Introduction

Grammatical Type: n f.
Occurrences (Total: 33): 26x OT, 0x Sir, 7x Qum, 0x inscr.
Qum: 1QM 1.16; 13.13, 14; 16.11; 4Q160 3-4 ii.2; 4Q372 1.18; 4Q381 24a+b 8

Text Doubtful:
A.1 In Nah 3.9 כְּבֵעֶזְרָתָ should be emended as in BHS and most modern commentaries to הּבְעֶזְרָתָ with LXX and Peshitta.

Qere/Ketiv: Ezk 12.14 Kt עַל עֶזְרָה Qr עֶזְרָתי or emend to עֹזְרָיו ‘his helpers’ (cf. BHS), following LXX, Syr. and Tg.

1. Root and Comparative Material
A.1 [See יָזָר]

2. Formal Characteristics
A.1 qitl / qitlat form, in which the seghol appears after a guttural (cf. JM:§97Aa).
A.2 The form עֶזְרָתָה in Ps 44.27, 63.8, and 94.17 appears only these three times in the OT (cf. masorah parva) and in 4Q160 3-4 ii.2, and appears to be the old accusative ending, particularly frequent with feminine nouns. The absence of the definite article may indicate the antiquity of the phenomenon (Hurvitz 1985:116–19), although this is not conclusive (JM:§93j n.1). This form with feminine nouns only appears in poetry (Tsevat 1955:21–22) and it may have been chosen to avoid the contact of two successive stressed syllables (JM:§93j). Sawyer suggests that it has a quasi-verbal function (ET:447). עֶזְרָת, found in Ps 60.13=108.13, is another variant ending of this noun (GK §80g).

3. Syntagmatics
A.1 עֶזְרָתָ is the subject of the verb היה ‘to be’ 4Q160 3-4 ii.2.
A.2 עֶזְרָתָ is the direct object of וַיְבָא ‘to give’ (Ps 60.13; 108.13) and רָאָה ‘to see’ (Jb 31.21).
A.3 עֶזְרָתָ is found as the predicate of אֱלֹהִים ‘God’ (Ps 46.2; 4Q381 24a+b 8), and of נוּר ‘Put and the Libyans’ (Na 3.9) and of אֱלֹהִים ‘God’ (Ps 27.9; 63.8).
A.4 עֶזְרָתָ is found as the nomen regens of יהוה ‘Lord’ (Jdg 5.23 [2x]), فلاָיָה ‘doers of evil’ (Is 31.2), וְפַתְיָא ‘your face’ or פֶּתַיָא ‘help of your works’ [text unclear] (1QM 13.14), and בני חוֹשָׁך ‘sons of darkness’ (IQ 16.11).
A.5 עֶזְרָתָ is followed by the preposition ב ‘in’ or ‘with’ (Jb 6.13), indicating the source of help, and also in Judg 5.23; Ps 46.2 and Jb 31.21, referring to the situation in which help is required.
A.6 עֶזְרָתָ is followed by מִן ‘from’ + רוּ ‘trouble’ (Ps 60.13=108.13).
A.7 עֶזְרָה is preceded by the preposition אֵל ‘unto’ (La 4.17).
A.8 עֶזְרָה is preceded by the prepositionbeth essentiae + ‘to be’ (Nah 3.9), + עָזֶר ‘to rise up as’ (Ps 35.2) and + עֶזְר ‘shine forth as’ (1QM 1.16). For a different account of the use of עֶזְר in such expressions see Brockelmann 1956, §106g.
A.9 עֶזְרָה is preceded by the preposition because of (1QM 13.13, with לְ; and עֶזְר ‘like’ (1QM 13.14).
A.10 עֶזְרָה sometimes follows a verb and the prepositionלְ, to express the purpose of seeking help, e.g. + לָשׂן ‘to flee to...for’ (Is 10.3; 20.6), לְ + עָזֶר ‘to go down ... for’ (Is 31.1).
A.11 עֶזְרָה is governed by the prepositions because of (1QM 13.13, with גִּיל) and like (1QM 13.14).
A.12 עֶזְרָה is used with a quasi-verbal sense without the prepositionלְ following a verb of motion, e.g. + עָזֶר ‘to rise up ... against’ (Is 31.2).
A.13 עֶזְרָה is found with the particle לְ ‘all / any’ (4Q372 1.18).

