient (cf. Skehan and Di Lella 1987, pp.569-570).
A.4 F.M. Cross read גאלתי ירשלם, ‘and I will redeem Jerusalem’, in 1.2 of Inscription A from Khirbet Beit Lei (Cross 1970, pp. 299-302), but a number of scholars read this line differently (see AHI 15.005.2, 15.006.2; and Renz and Röllig 1995:1, pp. 242-246 [BLay (7):1]).

Qere/Ketiv: none

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 In the OT גאל is attested in the qal 96x. Of these instances, almost half are the active participle as a substantive, twelve of which occur as אב גאל, ‘avenger of blood’. גאל is also attested in the niphal (8x). The nouns גאל והameleon (14x) and גאל והaneously (1x) are cognate. There are 3 occurrences of a name in the Hebrew Bible that is probably cognate, גאל (Nu 13.7, 2Sam 23.36, 1Chr 3.22). A further PN, גאליא, which does not appear in the Bible occurs 8 times in pre-exilic Hebrew inscriptions (see Davies 1991, p. 321, and Davies 2004, p. 149, for references). There is also an uncertain occurrence of the verb in an inscription from c. 700 (see above).

A.2 The root גאל is peculiar to Hebrew among the Semitic languages and became a loan-word in Samaritan Aramaic and post-biblical Jewish Aramaic (Stamm 1971, p. 385).

A.3 גאל has a parallel in Babylonian paṭāru (‘to loose, release’), a term used in Babylonian law for the duty or obligation to buy back lost family property or enslaved people, but also used more generally for buying slaves and prisoners (Stamm 1971, p.386). The Israelite concept of ‘redemption’ (buying back people or property in the legal sense) differs from the Babylonian in respect of its basis in Israel’s relationship to Yahweh. Since all land belongs to Yahweh, it is merely ‘on loan’ to the people and they must therefore always retain the right to repurchase it (Lev 25.23f.). In the same way, an Israelite must not remain a slave for a long time (Lev 25.42) because he is a descendant of those whom Yahweh freed from the Egyptians (Stamm 1971, p. 386).

B.1 It is generally agreed that גאל (I) is totally unrelated to its homonym גאל (II) (Niph), meaning ‘to be (ritually) defiled’ (possibly a by-form of געל, cf. Stamm 1971, p. 385, Ringgren 1977, p.351, HALOT, p.169b), contra Johnson, who suggests that in both words there is the basic idea of ‘covering (up) an object’ (1953, p.72), the first being ‘to protect’ by covering, and the second ‘to cover’ in the sense of soiling.

2. Formal characteristics

Vb. ‘Ayin-Guttural, triliteral root.

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 The human subject of גאל qal may be:

a) in a cultic context – גאל גאלתי ירשלם (I) ‘a man / someone’ (Lev 27.31; 4Q367 3.7); subj. not specified (Lev 27.13; 4Q251 14.2);

b) in a socio-legal context - גאל גאלתי ירשלם ‘next of kin’ (Lev 25.25; Ru 3.13 [3x], 4.4[4x], 6[2x]), (one) of the Levites’ (Lev. 25.33: for the superiority of this interpretation to ‘from the Levites’ see Milgrom 2001, pp.2202-2203), גאל ‘brother’ (Lev 25.48), גאל
A.2 The direct objects following לֵא qal in cultic and socio-legal contexts are: unclean animal’ understood from v.11 (Lev 27.13; 4Q251 14.2), בֵּית house (Lev 27.15), הָעָנה field (Lev 27.19, 20), מְנַעֲשֵׁי some of his tithe (Lev 27.31; 4Q367 3.7); מִקַּר what has been sold [property] (Lev 25.25), בְּרִית/קִנָּה ‘brother/kin’ understood from v. 47 (Lev 25.48, 49[2x]), נַפַּל soul’ (lives/souls of the poor) (Ps 72.14), (his own life/soul) (Sir 37.19 acc. MSS B and C); 2fs sf. referring to Ruth (3.13[4x]), לַנֶּפֶשׁ portion of land’ (Ru 4.4[5x], 6), לַחֲשָׂר ‘right of redemption’ (Ru 4.6).

A.3 The prepositions in these cases used with לֵא qal are: כ + 1sg sf ‘for myself’ [Naomi’s next-of-kin], כ + 2sg sf ‘for yourself’ [Boaz] (Ru 4.6); כ + מ ‘from’ + נֵפֶךְ injury (Ps 72.14), כ + נַפְלֶ某个 violence/wrong (Ps 72.14).

A.4 לֵא qal may also have an abstract subject: לָשׁוּג עֵקְט ‘darkness and deep darkness’ (Job 3.5). The object in this case is כ + רֵי ‘day’ of Job’s birth in v. 3 (Job 3.5).

A.5 לֵא qal is also used with a divine subject:

a) מַלְאָך ‘angel’ (Gen 48.16), מִהלָה understood from context (Ps 103.4; 106.10; 107.2, Isa 52.9; 63.9; Jer 31.11; 4Q185 1-2 ii 10; 4Q381 24a+b.5); מְזַהֲבָה (Isa 44.23; 48.20; Mic 4.10; 11Q5 18.17; Sir 51.8).

b) A divine subject is implied when the speaker is יהוה (Ex 6.6: Isa 43.1; 44.22; Hos 13.14; 4Q158 14i.5; 4Q176 3.2), and in speech addressed to God: יהוה (Ex 15; Ps 74.2; 77.16; Lam 3.58) and petitions to God (Ps 69.19; 119.154).

A.6 In these contexts לֵא qal takes as direct objects: כ + רֵי ‘me’ [Jacob] (Gen 48.16), כ + עֵקְט ‘sons of Israel’ (Ex 5.5; 15.13), מָשְׂפֹת ‘people’ (Ex 15.13, Ps 77.16; 4Q385 2.1), נַפַּל ‘soul/life’ (Ps 69.19), מְנַעֲשֵׁי ‘congregation’ (Ps 74.2), מַלְאָך referring to מִהלָה ‘ancestors’ from v.7 (Ps 106.10), 3mpl sf. referring to מַלְאָך ‘the redeemed of the LORD’ (Ps 107.2), 1s sf referring to the Psalmist (Ps 119.154), מְזַהֲבָה sf referring to מַלְאָך ‘Jacob’ / ‘Israel’ (Isa 43.1; 4Q176 3.2), מַלְאָך ‘Jacob’ (Is 63.9), מַלְאָך ‘servant Jacob’ (Is 44.23; Jer 31.11), מַלְאָך ‘life’ (Ps 103.4, Lam 3.58), 3mpl sf. referring to מַלְאָך ‘Ephraim’ understood from v.12 (Hos 13.14), מַלְאָך ‘daughter Zion’ (Mic 4.10); מַלְאָך ‘all his people’ (4Q185 1-2 ii 10); מַלְאָך ‘Judah’ (4Q381 24a+b.5), מַלְאָך ‘the poor/humble’ (11Q5 18.17), מַלְאָך referring to מַלְאָך ‘those seeking refuge in him (Yahweh)’ (Sir 51.8).

