Grammatical Type: vb piel.

Occurrences: Total 28x OT, 1x Sir, 6?x Qum, 0x inscr.


Qum: CD 7.21; 1Q27 1.4 [=4Q300 3.4] (DJD XX); 4QpPs 1–10 iv 20 (=4Q171); 4Q183 1 ii 3 (?), 4Q171 3–10 iv 20 (DJD V); 11QPs [=11Q5] 22.9 (=4QPs 8.11).

Text doubtful:
A.1 Most commentators have argued that at 2Kg 10.24 the verb מָלֵט niph in the MT should be read read as a piel (e.g. Burney 1903:305).
A.2 At Am 2.15b the passive of διασῴζω in the LXX implies the reading of the niphal יִמָּלֵט (cf. Vg, Tg, Pesh), but this may be a characteristic alteration by the Versions to assist the sense (cf. B.1). The piel, if retained, would have to be interpreted as intransitive (as it seems to be in 11Q5 22.9), or to share the same object נֵפֶ with the verb in the next line.
A.3 The reading at 4Q183 1 ii 3 might be either piel or hiphil. It is in parallelism with the hiphil הושׁיע, and hence could, through interference, be the hiphil. Since, however, the hiphil is so rare and restricted to one book in the OT, it is more likely that the verb in 4Q183 be interpreted as a piel.

B.1 Although at Ps 33.17 the passive of σῴζω in the LXX implies the reading בֶּלֶת (cf. Tg), the verb may not require emendation. There may be an implied indefinite object, and the Peshitta does include one in its translation (see Versions, Peshitta).
B.2 Kaiser (1974:352) thinks that it is “risky” to translate the piel of מָלֵט at Is 34.15 as ‘laid’ and therefore proposes that the word should be deleted from the context there. Since the hiph piel מָלֵט at Is 66.7 and 1QH XI 9, and the piel פָּלֶט at Jb 21.10, all have the same meaning, one could argue that this meaning could also appear at Is 34.15 for the piel of מָלֵט. Alternatively, one could follow Kaiser, and perhaps suggest that the piel of מָלֵט at Is 34.15 has been influenced by these other cases.
B.3 It is possible that the phrase at Jr 51.6 has been added from either Jr 48.6 or 51.45 (cf. BHS).
B.4 The reading at Sir 11.9 (numbering of Beentjes 1997; some editions give it as 11.10) of מָלֵט should probably be read as simply מְלֵט, and taken to be a niphal rather than a piel (Skehan & Di Lella 1987:237).
B.5 Although in the corresponding biblical passage (Ps 37.40) the verb פָּלֶט is found, there is no reason to emend the reading of מָלֵט at 4QpPs 1–10 iv 20 (=4Q171). Perhaps the original text did include מָלֵט rather than having two adjacent instances of פָּלֶט, or a scribe corrected the text in order to avoid this in the Qumran text. A similar discrepancy appears in 1QIs a, although there the biblical MS (Is 31.5) has מְלֵט hiph whilst the Qumran text has פָּלֶט hiph.

Qere/Ketiv: none.
1. Root and Comparative Material
   A.1 [See מָלַט nippal]