B.1 Dahood proposes that the presence of the preposition מִן in Ps 60.13=108.13 indicates that עֶזְרָה in these instances (and עֵזֶר at Dt 33.7) denotes ‘liberation’ (1970:95; 1973:82). He compares it to the use of the Ugaritic wy’drk byd ‘to liberate you from the hand of’ at UT 3 Aqht: rev.12–14 = KTU 1.18.1.12-14 (where it occurs in parallel with plṭ). In a similar manner to the verb ישׁע having two meanings, ‘to help’ and ‘to rescue’, Ug ‘dr and Heb יַד normally signify ‘to help’ or ‘help’, but with certain prepositions denote ‘to rescue, liberate from’ (Dahood 1970:95). Dahood gives further examples of this phenomenon, although it might be noted that the Ugaritic along with Sir 51.2–3 and 1QH 2.34–35 that he cites in support, all include the noun יַד with the preposition. The immediate context of Ps 60=108 is a request for God’s presence and help in battle rather than removal from it. It thus suggests that עֶזְרָה has the sense of divine presence providing protection from enemies (cf. the use of עֵזֶר + מִן in Ez 8.22).

4. Versions
a. LXX:

- ἀντίλημψις (Ps 22[21].20);
- βοήθεια (Jdg 5.23; Is 20.6; 31.1; Jr 37[44].7; Ps 35[34].2; 38[37].23; 60[59].13; 70[69].2; 71[70].12; 108[107].13; Jb 31.21; La 4.17; 2Ch 28.21);
- βοηθέω (Is 10.3; Ps 40[39].14; 44[43].27; 94[93].17);
- βοηθός (Jdg 5.23; Nah 3.9; Ps 27[26].9; 40[39].18; 46[45].2; 63[62].8);
- [ἐλπίς] (Is 31.2);
- [[πέποιθα]] (Jb 6.13).

Minor Greek Versions [MRN]:

- ἀντιλαμβάνομαι (Ps 44.27 Al);
- βοήθεια (Jdg 5.23 B-text [2x]; Ps 27.9 Aq; 60.13 Symm);
- βοηθέω (Ps 40.14 Aq?; 70.2 Al);
b. Peshitta:

m’drn’ (Jr 37.7; Ps 40.18; 46.2; 63.8); ‘helper’

‘wdrn’ (Jdg 5.23 [haplography]; Is 31.2; Nah 3.9; Ps 22.20; 35.2; 38.23; 40.14; 60.13; 70.2; 71.12; Jb 6.13; La 4.17);

‘dwr’ (Ps 27.9??; 94.17);

Pael ‘dr (Ps 44.27; Jb 31.21);

Ithpael ‘dr (Is 10.3; 20.6; 31.1);

[[Aphel hrr (2Ch 28.21)]];

[[ḥyl’ (Ps 108.13)]]

c. Targum:

TgJ

כוע ה (Jdg 5.23 [2x]);

Pael כוע (Is 10.3; 20.6; 31.1, 2; Jr 37.7);

כוענה (Nah 3.9);

TgPsa

Pael כוע (Ps 63.8; 70.2);

כוענה (Ps 35.2; 60.13; 71.12; 94.17; 108.13);

כוענה (Ps 22.20; 27.9; 38.23; 40.14, 18; 44.27);

Pael כוע [variant noun כוע] (Ps 46.2)

TgJob

כועה (Jb 6.13; 31.21);

TgLam

Pael כוע [variant noun כועה] (La 4.17)