A.7 לֵא qal with a divine subject takes the preposition כ introducing the object מְנַעֲשֵׁי ‘Judah’ (4Q381 24a+b.5); כ + מ ‘with, by means of’ (instrumental) + מַלְאָך ‘an outstretched arm and mighty acts of judgement’ (Ex 6.6), כ + מ ‘with a strong arm’ (Ps 77.16), and כ + מ ‘in, with’ (of accompaniment) + מַלְאָך ‘kindness’ / ‘mercy’ (Ex 15.13), + מַלְאָך ‘love’ (Is 63.9), + מַלְאָך ‘compassion’ (Is 63.9); or the preposition כ ‘from’ + מ ‘death’ (Hos 13.14), כ + מ all harm (Gen 48.16; Sir 51.8), כ + מ hand of enemy (Ps 106.10; Mic 4.10), כ + מ ‘trouble’ (Ps 107.2; 4Q381 24a+b.5), כ + מ ‘the hand of the one stronger than him’ (Jer 31.11), כ + מ
‘their hands’ referring to Egyptians (4Q158 14i.5), + [ to spare (11Q5 18.17).

**A.8** the subject of יֵּדְּאָל qal is unspecified in 4Q411 1 ii 8: [and redeemed with rejoicing]; and in 4Q471a 3: ‘he has redeemed us’, although in both cases it is likely that the subject is יֵּדְּאָל.

**A.9** A number of times the qal act part成立以来 is used as a substantive for both human and divine subjects:

a) When a human יֵּדְּאָל is the subject, the following verbs occur with it: ב disease ‘to come’ (Lev 25.25), + יֵּדְּאָל ‘to redeem’ (Lev 25.25), + יֵּדְּאָל ‘to be’ (Lev 25.26), [understood] (Nu 5.8), מז ‘to kill’ (Nu 35.19[2x], 21), מז ‘to meet’ (Num 35.19, 21), מז ‘to find’ (Nu 35.27), מז ‘to kill’ (Nu 35.27), מז ‘to pursue’ (Dt 19.6, Josh 20.5), מז ‘to pass by’ (Ru 4.1), מז ‘to say’ (Ru 4.6, 8), מז ‘to destroy’ (2Sam 14.11, Ru 4.6 Hiph), מז ‘to be able’ (Ru 4.6[2x]), מז ‘to turn aside’ (Ru 4.1), מז ‘to sit down’ (Ru 4.1), מז ‘to multiply’ (2Sam 14.11), מז ‘to take off’ (Ru 4.8).

b) A human יֵּדְּאָל is the object of the verbs יֵּדְּאָל Hiph. ‘to leave remaining’ / ‘to spare’ (1Kgs 16.11), [Pi] ‘to speak’ (Ru 4.1), and יֵּדְּאָל Hiph ‘to let be lacking’ / ‘to withhold’ (Ru 4.14).

c) A human יֵּדְּאָל occurs as nomen regens with יֵּדְּאָל ‘avenger of blood’ (Nu 35.19, 21, 24, 25, 27[2x]; Dt 19.6, 12; Josh 20.3, 5, 9; 2Sam 14.11) and as nomen rectum with יֵּדְּאָל ‘from the hand of’ (Nu 35.25), יֵּדְּאָל ‘into the hand of’ (Dt 19.12), ‘by [means of] the hand of’ (Josh 20.5).

d) A human יֵּדְּאָל occurs in the following nominal clauses: יֵּדְּאָל לא ‘if the man did not have a kinsman’ (Nu 5.8), יֵּדְּאָל ‘you [Boaz] are next-of-kin’ (Ru 3.9), יֵּדְּאָל ‘I [Boaz] am a near kinsman’ (Ru 3.12), יֵּדְּאָל ‘there is a kinsman’ (Ru 3.12); בָּנָי יֵּדְּאָל ‘an owner who has no kinsman’ (4Q251 16.5); יֵּדְּאָל ‘and for the girl who has no redeemer’ (4Q266 10i9).

e) The prepositions used in the above verses are: ל of possession + 3ms sf (Nu 35.27), ל ‘to be’ (Lev 25.26), of direction ‘to’ + 3ms ‘to say’ (Ru 4.3), מ (of direction) from the יֵּדְּאָל (Nu 35.12 [understood]; Josh 20.3), partitive ‘one of our kinsmen’ (Ru 2.20), מז פָּנְיָה (partitive ‘a man from (among) our nearest kin’ (Ru 2.20); מז ‘from the hand of’ (Nu 35.25), יֵּדְּאָל ‘in the hand of’ (Dt 19.12; Josh 20.5) ‘by the hand of’ (Josh 20.9), יֵּדְּאָל ‘between’ + יֵּדְּאָל ‘the slayer and the avenger of blood’ (Nu 35.24).

f) The only adjective used to describe a human יֵּדְּאָל is יֵּדְּאָל ‘near’ (Lev 25.25; Ru 2.20, 3.12).

g) When a divine subject is the יֵּדְּאָל the following verbs occur: יֵּדְּאָל ‘to stand’ (Job 19.25), יֵּדְּאָל ‘to plead/contend’ (Prov 23.11 - subject is presumably God, Jer 50.34), יֵּדְּאָל ‘to say’ (Isa 54.8; 4Q176 8-11.10), יֵּדְּאָל ‘to come’ (Isa 59.20), יֵּדְּאָל ‘to have pity’ (4Q176 8-11.10); it is the indirect object of יֵּדְּאָל Hiph. (Sir 51.12).

h) A divine יֵּדְּאָל occurs as nomen regens only with יֵּדְּאָל of Israel’ (Isa 49.7; Sir 51.12).