2. Formal Characteristics
   A.1 [See מָלַט nippal]

3. Syntagmatics
   A.1 The subject of מָלַט piel is primarily either a human or an animal. It may be 
   עֶבֶד, servant (2Sm 19.6), קִִפּו, owl (Is 34.15), חָּכָּם, a poor wise man (Qoh 9.15), and 
   מֶלֶ, king (2Sm 19.10), קַלִּּבְּּרַגְּלָ, swift of foot (Am 2.15), רֹכֵ, riders (Am 2.15), 
   גִּבּוֹר, the mighty (Am 2.14), and מַשָּא, burden (Is 46.2). It may also be followed by the verbal 
   suffixes 1ppl (2Sm 19.10), 2ps ms (Jr 39.18), 3pms (Ps 41.2), and 1ps (Jb 6.23).
   A.2 The direct object of מָלַט piel may be מִן, bone (2Kg 23.18), עָּנִי, the poor 
   (Jb 29.12), בַּעִ, master, practitioner (Qoh 8.8), עִיר, city (Qoh 9.15). It may also be followed by the verbal 
   suffixes 1ppl (2Sm 19.10), 2ps ms (Jr 39.18), 3pms (Ps 41.2), and 1ps (Jb 6.23).
   A.3 The apparently intransitive occurrences of מָלַט piel in Am 2.15a and 11Q5 
   are best understood as being due to the ellipse of נֶפֶ, which is the most frequent 
   object of מָלַט piel (cf. A.2).
   A.4 מָלַט piel may be conjoined with the verbs סָּבַל, ‘to carry’ (Is 46.4), נוּס, ‘to 
   flee’ (Jr 48.6), and הושׁיע, ‘to save’ (Jb 6.23).
   A.5 מָלַט piel may be followed by the preposition בְ, ‘in’ (2Sm 19.10; Ps 41.2; 89.49; 107.20; Jb 6.23; 1Q27 1.4).
   A.6 At Qoh 9.15 מָלַט piel is followed by the indirect object חָּכְּמָ, wisdom + preposition בְ.

4. Versions
   a. LXX: ἀνασῴζω (Jr 51[28].6);
   διασῴζω (Am 2.15; Jb 29.12; Qoh 8.8; 9.15);
   ἐξαιρέω (2Sm 19.6, 10; 1Kg 1.12; Ezk 33.5; Sir 51.12);
   ῥύομαι (2Kg 23.18; Ps 41[40].2; 89[88].49; 107[106].20; 116[114].4; Jb 22.30);
   [*εὑρίσκω (?2Kg 23.18 variant);]
   σῴζω (1Sm 19.11; Is 34.15; 46.2; 4; Jb 19.18 [2x]; 48.6; Am 2.14, 15; Ps 33[32].17; Jb 6.23; 20.20);
   Large omission: Jb 51.45.

   Minor Greek Versions [MRN]:

   b. Peshitta: plт (2Sm 19.6, 10; 1Kg 1.12; 2Kg 23.18; Jb 51.45; Ps 41.2; Jb 6.23; 20.20; 22.30; 29.12);
   prq (Sir 51.12);
   ῥθ (1Sm 19.11; ?Is 34.15; 46.4; Jb 39.18 [1x for 2x]; 48.6; 51.6; Ezk 33.5; Am 2.14, 15; Ps 33.17 [+ lrkbl]; 89.49; 107.20; 116.4);
   Šwzb (Is 46.2; Am 2.15; Qoh 8.8; 9.15);

   c. Targum: סלח (Is 46.4);
A.1 The choice of the verb פרך in the Targum to 2Sm 19.10 (cf. the Peshitta to Sir 51.12) is dictated by the use of Shafel שׁיזב earlier in the verse to translate hiph נצל.
Presumably the translator wished to vary his verb, as in the Hebrew.
A.2 The Targum’s interpretative translation סלח ‘to forgive’ sins at Is 46.4 is paralleled by the context of Qoh 8.8 where in the MT deliverance (מלט piel) from wickedness is not offered (see Exegesis A.7).

B.1 Hasel (1989:595) holds that the frequent use of σῴζω and its derivatives in the LXX represents a shift from the Hebrew word-field of “Entkommen” and “Entrinnen”, to one of “Retten”, “so daß die Entronnenen des MT in der LXX zu Geretteten werden.” With similar wording (but no reference to Hasel) Hubbard (1997b:624-25) maintains that the translation by the LXX results in “the displacement of the word field of vbs. to escape and to run away by that of vbs. to save. Those who in MT escaped, in LXX become those who are saved”. The range of meanings of the Greek σ)object is broader than these scholars allow (see LSJ:1748).
B.2 The LXX variant εὑρίσκω at 2Kg 23.18, listed by HR, is most likely an inner Greek corruption of ῥύομαι found in other Greek traditions.