TgChr

כוע (2Ch 28.21);

d. Vulgate:

adiutorium (Jdg 5.23);

adiuvo (Ps 40[39].14 [gerund]; 70[69].2; 71[70].12 [gerund]);

auxiliator (Ps 94[93].17);

auxilior (Ps 44[43].27);

auxilium (Jdg 5.23; Is 10.3; 20.6; 31.1, 2; Jr 37.7[6]; Nah 3.9; Ps 22[21].20; 27[26].9; 35[34].2; 38[37].23; 40[39].18; 46[45].2; 60[59].13; 63[62].8; 108[107].13; Jb 6.13; La 4.17);

prosum (2Ch 28.21);

[[superior (Jb 31.21)]]

A.1 The primary translation is that of ‘help’ in the LXX (βοήθεια and cognates; ἀντίλημψις), Pesh (m’drn’), Tg (כוע and cognates), and Vg (auxilium and cognates).

A.2 ἀντίλημψις (see Margolis 1972 for Hebrew equivalents), a later form of ἀντίλημψις, is derived from ἀντιλαμβάνομαι ‘to help, take part with, assist’ (LSJ:157) or ‘to come to the assistance of’ (Lv 25.35; Muraoka 2002:43). The noun in koine
often denotes ‘defence, succour’ (LSJ:158; cf. LEH:55), and is attested with such a meaning in papyri, the LXX and the NT.

A.3 Vg’s unique choice of prosum ‘be useful, of benefit’ for הָעָצָה in 2Ch 28.21 may result from the subject of the clause being (or being seen as) impersonal. In Jb 31.21 (cum viderem me (in porta) superiorem) is a paraphrase which specifies the result of the speaker having help (העוצה) as superiority in a legal dispute, rather than representing precisely the meaning of the original.

A.4 The Peshitta at Ps 108.13 has ἐλπίς ‘power’ for עֶזְרָה, whereas in the identical Ps 60.13 it has ‘wdrn’ ‘help’. The translator knew what עֶזְרָה meant, but evidently decided here to specify the kind of help that was needed in a military crisis (compare the occasional use of ἵσχυς for ρῆσαν and of ἵσχὺς and compounds for ὅρον). In 2Ch 28.21, as in the previous verse, the translator has rewritten his original in the light of the whole of vv. 16-20. For τοῦ ὅπου ἠμαρτάνειν ἀλλὰ he has put ‘so that he would not harm him (in a time of trouble)’. The final words are taken from the beginning of v. 16 and are made to refer back to the Edomite and Philistine attacks in vv. 17-19. Then instead of reporting the failure of Ahaz’s approach to Tiglath-pileser with MT (with its echo of v. 16) the translator explains its intention in a δ-clause, in effect seeing the ‘help’ sought (and not provided) as the avoidance of harm (ὁ ρῆσαν ὕνρῳ, from ὅρον Aphel). In both verses, therefore, the Peshitta provides no direct evidence for the meaning of עֶזְרָה.

A.5 In all the Versions verbs are used to render עֶזְרָה on several occasions.

B.1 Job 6.13 appears in the LXX to be a paraphrase of the sense of the Hebrew. πέποιθα ‘to trust in’ (LEH:477) provides the rendering ‘I have not trusted in him’ in place of the Hebrew ‘my help is not in me’. It should be noted, however, that the noun in parallelism ὅσημα (‘effective aid’) is translated by βοηθεία, the most frequent equivalent for עֶזְרָה. The LXX could be justification for emending ὅσημα to βοηθεία, but it is not necessary.

B.2 The LXX rendering ἐλπίς (Is 31.2) appears in a translation of the Hebrew phrase ‘the helpers of those who perform iniquity’. The LXX appears to have understood this passage as simply ‘their vain hope’, omitting the verb ὅσημα. The difference between the Hebrew and Greek is great enough for no reliable semantic information to be drawn from the version to this verse.