i) A divine יֵּדְּאָל occurs in the following nominal clauses: יֵּדְּאָל ‘your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel’ (Isa 41.14; 54.5; 4Q176 8-11.7), יֵּדְּאָל ‘the LORD is...’ YHWH... Our redeemer is the Holy One of Israel’ (Isa 47.4), יֵּדְּאָל ‘that I am the LORD, your Saviour and your redeemer...’ (Isa 49.26, 60.16); יֵּדְּאָל ‘the most High God is their redeemer’ (Ps 78.35), יֵּדְּאָל ‘the LORD of hosts’ (Isa 44.6; 47.4), יֵּדְּאָל ‘our redeemer from of old is your name’ (Isa 63.16),
their redeemer is strong’ (Prov 23.11; Jer 50.34), ‘my redeemer is alive’ (Job 19.25).

j) Nouns in apposition to a divine נָּחַל are ‘my rock’ (Ps 19.15), ‘the LORD’ (Ps 19.15; Isa 41.14; 43.14; 44.24; 48.17; 49.7; 54.8; 63.16), ‘the mighty one of Jacob’ (Isa 49.26).

k) The passive ptcp of נַחַל (גאל) also appears as a substantive in the following cases: as the subject of נַחַל ‘to say’ (Ps 107.2), נַחַל ‘to walk’ (Isa 35.9), and נַחַל ‘to cross over’ (Isa 51.10); as an object of נַחַל ‘redeem’ (Ps 107.2), as nomen regens with הֵיה ‘the ones redeemed of the LORD’ (Isa 62.12; Ps 107.2) [for נַחַל in Isa 63.4 see the entry for גָּאַל (noun)].

A.10 The subject of נַחַל niph may be: נַחַל ‘house in a walled city’ (Lev 25.30), הֵיה (from v. 47) ‘brother’ (Lev 25.49 [+ ‘if his hand reaches’, i.e. if he is able to redeem himself]; 25.54), הֵיה ‘field’ (Lev 27.20), הֵיה ‘unclean animal’ referring to נַחַל ‘first-born’ (beast) from previous verse (Lev 27.27), נַחַל ‘anything devoted to the ban’ (Lev 27.28), נַחַל ‘all tithes of cattle and sheep’ (from v. 32) and נַחַל ‘its substitute’ (Lev 27.33), נַחַל ‘captive Jerusalem’ / ‘captive daughter of Zion’ understood from v. 2 (Isa 52.3; 4Q176 8-11.4), and probably נַחַל ‘a reliable one’ (4Q420 1a ii-v 6), understood from 1.5.

A.11 Prepositions used with נַחַל niph are פָּרָם ‘these [ways]’ (Lev 25.54), and probably פָּרָם ‘righteousness’ (4Q420 1a ii-v 6), פָּרָם ‘without money’ (Isa 52.3)

4. Versions
a. LXX:
qal – λωτρόος (Ex 6.6; 15.13; Lev 25.25, 33, 38, 48, 49[2x]; 27.13, 15, 19, 20, 31; Ps 69.19; 72.14; 74.2; 77.16; 103.4; 106.10; 107.2; 119.154; Prov 23.11; Isa 35.9; 41.14, 43.1, 14; 44.22, 23, 24; 62.12; 63.9; Jer 50.34; Hos 13.14; Mic 4.10; Lam 3.58)
ῥόμαι (Gen 48.16; Isa 44.6; 47.4; 48.17, 20; 49.7; 51.10; 52.9; 54.5, 8; 59.20; 63.16)
ἀγγελετῷ (Lev 25.25, 26; Nu 5.8; 35.12, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27; Dt 19.6, 12; Josh 20.3, 5, 9; Ru 2.20; 3.13[4x]; 4.4[5x], 6[3x]; + τὸ αἷμα / τοῦ αἷμας Nu 35.12, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27; Dt 19.6, 12; Josh 20.3; 2Sam 14.11)
ἐξαρέω (Jer 31.11, Isa 60.16)
ἀγγελετῷ (Ru 3.9, 12[2x], 4.3, 6, 7, 14; 2Sam 14.11; 1Kgs 16.11)
ἀγγελετῇς (Ru 4.1)
ἐκλέισεν μέλλων (Job 19.25)
λωτροτής (Ps 19.15; 78.35)
ἀντιλαμβανόμενος (Isa 49.26)
σῶσέ (Sir 51.8)
ἐκλαμβάνω (Job 3.5)

niph - λωτρόο middle: Lev 25.49, 27.20, 27, 28
λωτρόο passive: Lev 25.30, 54; 27.33; Isa 52.3

Aquila [given according to the most recent authorities, even where there may be suspicion about the attribution]
ἀγχιστεῦω (ν) (Gen 48.16; Isa 35.9; 47.4; 49.7; 52.3; 59.20, 62.12; 63.16[?]; Jer 31.11; Ps 19.15; 72.14; 103.4; 107.2; 119.154; cf. Lev 25.33 [quicunque affinis est]; 27.15 [affinem fecerit]; 27.33 [affinis non efficietur])

ἀγχιστεῦς (Isa 41.14; 54.5, 8; 60.16; 63.16[?]; Ps 78.35; Prov 23.11)

ἐγγίζω (Jer 50.34; Lam 3.58)

λυτρῶν (Ps 74.2)

μολόνω (Job 3.5)

Symmachus [given according to the most recent authorities, even where there may be suspicion about the attribution]

ἀγχιστεῦω (ν) (Isa 35.9; 59.20; cf. Lev 25.33 [quicunque affinis est])

ἀγχιστεῦς (Prov 23.11)

ἀντιποιόμαι (Job 3.5)

ἐγγίζω (Jer 50.34)

λυτρῶν (Isa 49.7, 26; Ps 74.2)

λυτρωτής (Isa 47.4)

ὑπέρμαχω (Sir 51.8)

Theodotion [given according to the most recent authorities, even where there may be suspicion about the attribution]

ἀγχιστεῦω (ν) (Isa 49.7; Job 3.5)

ἀγχιστεῦς (Isa 41.14; Job 19.25; Prov 23.11)

λυτρῶν (Isa 47.4)

ῥύομαι (Isa 35.9; 51.10)

A.1 λυτρῶν (‘to release on receipt of ransom’, ‘redeem’, LS p.1067a) is clearly the most frequently used verb to translate גאל in the LXX. It is interesting to note that among the other Hebrew verbs translated by λυτρῶν and ῥύομαι (‘to set free, redeem, deliver’; ‘to protect’, LS p.694) are those defined by Sawyer as the semantic field of הושע, namely נצל (Hiph), חלץ (Pi), מַלַט (Pi), פַלֵט (Pi), and פצה.

