(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: n m.pl.
Occurrences: Total 1x OT, 0x Sir, 0x Qum, 0x inscriptions

Text doubtful:
B.1 It is possible to parse the form as m pl. pass. part. of the verb (cf. Duhm and Whybray ad loc.), and DCH records it as such, while allowing the nominal parsing as an alternative (2, pp. 293-94). But most modern commentators (so Marti, Volz and recently Blenkinsopp) and versions (e.g. RSV, NRSV) treat it as a noun, as do BDB (p. 145) and HALOT (p. 168, with ref. to BL 517y and Köhler 1921). The parallel נקם and the versional renderings (see below) support this.

B.2 Budde (1909, pp. 661-62; cited by Köhler without reference) proposed the emendation גמולי, but it has not found favour with others.

Qere/Ketiv: none.

1. Root and comparative material
A.1 [see גאל]

2. Formal characteristics
A.1 qatūl : Joüon and Muraoka 2000, §88Ec (abstract or action nouns), §136f-i (on the use of the plural to represent intensity, abstraction or action) (cf. BL 517y and Köhler 1921, 316). Cf. also פְּדוּיִם.

3. Syntagmatics
A.1 גאולים is nomen rectum of שָׁנַת, ‘the year of redemption’ and the whole phrase is the subject of the verb בָאוּ (Isa. 63.4).

A.2 The form attested is גָאָלוּי, ‘my redemption’: the 1 s pronoun here, as throughout Isa 63.1-6, refers to God.

4. Versions:
a. LXX
λύτρωσις (Isa 63.4)

A.1 λύτρων is used in the LXX to translate the nominalizations of נקם, כפר and פדה. In Classical Greek λύτρων denotes ‘price of release, ransom’ (LS p.1067b), the ‘means of release’ implied by the suffix –τρων, and was used for the sum paid to ransom prisoners of war and slaves (Procksch and Büchsel 1967, p. 340).
A.2 The choice of words in the LXX seems to vary according to context, λύτρον being used when the emphasis is on a particular sum of money and λύτρωσις when the action or right of redemption is being discussed.

b. Peshitta:
pwrqnʾ (Isa 63.4)

c. Targum:

TgJon
פורקן עמי (Isa 63.4)

A.1 Both the Peshitta and the Targums prefer the root prq, rather than šzb or ṣṣy, to render גאל (see entry on root גאל, with the exception of passages in Ruth and Jeremiah, where the choices of yrwtʾ and אחסנתא respectively emphasise the claim to inheritance.

A.2 Here the Targum has added עמי to make clear whose ‘redemption’ is involved.

d. Vulgate:

redemptio (Isa 63.4)

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 (see גאל vb)

A.2 גְּאוּלִים occurs in poetic parallelism with נקם, ‘vengeance’ (Isa 63.4). The parallelism is not synonymous: the two terms represent the different effects of the same action respectively for Israel’s enemies and Israel itself (cf. Tg).

6. Exegesis

A.1 Marti (1900, 392) compared ‘the year of my גְּאוּלִים’ to the laws on the jubilee year in Lev. 25.28-34, 47-55, where the verb גאל is used several times.

B.1 Merz (1916, 68) introduced a sense based on the idea of the גאל as an avenger of blood: ‘(the year of) those to whose avenging I am obligated’. Köhler (1921, 316) took this in a more plausible direction (‘year of’ is not very likely to be followed by a genitive of the person, and the sense which Merz proposed for the part. is forced) by comparing נערים and בתולים (cf. also זקנים) as ‘time-words’ formed on this pattern and proposing ‘time when one acts as an avenger of blood’ (likewise KB and Westermann 1969, 383). But, although the parallel with נקם, ‘vengeance’, can be seen as favouring this interpretation, it is not decisive (see above, 5) and the combination with ‘year’ seems to make this temporal dimension of meaning otiose. Volz retains the traditional understanding as an abstract noun (1932, 261).

Conclusion
The single occurrence of גְּאֻלִים in BH leaves some doubt as to which of the uses of the verb it is related to. A case has been made for ‘(time of) avenging’ instead of the traditional understanding ‘redemption’, which sees it as a synonym of גְּאֻל ה in one of its senses, but it is not compelling.

Bibliography
Duhm, B., 1892. Das Buch Jesaia, HKAT, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen.

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