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 רענן is found in parallelism with הָעָצָה ‘strength’ (Na 3.9); וַהֲנָן hiphil ‘to deliver’ (Ps 40.14; 70.2); וַעֲשָׁי ‘help’ (Ps 60.13=108.13); וַעֲשָׁי ‘wisdom’ (Jb 6.13); and וַעֲשִׂי hiph ‘save’ (La 4.17). It is joined by waw to Passive piel ptcp ‘deliverer’ (Ps 40.18).

A.2 It occurs in close collocation with the verbs וַיִּשָּׂא ‘rise up’ and וַיִּפְסַל ‘set free’ (Ps 44.27); וַיִּפְסַל ‘flee’ (Is 10.3; 20.6); וַיִּפְסַל hiphil ‘to deliver’ (Is 20.6); and with the nouns הָעָצָה ‘strength’ (Na 3.9); וַעֲשָׁי ‘strength’ (Job 6.12-13); וַעֲשָׁי ‘my help’ (Ps 22.20); וַעֲשָׁי ‘God of my salvation’ (Ps 27.9); וַעֲשָׁי ‘salvation’ (Ps 38.23); וַעֲשָׁי ‘refuge’; וַעֲשָׁי niphal ‘escape’ Is 20.6) and וַעֲשָׁי ‘strength’ (Ps 46.2).

A.3 Antonyms, such as וַעֲשָׁי, and וַעֲשָׁי, in the Heb. and Aramaic attests, occur in the often repetitive Psalms contexts where וַעֲשָׁי appears (e.g. Ps 22.20; 27.9; 71.12; 94.14-17).

A.4 Lipiński (1989:17) argues that וַעֲשָׁי synonymous with וַעֲשָׁי, and that this is indicated by their both being found with the syntagm וַעֲשָׁי (Dt 33.7 and Ps 60.13; 108.13). The variant reading וַעֲשָׁי for וַעֲשָׁי in 1QIs at 30.5 gives additional support to
6. Exegesis

A.1. יֶזְרָה is absent from the Pentateuch and is found primarily in poetry (Jdg 5 is a poetic composition). It is most frequent in the Psalms (14x). In this it can be contrasted to עֵזֶר, which is well attested in the Pentateuch and historical books, as well as being found in the Psalms and Latter Prophets.

A.2. יֶזְרָה, like עֵזֶר and the associated verb עָזַר, is used of divine and human assistance in both military and non-military contexts.

A.3. יֶזְרָה ‘human help in everyday life’

There appear to be only two examples, although one might have expected this to be the most common use of the word.

In Jb 31.21 Job speaks of his ‘help(er) in the gate’, which probably means someone who would support him in a legal dispute. Since the other party is a יָרָה, ‘orphan’, Job must imagine himself to be using such support to take advantage of the weak (contrast 29.12, where עֵזֶר is used and the context may also be judicial).

In Jb 6.13 אין עזרתי ori (the preceding הָאָשָׁה is difficult (see the commentaries) and perhaps corrupt: BHS suggests that it could mean ‘Truly’ as (?) in Num 17.28) Job is searching for help to survive within himself, i.e. in his own strength, but cannot find any.

A.4. יֶזְרָה ‘divine help in everyday life’

God’s help is frequently sought or welcomed by individuals in their struggles with their personal ‘enemies’ (e.g. Ps 22.20; 27.9; 35.2; 38.23; 63.8; 4Q381 24a+b 8). Sometimes the enemies are explicitly identified as accusers (Ps 71.12) or hostile rulers (Ps 94.17).

A.5. יֶזְרָה ‘divine help as national political and military support’

In the Psalms the nation seeks or rejoices in God’s help against enemy forces (44.27; 46.2; 60.13=108.13); similarly in the Qumran War Scroll the sectarian ‘sons of light’ rely on God’s help (1QM 1.16; 13.13, 14), while Belial girds himself to bring help to the ‘sons of darkness’ in the eschatological battle (1QM 16.11).