A.2 ἀγχιστεῦω (‘to be next-of-kin’, LS p.17a) is used in each of the ‘technical’ contexts of גאל, for the duties of kinsman and the avenger of blood, and is used exclusively for הָאִיל.

A.3 λυτρῶν is used across the whole range of literature, bearing no distinction between socio-legal, cultic or religious contexts. ῥύομαι, however, is only used outside of the technical legal and cultic contexts.

A.4 It is interesting that there is a distinction made in the LXX, which is not expressed in Hebrew, between the present ptcp ῥύομαι (Gen 48.16; 59.20), with one example anticipating future deliverance, and the aorist ῥυσάμενος (Isa 44.6; 47.4; 48.17; 49.7; 54.5, 8), which seems to be a deliberate reference to past deliverance (i.e. the Exodus).

A.5 The Minor Versions (namely, Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion) show a tendency (most pronounced in Aquila and least so in Symmachus, who has a range of equivalents) to use ἀγχιστεῦω (ν) or ἀγχιστεῦς (the words used in Ruth for ‘kinsman’), rather than λυτρῶν or ῥύομαι, even for God. This accords with the aim of Aquila’s revision of the LXX in particular to have a single equivalent for each Hebrew word, but
to achieve this it seems to have been necessary in some contexts to stretch the meaning of the verb ἀγχιστεύω beyond its usage elsewhere. It may also reflect a development in Judaism, associating God more closely with the kinsman-redeemer figure, thus emphasising the familial connection with his people. A similar tendency can be seen in early Christianity, with references to God as ‘father’ and Paul’s emphasis on adoption into God’s family (cf. Rom 8.15, 9.4; Gal 4.5). Symmachus (Isa 47.4; 49.7, 26) and Theodotion (Isa 47.4) were sometimes content to replace a more general expression with a word from the λύτρον-group.

A.6 ἀγαλ seems to be translated by words which have the idea of removing from danger, e.g. ἐξαιρέω, whereas פדה seems to have a broader range of meaning. It is translated by verbs which emphasise an exchange in the ransom, e.g. ἀλλάσσω, ἀπολυτρόω, but it also shares the general sense of liberation and rescue from danger, e.g. σώζω.

b. Peshitta:
qal – prq (Gen 48.16; Ex 6.6; 15:13; Lev 25.25, 26, 33, 48, 49 [2x]; 27:13 [2x], 15, 19 [2x], 20, 31 [2x]; Isa 35.9; 41.14; 43.1; 43.14; 44.6, 22, 23, 24; 47.4; 48.17, 20; 49.7, 26; 51.10; 52.9; 54.5, 8; 59.20; 60.16; 62.12; 63.9; Jer 50.34; Mic 4.10; Ps 19.15; 69.19; 72.14; 74.2; 77.16; 78.35; 103.4; 107.2 [2x]; Prov 23.11; Job 19.25; Lam 3.58; Sir 51.8)

ps’ / psy (Jer 31.11; Hos 13.14; Ps 106.10; 119.154)
qrb (Lev 25.25; Nu 5.8; 1Kg 16.11)

tb’ (Ru 3.13 [4x]; 4.4 [5x], 6 [4x], 8, 14; [+ ’yrt’) Ru 2.20; 3.9, 12 [2x]; 4.1, 3; [+ ’yrt dm’] (Nu 35.12, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27; Dt 19.6, 12; Josh 20.3, 5, 9)
ḥdt [+dm’] (2Sm 14.11)
ks’ Job 3.5 (perhaps, along with the Vg, reading ἀγαλ as ἀγαλ II ‘defile’)
niph – prq (Lev 25.30, 49, 54; 27.20, 27, 28, 33; Isa 52.3)

A.1 Although prq is the most common verb used to translate ἀγαλ in the Peshitta, along with many others in the semantic field, there are some interesting variations which are worth noting. ps’ / psy ‘to deliver’/’set free’ is used to translate ἀγαλ on three occasions when it follows another ‘salvation’ word (Ps 106.10; Jer 31.11; Hos 13.14) or another ‘legal’ term, e.g. ריב (Ps 119.154). However, this is not consistent (cf. Isa 49.26, 60.16, 63.9, etc.).

A.2 In several instances where the other versions use another familial term, emphasising the relational aspect of ἀγαλ (ἀγχιστεύω(v) / בְּרִית/ propinquus), the Peshitta uses qrb, which can also mean ‘kinsman’ (Payne Smith, 519) (Lev 25.25; Nu 5.8; 1Kg 16.11).

A.3 The occurrences of ἀγαλ in Ruth are consistently translated by tb’ ‘to seek, demand; require, claim, avenge’ (Ru 3.13 [4x]; 4.4 [5x], 6 [4x], 8, 14; [+ ’yrt’ = ‘vengeance’: Payne Smith, 412] Ru 2.20; 3.9, 12 [2x]; 4.1, 3) rather than qrb, which would perhaps seem more likely (cf. A.2 above). This is evidently based on the use of the same verb (with ’yrt’) to translate הדר in the context of the avenging of blood (הדר: Nu 35.12, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27; Dt 19.6, 12; Josh 20.3, 5, 9). tb’ seems to carry with it something of the force of שלד in BH (cf. Gen 42.22). It is interesting to compare tb’ ’yrt’
A.4 The use of *ḥdtn* `to make new, restore, repair’ to translate תָּבָאְלָה תָּבָאְלָה in 2Sm 14.11 emphasises the restoration of blood required by the family, which is the right of the kinsman to claim.

c. Targum:

TgO

qal - פֶּרֶךְ (Gen 48.16; Ex 6.6; 15.13; Lev 25.25, 30, 33, 48; 27.13, 15, 19, 31)
(subst.) פֶּרֶךְ (Lev 25.25, 26; Nu 5.8)

niph – פֶּרֶךְ (Nu 35.12, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27; Dt 19.6, 12)

TgJon

qal - פֶּרֶךְ (Isa 35.9; 43.1; 44.22,23; 48.20; 52.9; 62.12; Mic 4.10)

niph – פֶּרֶךְ (Isa 49.26; 51.10; 63.9; Jer 31.11; Hos 13.14)