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)
A.1 [See נצל]
A.2 The piel of מָלַט appears in parallelism with the hiph נצל (2Sm 19.10), hiph נָחַל ‘to let alone’ (2Kg 23.18), רָפָא ‘to heal’ (Ps 107.20), פָּדָה ‘to ransom’ (Jb 6.23).
A.3 The piel of מָלַט is in antithetic parallelism to אבד in 11Q5 22.9.

6. Exegesis
A.1 The piel of מָלַט appears to be primarily factitive ‘to make safe, to bring into safety, to save’ (cf. LXX σῴζω). The piel is the only verbal form of מָלַט to take שׁנַה ‘soul, life’ as a direct object (11x OT). In these instances it denotes saving someone’s life (e.g. 1Sm 19.11; Jb 39.18). In a few cases this is reflexive (Jr 48.6; 51.6, 45; Am 2.14, 15), sometimes with reference to fleeing from battle.
A.2 מָלַט in contrast to פָּלַט rarely (five times) occurs in the Psalms (Sawyer 1972:98). It may be significant that it is the piel form, the one sharing a similar level of frequency with מָלַט, that appears in four of those occurrences in the Psalms. מָלַט is also a verb rarely used of God in contrast to פָּלַט (see A.6 below).
A.3 Jenni (1968:80-87) argues that the piel participle of verbs with an intransitive Grundstamm generally represents actions that are “habituell” rather than “okkasionell”. The two instances of the piel participle of מָלַט (1Sm 19.11; 2Sm 19.6), however, are not “habituell” (1968:83–84). In general he interprets the piel of מָלַט as “in Sicherheit bringen = retten” (1968:106).

A.4 The meaning ‘to save or deliver’ for מָלַט piel (e.g. 2Sm 19.9; Jb 6.23) is apparent from its parallelism with פָּדָה (Jb 6.23). This may be an instance of the ‘resultative’ use of the piel.

A.5 The factitive sense may account for two peculiar instances of the piel. At 2Kg 23.18 it denotes the sparing (i.e. leaving sacrosanct) of the bones of the prophet, perhaps deriving from the meaning ‘to cause to escape’ (cf. its parallelism with הָפַךְ). The piel at Is 34.15 denotes a bird laying its eggs (cf. hiph מָלַט at Is 66.7 and 1QH XI 9, and the piel מָלַט at Jb 21.10). Although this may indicate deliverance from the place of origin (the womb) it may also indicate the place to which deliverance is made. This uncertainty is reflected in Hubbard’s paraphrase “to cause [them] to escape the womb safely, deliver them into safety” (1997a:953). Nonetheless, Hubbard in discussing the hiph sees its meaning as denoting escape from the place of origin (i.e. the mother’s womb; 1997a:953).

A.6 The piel of מָלַט rarely has God as its subject. It appears with the divine name or אֱלֹהִים four times (see Syntagmatics A.1) and has God as the implied subject (Jr 39.18; Ps 116.4). In addition, the speaker in Is 46.4 is God, who will save the exiles because of his superior power to foreign gods, whilst at Ps 33.17 and Jb 22.30 it is uncertain whether God is intended as the subject. Even with these instances מָלַט piel is only used of God in nine out of 35 occurrences. When used of God מָלַט piel seems to denote saving from physical circumstances, as Ps 41.1 speaks of God’s deliverance from trouble, and 107.20 recalls his saving of the sick by healing.

A.7 In Qoh the piel seems to have the connotation of ‘to deliver’ (Qoh 8.8; 9.15), in the first example denoting release from sins and in the other the saving of a city.

B.1 [nil]

7. Conclusion
Although the piel of מָלַט is sometimes used of God, it is more often used of humans and animals. The verb is most commonly used of saving someone’s life, especially in battle. It may also denote saving in the form of protection for objects (e.g. 2Kg 23.18). When used of God מָלַט piel continues to denote saving from physical troubles. One usage, which has an equivalent in the hiphil, is מָלַט piel denoting the laying of eggs (Is 34.15). The piel should be interpreted as factitive ‘to make safe’.

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