A.6. The help given is sometimes support of an undefined kind, whether military (Jdg 5.23; Is 31.1, 2; Jer 37.7; 1QM as above) or not (Ps 94.17; Jb 31.21), but frequently it takes the form of rescue from danger (Is 20.6; Ps 22.20; 35.2; 38.23
etc.; La 4.17) or the provision of a safe refuge (Is 10.3; 20.6; Ps 27.9; 46.2 etc.). Occasionally there is an indication that ‘strength’ is meant (Nah 3.9; Ps 46.2; Jb 6.13; 4Q381 24a+b 8). It is from the surrounding context that it is often possible to deduce that the assistance takes the form of rescue, refuge, protection or strengthening. But this does not change the meaning of the word, only its reference. In almost all cases the help is needed in a situation of conflict or danger, even though the meaning and potential use of the word is much broader.

A.7. עֶזְרָה denotes active support which requires the proximity of the helper: the frequency with which it follows a verb of motion plus the preposition הַמַּעֲרָת reflects this (Jdg 5.23; Jer 37.7; Ps 22.20; 38.23; 40.14; 70.2; 71.12; 94.17; 2 Chr 28.21; 1QM 16.11: cf. Ps 44.27 with paragogic הַמַּעֲרָת). In these cases the noun is virtually equivalent to the infinitive of the verb. This is a distinctive use of עֶזְרָה which is not shared by עֵזֶר.

A.8. Several times עֶזְרָה has a personal sense, ‘helper(s)’, like the participle of the verb: Is 31.2; Nah 3.9; Ps 27.9; 40.18; 46.2; 63.8; 94.17; Jb 31.21; La 4.17; 1QM 1.16(?); 4Q160 3-4 ii 2; 4Q381 24a+b 8).

A.9. Sometimes the help denoted by עֶזְרָה does not materialise, from Assyria (Is 20.6), Egypt (Is 31.1, contrasted with going to God) or an unnamed nation (La 4.17).

A.10. Perhaps because of its concentration in the Psalms, it is more frequently associated with other ‘salvation’ lexemes (ишע, נצל hiph, פָּלַש pi: see Lexical/Semantic Fields, A.1, A.2) than is עֵזֶר.

7. Conclusion

A.1. עֶזְרָה, like the other words in the ‘help’ group, is essentially a general word for ‘support, assistance’, as can be seen from some examples of its use, both military (Jdg 5.23; Is 31.1, 2; Jer 37.7; 2Chr 28.21; 1QM 1.16; 13.13, 14; 16.11) and non-military (Ps 94.17; Jb 31.21; 4Q160 3-4 ii 2; 4Q372 1 18).

A.2. As such it is closest in meaning to expressions like כָּלֵד and חֲסַד, חַסַד which like it have a strongly active component but are not tied to a specific kind of benefit to others. Antonyms are words or phrases which are equivalent to ‘not to help’, such as החסידיר פָּלַש and נָטָש, נָטָש, which occur in the often repetitive Psalms contexts (see Lexical/Semantic Fields, A.3).

A.3. This will also be its meaning in most, perhaps all, contexts which are concerned with rescue, refuge or strength (see Exegesis, A.6). Its association with other words from the ‘deliverance’ field (see Lexical/Semantic Fields) does not (usually) lead to its becoming a synonym of them, rather it presents a different, broader perspective on the intervention that is looked for or experienced, a perspective which may be more relational in character.

A.4. The possible exceptions are in Ps 60.13 and 108.13 (where two different introductions lead into what is essentially the same text): in each case the tight
syntagm: construct state הפה and the sense ‘release’ might seem to be appropriate, especially with in the parallel stich. But if so, this probably arises from the same kind of ‘pregnant construction’ (GK §119ee-ff) that is sometimes found with verbs (including see Syntagmatics, A.12, in that entry): ‘give me help from the foe’ is shorthand for ‘give me help and deliverance from the foe’, especially as ‘give me help’ is only a transformation of the verbal form ‘help me’.

Bibliography

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