TgNeo

qal - פֶּרֶךְ (Gen 48.16; Ex 6.6; 15.13; Lev 25.26, 33, 48; 27.13, 15, 19, 31)
(subst) פֶּרֶךְ (Lev 25.26; Nu 5.8)

niph – פֶּרֶךְ (Nu 35.12, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27; Dt 19.6, 12)

TgPsJon

qal - פֶּרֶךְ (Gen 48.16; Ex 6.6; 15.13; Lev 25.25, 26, 33, 48; 27.13, 15, 19, 31)

niph - פֶּרֶךְ (Nu 35.12, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27; Dt 19.6, 12)

TgFrg MS Paris Bibliothèque nationale Hebr. 110

qal - פֶּרֶךְ (Ex 15.13)

TgFrg MS Vatican Ebr. 440, Folios 198-227

qal - פֶּרֶךְ (Ex 15.13; Lev 27.19, 31)

niph – פֶּרֶךְ (Lev 27.27, 33)

TgRuth

qal - פֶּרֶךְ (Ru 2.20; 3.9, 12[2x], 13[4x]; 4.1[2x], 3, 4[5x], 6[4x], 8[2x], 14)
TgPsa
qal פָּרֵס (Ps 19.15; 69.19; 72.14; 74.2; 77.16; 78.35; 103.4; 106.10; 107.2[2x]; 119.154)

TgLam
qal פָּרֵס (Lam 3.58)

A.1 In the Targums, whenever גָּאַל is juxtaposed with another word for ‘liberation’ or ‘rescue’, פָּרֵס is used for that verb and גָּאַל is consistently translated by שָׁזָב (‘to save, rescue’, Sokoloff, p.546), e.g. יִשָּׁע Hiph (Isa 49.26; 60.16; 63.9), פָּדָה (Isa 51.10-11; Jer 31.11; Hos 13.14), with the exception of Ps 69.19, where both גָּאַל and פָּדָה are translated by פָּרֵס.

A.2 It is interesting that in TgO and TgJon the root גָּאַל is only retained (presumably as a loan-word) in the context of blood vengeance.

d. Vulgate:
quale - eruo (Gen 48:16)
redimo (Ex 6.6; 15.13; Lev 25.25, 31, 33, 48; 27.15, 19, 31; Isa 43.1; 44.22,23; 48.20; 52.9; 62.12; 63.9; Hos 13.14; Mic 4.10; Ps 69.19; 72.14; 74.2; 77.16; 103.4; 106.10; 107.2; 119.154)
suscipio (Ru 3.13)
iure propinquitatis emo (Ru 4.4)
libero (Isa 35.9; 51.10; Jer 31.11; Sir 51.8, Ps 69.19 LXX)
do (Lev 27.13)
propinquus (Lev 25.25; 1Kgs 16.11; Prov 23.11; Ru 2.20; 3.9, 12; 4.1, 3, 8)
proximus (Lev 25.26; Nu 5.8)
successor familiae (Ru 4.14)
redemptor (Isa 41.14; 43.14; 44.6.24; 47.4; 48.17; 49.8, 26; 54.5, 8; 59.20; 60.16; 63.16; Jer 50.34; Ps 19.15; 78.35; Job 19.25; Lam 3.58)
גָּאַל cognatus occisi (Nu 35.12, 21)
propinquus occisi (Nu 35.19)
propinquus sanguinis (Nu 35.24)
ultor [+ sanguinis] (Nu 35.25,27; Josh 20.3,5)
proximus [+ cuius sanguis] (Dt 19.6, 12; Josh 20.9; 2Sam 14.11)
niph – redimo (Lev 25.30, 49, 54; 27. 20, 27, 28, 33; Isa 52.3)

A.1 The predominant verb used by the Vg to translate גָּאַל is redimo ‘to buy back, redeem’, although more general terms of liberation and rescue are also used (eruo, libero). It is interesting that the Vg consistently avoids using the familial term propinquus / proximus for God, preferring redemptor, with the remarkable exception of Prov 23.11. However, Jerome may have followed one of the Minor Versions here, which, as already noted above (LXX A.5), use ἄγχοστευός of God in this verse.
5. Lexical / Semantic Field(s)

A.1 Verbs found in parallelism with כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘buy/acquire’ (Ps 74.2) and כָּרָה ‘to set free’ (Jer 31.11, Hos 13.14).

A.2 A number of different verbs and phrases are associated with כָּרָו יִנָּה.

a) In Ru 4.8 כָּרָה ‘to buy/acquire’ appears to take the place of נָקַל אֲדֹלַים in v. 6, when Naomi’s next-of-kin offers his right of redemption to Boaz (cf. also Ps 74.2 above). כָּרָה also corresponds to כָּרָה in Ex 15.13, 16. כָּרָה ‘to ransom’ in Lev 27.27 is either being used synonymously with כָּרָו יִנָּה or is a particular term for the redemption of first-born.

b) As one would expect, many other ‘salvation’ words also occur in close proximity to כָּרָו יִנָּה, namely כָּרָה ‘to set free’ (Ps 69.19), שָׁנַה (Hiph) ‘to defend, help’ (Ps 106.10, Isa 63.9), מָק (Hiph) ‘to deliver’ (Ex 6.6, Mic 4.10, Sir 51.8, 11Q5 18.17).

c) In the context of the Exodus rescue מָק (Hiph) ‘to bring out’ (Ex 6.6), מַע (Mas) ‘to lead’ and מִשָּׁר (Mas) ‘to guide’ (Ex 15.13) also occur alongside כָּרָו יִנָּה.

d) In socio-legal contexts, כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘to plead one’s cause’ (Ps 119.154, Lam 3.58) is closely related to כָּרָו יִנָּה.

e) In passages concerning rescue from oppression, כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘to draw near’ (Ps 69.19), מַמ (Pi) ‘to comfort’ (Isa 52.9), מַמ (Mas) ‘to have pity’ (4Q176 8-11.10) are all associated with כָּרָו יִנָּה.

f) In a speech by מַמ (Mas) כָּרָו יִנָּה (Isa 43.1).

A.3 The nouns associated with כָּרָו יִנָּה are כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘his friends’ (1Kgs 16.11) and כָּרָו יִנָּה in apposition with כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘the holy people’ (Isa 62.12).

A.4 The titles of God associated with כָּרָו יִנָּה are כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘the Holy One of Israel’ (Isa 41.14; 43.14; 47.4; 48.17; 54.5; 4Q176 8-11.17), מַמ (Mas) ‘the King of Israel’ (Isa 44.6; 47.4; Jer 50.34), מַמ (Mas) ‘the LORD of hosts’, מַמ (Mas) ‘the one who formed you from the womb’ (Isa 44.24), מַמ (Mas) כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘your saviour’ (Isa 49.26; 60.16), מַמ (Mas) אֲבָרִי (Mas) כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘mighty one of Jacob’ (Isa 49.26; 60.16), מַמ (Mas) אֲבָרִי (Mas) כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘our father’ (Isa 63.16)

A.5 Antonyms: מַס ‘to sell’ occurs several times in both socio-legal (Lev 25.25[2x], 33; Ru 4.3) and cultic (Lev 27.20, 27, 28) contexts. כָּרָו יִנָּה is used in contrast with מַס which confirms the idea of כָּרָו יִנָּה meaning to ‘purchase’ or ‘re-purchase’ something which has been sold. Surprisingly, perhaps, the same word also occurs once in a theological context, in Isa 52.3, where God says to Israel כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘the Holy One of Israel’ (Isa 52.3). This seems to suggest that כָּרָו יִנָּה usually involves a monetary transaction, but Israel’s case is an exception (see Exegesis below). In 4Q185 1-2 ii 10 (Wisdom literature) כָּרָו יִנָּה is used in opposition to מַס ‘to kill’ in a warning to those who hate wisdom, comparing them to God’s people whom he will save. In 4Q251 14.2, part of the legal commentary based on Lev 27, כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘to bring near’ (i.e. present as an offering) is used in opposition to כָּרָו יִנָּה in the context of cultic sacrifice.

6. Exegesis

A.1 a) כָּרָו יִנָּה ‘to re-purchase, reclaim’ (qal and niph), in the particular context of cultic laws in Lev 27 (and related Qumran texts 4Q251 14.2; 4Q367 3.7), refers to the redemption of gifts to the sanctuary. The following may be re-claimed after one fifth has been added to their value: unclean animals not fit for sacrifice (v.13), the first-born of an unclean animal (v.27), a field which has been consecrated (v.19), a house which has been consecrated (v.15) or a tithe of the land which is the Lord’s (v.31). However, a tithe of
herds and flocks (v.33) and a consecrated field which has either been sold or left unredeemed by the original owner (v.20) may not be redeemed. In addition, anything devoted to the ban (חרם) belongs exclusively to God and may not be redeemed (v.28). In each case, the only person who is able to ‘re-claim’ an offering is the original owner.

b) There is an interesting clarification of Lev 27.13 in the legal commentary, Halakhah A (4Q251 14.2). Whereas the MT may be regarded as ambiguous (superficially) as to whether (א) an unclean animal may be offered for sacrifice, it is made quite clear in the Qumran text that it must be redeemed (see DJD XXXV, p. 42 and Levine 1989, p. 195).

A.2 a) גאל ‘to reclaim as kinsman’ occurs in the Holiness Code (Lev 25) and in the narrative in Ruth 2-4. The adjective קרוב in Ru 2.20, 3.12 places the emphasis on kinship, which is also reflected by the translations of the subst. ptcp propinquus, proximus (Vg), cf. Nu 5.8 and 1Kgs 16.11 (קריב Tg Jon), where the subst ptcp seems to mean little more than ‘relative’. It is in Ruth that we find instances of גאל (qal) with an intransitive sense ‘to act as one’s kinsman’ (BDB, p.145) in the context of claiming property as inheritance. Since גאל appears as a title for someone (e.g. Ru 3.9, 12, etc.) the relational quality seems to assume priority over the verbal aspect of redemption and is thus the foundation for the subsequent action. It is the familial relationship that provides the basis for the obligation or right to claim or acquire property or people, either on behalf of one’s kin or by claiming the inheritance for oneself.

b) The people who can act as גאל for someone are listed in Lev 25.49: a man’s uncle, uncle’s son, or anyone left who is of his flesh in his family (i.e. blood-related). It is also possible for a man to be without a גאל (Lev 25.26, Nu 5.8, 4Q251 16.5, cf. CD IX 13-16 based on Nu 5.8 which has בзалע rather than גאל), but he may redeem himself (גאל Niph: Lev 25.49) if he has acquired the means to do so, ככ יג גאלתו (Lev 25.26).

c) In a passage about distribution of wealth the Damascus Document 4Q266 10 i 9 teaches that the community will provide for the [girl] who has no גאל.

A.3 גאל is used several times (in the asylum laws in Nu 35.19, 21, 24, 25, 27[2x], and also in Dt 19.6, 12; Josh 20.3, 5, 9; 2Sm 14.11) and is usually translated as ‘the avenger of blood’ (BDB, p.145, NRSV). It seems, therefore, to some scholars, that another responsibility or right of the kinsman is to restore the blood of the family which has been lost (Stamm 1971, p. 386, Johnson 1953, p. 68). This idea is emphasised particularly in the Peshitta 2Sm 14.11 (see Peshitta A.4 above). Thus the avenger is the subject of verbs such as מות Hiph, הרצח and הדרף. TgNeo and TgPsJon, translate it as תבע אדמא (תבע ‘to seek, demand, claim’, Sokoloff 1990, p. 574b) and the Peshitta translates it by.tb (‘yrt’), ‘seek (vengeance for)’. These both emphasise the concepts of family obligation and claiming possession which are essential to גאל. When something belongs to someone they have a claim to it, either by themselves or with the help of one’s kinsman (גאל).

A.4 גאל (qal pf) ‘to act as kinsman’ with God as subject, is used several times in the context of the Exodus (Ex 6.6; 15.13; Isa 51.10; 63.9; Ps 74.2; 77.16; 78.35; 106.10; 4Q158 14i.5) and could be translated in several different ways. In Ps 74.2 גאל is in collocation with קנה ‘to acquire/buy’ (obj. והקדש), which seems to have overtones of payment and is perhaps more akin to the human socio-legal usage of גאל (Lev 25). The same association of גאל with קנה occurs in otherwise identical expressions referring to early Israel in Ex 15.13 and 15.16. Even when payment is not mentioned, the use of גאל for buying someone out of slavery (Lev 25.48) may provide a useful background to the
context here of release from slavery in Egypt. God fulfilled the role of Israel’s kinsman at
the Exodus, setting them free from slavery. It can easily take on the sense ‘to save’ or
‘liberate’ here, although this ignores the connotation of God ‘acquiring’ or ‘claiming’ his
people, which may be underlying the choice of הָגָאל rather than (or alongside) מָשָׁע Hiph. or
מָשֵׁל Hiph. This does not preclude, however, the possibility that the meaning of הָגָאל could
have developed by association with other salvation words.

The use of הָגָאל to describe the king’s action towards the poor in Ps 72.14 needs
special attention. It is the only use of the verb with a human subject which lies outside the
cultic and socio-legal contexts, and with which the preposition יי is connected (on Lev
25.33 see Syntagmatics A.1 b)). Both these characteristics link Ps 72.14 with some of the
occurrences of הָגָאל where it has a divine subject (which is not surprising in view of the
overlap of royal and divine characteristics in the Bible): e.g. Gen 48.16; Hos 13.14; Ps
103.4; Sir 51.8. The proximity of less specific words in the salvation-group should also
be noted (יהוה Hiph. and זָעָמ in Ps 72.12, צָעָמ Hiph. in 72.13). The same questions as above
arise about how far the semantic components of ‘kin’, ‘release from slavery’ and
‘payment’ may be alluded to here. In any case this occurrence of the wider meaning of הָגָאל in a royal psalm (which is presumably pre-exilic) is evidence that it does not represent
a late, exilic, development (see also A.11, A.12 and B.3).

A.5 הָגָאל seems to have a particular force in Dt-Isa. The subst. ptcp הָגָאל is used as a
title of God thirteen times. Also occurs alongside other titles of God: יְהֹוָה יָשָׁר ‘the
Holy One of Israel’, קֶבֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל ‘the King of Israel’, יְהֹוָה יָשָׁר ‘the LORD of hosts’, ‘his Holy One’, צֶלֶם יָשָׁר ‘your saviour’, ‘mighty one of Jacob’. It occurs six times
with the phrase יָשָׁר יִתֵּן ‘thus says the Lord’ (43.1.14, 44.6.24, 48.17, 49.7), and six
times on the lips of God in promises of help 41.14, of redemption from sins (44.22), of
triumph over enemies (49.26), of compassion (54.8). It is significant that the only
instance of הָגָאל as nomen regens is with Israel (Isa 49.7) – God is exclusively Israel’s הָגָאל.

A.6 הָגָאל qal is used in an eschatological hymn of praise (Isa 44.23, 48.20, 52.9),
which suggests the author has made a connection between the first exodus, the first
‘redemption’ or liberation, and the hoped-for future redemption, as well as hopes for the
second liberation from the Babylonian exile (cf. Stamm 1971, p. 390).

A.7 Several times God’s ‘redemption’ of Israel and his title ‘Redeemer’ are linked
to creation (43.1, 44.6.24, 54.5) – since God created His people, Israel, they belong to
him, and so he has the right to redeem them, or to claim them back (cf. Stamm 1971, p.
391). The Qal pass ptcp מִלְתֵּךְ also occurs in this context, in Isa 51.9-11. Verse 9 is an appeal
to God as Creator of the world to rescue them. מִלְתֵּךְ in v.10 refers to those who were
‘saved’ at the Red Sea, and is followed by מְשַׁמִּית in v.11, looking forward to ‘the redeemed
of the Lord’ returning to Zion from the Babylonian exile.

A.8 The occurrences of הָגָאל in Trito-Isaiah have a similar meaning to those in
Deutero-Isaiah, in the context of future deliverance (59.20, 60.16). It also occurs in
conjunction with מַלְתִּיךְ ‘our father’, with reference to the past.

A.9 הָגָאל occurs in several verses in a quasi-forensic context, which seem to be
related to other socio-legal uses of הָגָאל referring to the actions of a kinsman, namely the
responsibility to protect and help a family member in times of need, including in a court
trial (e.g. Job 19.25). הָגָאל is used of God four times with רִיב ‘to contend, conduct a (legal)
case’ (BDB, p.936) in Jer 50.3; Ps 119.154; Prov 23.11; and Lam 3.58. In each case רִיב is
used with its cognate noun, hence the NRSV rendering ‘to plead a cause’.
A.10 niph ‘to be reclaimed’ in Isa 52.3 (cf. 4Q176 8-11.4) is set in response to the community lament in 51.9f. and is a promise of liberation, in preparation for a summons (52.11) to depart from captivity. The legal sense of גאל is being used figuratively here, in opposition to מ ise, to mean ‘reclaim’ (cf. Lev 25). Since Israel was not ‘sold’ in a proper legal transaction to Babylon, no ransom price is due from God, their rightful owner, for their ‘redemption’. This usage of גאל seems to suggest that its meaning can ‘overlap’ between the socio-legal and theological spheres. Isa 52.3 is a clear case of sharing the meaning of the socio-legal context, but excluding the monetary exchange.

A.11 The use of מן with גאל aligns it more closely with other ‘salvation’ words, e.g.ملת Hiph, מלט Pi and חלץ Pi. This use of גאל does not seem to be a radical departure in meaning from its meaning in references to the Exodus, although it is slightly more developed (cf. use of מן with גאל in a passage on the Exodus in the Reworked Pentateuch, 4Q158 14 i 5). The understanding of God as kinsman, who claims Israel and bails them out in times of trouble, is not excluded from the meaning of גאל with מן e.g. Ps 106.10, where גאל seems to parallel ישׁע Hiph. The other examples of גאל + מן imply a sense of rescue from oppressive powers and threats to life for the people as a whole or individuals within it (Jer 31.11; Hos 13.14; Mic 4.10; Ps 72.14; 103.4; 107.2; 4Q381 24a+b.5; 11Q5 18.17).

A.12 The use of מן does perhaps suggest a physical or metaphorical removal from trouble, rather than a restoration to the original owner, although the idea of liberation from the hand or power (י/כ) of enemies (in all but two instances above) seems to suggest a transference of ownership. Hos 13.14 is an early example of גאל and מן being used with מן (not later than 8th century BCE; see also B.3). This contradicts assumptions that the use of מן with גאל was a later development.

A.13 An unusual connection is made in 4QPseudo-Ezekiel between ירדה and גאל in a speech by יהוה declaring that he is the one who redeemed his people לאכזל, which could either be rendered ‘in order to give them the covenant’ or ‘by giving them the covenant’. If one compares the language of Ezekiel 37:23-28. it seems that God will save (ישׁע Hiph, v.23) his people in order that his ancient promises of ruler, land, covenant and temple may be fulfilled. If it is an instrumental use of גאל, it would be a rather surprising development that re-establishing covenant had become a vehicle of redemption.

B.1 The role of a man’s גאל has been understood by some scholars to be to restore balance and wholeness to his family (Stamm 1971, col. 386; Johnson 1953, p. 70; Jepsen 1957, p. 158). However, although this description fits with a number of examples (e.g. where something is ‘bought back’ for a family member) it seems to ignore the cases where גאל could mean pre-purchase rather than re-purchase (Ru 4.3 and Jer 32.7), and also see below on גאל †ד, where the underlying idea does not seem to be one of ‘Wiederherstellung’.

B.2 Job 3.5 seems to express the idea of גאל as ‘claiming back’. It is the only example of גאל being used with an abstract subject (‘gloom/darkness’) and some argue either that it is a unique usage of גאל or that it should be read as the homonym געל (II) †געל ‘to soil/defile’, which may fit better with the rest of the verse. This would support Johnson’s argument for a single original root of both גאל (I) and געל (II) †געל, meaning ‘to cover’, which is supported by the Vg obscurare (to conceal, suppress, obscure) which
seems to contain the idea of ‘cover’ (cf. LXX ἐκλάβοι). However, Stamm points to a different ‘core meaning’ of יהוה in the idea of something being restored to its rightful owner. He translates it: ‘einfordern sollen ihn Finsternis und Dunkel’ for the forces of darkness and chaos are older than the light (cf. Gen 1.2) and therefore have a claim on his life (1971, p. 390). This view seems to be supported by the previous verse and to be more akin to the idea expressed by צפה יהוה (similarly Blau 1956, pp. 244-245).

B.3 Verses containing יהוה with גאל ‘to rescue from slavery, adversity, death’ with God (or the king) as the subject have been treated by both Stamm (1971, cols 392-93) and Jepsen (1957, p. 161-62) as instances of יהוה which are outside of the ‘normal’ usage, and show a semantic development away from its ‘original’ meaning (Gen 48.16; Jer 31.11; Hos 13.14; Mic 4.10; Ps 103.4; 106.10; 107.2, and one without גאל in Ps 69.19). The list unaccountably omits Ps 72.14. Even if one follows Stamm and Jepsen in regarding this group as exhibiting a widening of the meaning of יהוה from its original legal context, the development should not be regarded as post-exilic in origin, as a plausible case can be made for an earlier date for three of the occurrences concerned. Ps 72 is a royal psalm (see above A.4). Gen 48.16 has generally been assigned to an older layer of the Jacob-narrative (traditionally E) rather than the Priestly layer, and Hos 13.14 is part of a judgement oracle which there is no compelling reason to deny to the eighth-century prophet (cf. Davies 1992, p. 285, 295). In Gen 48.16, which Ringgren (1977, p. 353) considered to be ‘perhaps the oldest passage using the root gʾl’, יהוה also seems to be an unusual choice for ‘rescuing’ or ‘liberating’ from harm, as this is the only occurrence of יהוה in Genesis. However, since Jacob had no human יהוה when he was in need, it was God who rescued him, both from his uncle (Gen 31) and from his brother (ch.32-33). The emphasis here seems to be on the familial relationship, but under different circumstances from those we find in Leviticus and Ruth. Jacob was not in debt and did not need ‘redeeming’ in the socio-legal sense, but rather needed rescuing from danger, or protecting from harm (cf. Johnson 1953, p. 75-77). For יהוה as an element of pre-exilic personal names, most of them explicitly theophoric, see above, Root and Comparative Material A.1.

Conclusion

A.1 The meaning of יהוה seems to comprise three ‘semantic components’: (a) ‘to act (or fulfil one’s duty) as kinsman’; (b) ‘buying’ (cf. the parallelism of יהוה with קנאו, and opposition with ממנו) and (c) ‘claiming back’. These appear variously in its different uses, as below.

A.2 The socio-legal contexts of Lev 25, Ruth and Jer 32 make clear the connection between the responsibility of a kinsman and the acquisition or re-purchase of property, possessions or people, when one of their family is in financial trouble. The kinsman’s actions effect a transfer of ownership, by claiming something back for its rightful owner.

A.3 The particular cultic use of יהוה in Lev 27, which is concerned with re-purchasing things dedicated to God, does not have the kinship aspect to its meaning, but is a development of a) and b), meaning ‘to buy back’ or ‘re-claim’ a gift, when the subject is the original owner of the offering.
The particular use of גאל in a construct relationship with ה ד ם seems to bring out the idea of ‘claiming’, which is the responsibility of a kinsman, so that ה ד ם could almost be translated ‘claimer of blood’, which is another development of (b).

The use of גאל in references to the Exodus and other cases where God is the subject in contexts of deliverance (individual and national), could equally be rendered by the general meaning ‘to act as kinsman’ (a) or by a more particular meaning ‘to re-claim’ (b) e.g. from alien ownership or ‘to deliver’ (from trouble). It is often difficult and sometimes unnecessary to separate these meanings in individual contexts. The particular actions of God to help his people in a time of need are understood from the perspective of his close ‘kin’ relationship with Israel (cf. juxtaposition of גא in Isa 63.16), which is emphasized in Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah in relation to God as creator. The particular uses of גאל with ריב in legal contexts could mean ‘to defend’ or ‘to bail someone out’, understood within the general responsibilities of a kinsman.

The uses of גאל with the preposition מֹן seem to define its meaning more specifically as ‘to rescue from’, i.e. removal from threats of enemies, danger or death. Again, the idea of kin-relationship (a) is not absent, even if not explicit. This usage of גאל with מֹן also shows a parallel to other ‘salvation’ words.

The use of the subst. act. ptcp. גאל often functions as a title, used for both humans, meaning ‘nearest relative bearing the kinship responsibility’ (a) and for God, meaning ‘the closest kin to Israel’ and also ‘redeemer’ in the sense of ‘deliverer’ from slavery and oppression. Although גאל is never used intransitively with a divine subject, the subst. active participle (without a subsequent verb), seems to draw out the intransitive sense of the verb and emphasises the fundamental relational aspect to this verb’s meaning.

Bibliography


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