(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.

Occurrences: Total 24x OT, 0x Sir, 10x Qum (1QH fr2 1.6, 3.28, 5.18, 6.25, 32, 9.29, 33, 1QSb 1.7, 4Q171[pPs] fr3-10 4.20, 4Q381 24.1.7, 1IQPs* 23.13 [= Ps 144.2]), 0x inscr. All but three of the biblical occurrences are in non-prophetic poetry, and all Qumran occurrences are in poetry. All occurrences are in poetry (cf. Hubbard 1997b:621).

Text Doubtful:

A.1 BHS 2Sm 22.44 records that a Hebrew manuscript, citations, LXX manuscripts, Pesh and Vg support תְּפַלְּטֵנִי (as Ps 18.44) rather than MT וַתְּפַלְּטֵנִי. At Ps 18.44 it notes the reading of 2Sm 22.44. BHS Ps 18.3 suggests the deletion of וַתְּפַלְּטֵנִי metri causa, but also registers that Tg and 2Sm 22.3 add immediately after וַתְּפַלְּטֵנִי. BHS Ps 18.49 registers that 2Sm 22.49 has וּמְפַלְּטִי in place of וַתְּפַלְּטֵנִי. BHS Ps 32.7 suggests that for וַתְּפַלְּטֵנִי may be read (Jenni [1968:106] likewise considers this text uncertain). BHS Ps 37.40 records that LXX and Pesh provide a copula before יְּפַלְּטֵם (second occurrence). However, this is simply because the translators followed the syntactic preferences of the receptor languages. BHS Ps 71.2 suggests that Pesh does not have an equivalent of וַתְּפַלְּטֵנִי. However, it is uncertain whether Syr pṣny is the equivalent of וַתְּפַלְּטֵנִי, of פַלֵּט, or of both.

A.2 The piel form אֲפַלְּטָה in Jb 23.7 is repointed as a Qal אֶפְּלְּטָה by Driver (1936:160), Dahood (1970b:397), Ruprecht (1979:421) and BHK. In most cases (though see Dahood) the repointing is due to the lack of a direct object for the piel. Hasel (1989:593 = 2001:555) rejects this proposal. Fohrer (1963:363) retains the piel, but alters the pointing of מִשֹּׁפְּטִי to מִשְּפָטִי, thus providing a direct object. Hölscher (1952:58) suggests reading אֲפַלְּטָה with נַפְּשִׁי understood, or simply אֶפְּלְּטָה.

A.3 Hubbard (1997b:622) describes פַלֵס (Ps 56.8) as “problematic” on the ground that a psalmist would not ask for the wicked to be allowed to escape. He registers the emendation to פַלֶס or פַלָס (“repay” NRSV, also recorded in Zorell [650b] and going back at least to Ewald [1880:279]), though he prefers MT, understanding it to be “a bitter, even ironic, question: ‘For their evil is their [sic] deliverance for them?’” (following Tate [1990:65]). Jenni (1968:106) and HAL (879b) consider this text uncertain.

A.4 Consonantly the noun וַתְּפַלְּט and the piel participle וּתְּפַלְּטֵנִי are identical. As a result it has been proposed that some cases pointed piel in MT be repointed as מִפְּלָט. This has been proposed for Ps 18.3 (Hupfeld [1867:462], Briggs & Briggs [1906:151], Dahood [1973:33]), Ps 144.2 (Hupfeld [1867:462], Dahood [1970a:329, for some reason referring to the repointed form as “pausal”, 1973:33]), and 2Sm 22.2[3] (Fürst 1857:771b). HAL (584b) mentions all three of these conjectures. Watson (1984:265) translates (Ps 18.3) “my haven”, which suggests repointing as מִפְּלָט. Hill (1997:1057) understands Ps 18.3 to be an occurrence of מִפְּלָט, but Zorell (462), Alonso Schökel (424), and Hubbard (1997b:624) give Ps 55.9 as the only occurrence of the noun מִפְּלָט. For further instances see below B.1.
The issue is difficult to resolve, though for contextual reasons it seems highly probable that the piel participle is found in Ps 18.49, 40.18, and 70.6. The other proposals for repointing must stand or fall together since the verbal similarities between 2Sm 22.2, Ps 18.3 (and following it 4Q381 24.1.7), and Ps 144.2 (and thus 11QPs 23.13) are too great for different pointings of the word to be acceptable in these cases. All these texts are referring to God and contain a list of descriptive nominals with 1sg suffix. This is in contrast with Ps 55.9 (the only example of מְּפַלֵט in MT), which has no such list. Thus the Masoretic pointing reflects some formal difference of context, and is probably to be retained. All the above examples will be treated as piels in the entry, with the caveat that the other pointing is perfectly plausible.

A.5 For the possibility that Ps 55.9 contains מְּפַלֵט see section Text Doubtful in entry on מְּפַלֵט.

A.6 In 1QH 6.32 piel may be restored (the ms. is damaged): see also A.7. Bardtke (1956:600) has והנה יהוה פלט, with פלט as piel (infinitive), indicated by doubling of middle radical. “(E)scape” (Vermes 1997:274) could be based on פלט or מְּפַלֵט.

A.7 The phrase מְּפַלֵט (Ps 32.7 MT) has been considered difficult. For proposed emendations see Hasel (1989:599-600 = 2001:561). However, 1QH fr2 1.6, 3.28, 6.25 (probably, cf. Bardtke [1956:600]) and Ps 56.8 (possibly) provide parallels for such a nominal use of the piel infinitive. Zorell (650b) even lists the infinitive מְּפַלֵט as a separate lexeme, stating that it is used as a substantive “salus” in Ps 32.7, 56.8 (cf. Hubbard 1997b:621). Craigie (1983:264) also retains MT.

A.8 1QSb 1.7 is partially restored. According to DJD (I:120) and Charlesworth (1994:122) it reads לְטֶכֶת יִפְלַּע, which is translated by Charlesworth (1994:123) as “de]liver”, suggesting that he takes it as a piel.

A.9 4QpPs 3-10.4.20 quoting Ps 37.40 substitutes פלט for MT פלט the first time, but not the second (DJD V:45, Hubbard 1997b:625).

B.1 Hupfeld (1867:462) proposed reading the noun מְּפַלֵט in Ps 40.18 and 70.6 which have פלט in MT. This emendation provides less good sense than MT.

B.2 Hubbard (1997b:623) wrongly states that BHS suggests the emendation ofpiel in Mc 6.14 to hiph. In fact BHS suggests the emendation of מִפְּלָט hiph to piel.

B.3 For a discussion of the incorrect proposal to read piel in 1QH 3.10 see entry on פלט niph Exegesis A.1.

Qere/Ketiv: none.

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 See פלט Qal.

B.1 See פלט Qal.

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 Strong triliteral root.

B.1 [nil]

3. Syntagmatics
A.1 Subj פָרָה (Jb 21.10), 1sg pron = Job (Jb 23.7), 2sg pron = God (2Sm 22.44, Ps 17.13, 18.44, 43.1), 3sg pron = God (Ps 37.40, 1QSb 1.7), 2pl pron = gods (Ps 82.4), part = God (Ps 18.49).

A.2 Obj נש (Ps 17.13, 1QH 5.18, 9.33), direct object suffix (2Sm 22.44, Ps 18.44, 22.5, 9, 31.2, 37.40 [2x], 43.1, 71.2, 4, 91.14); 1sg suffix on participle (2Sm 22.2, Ps 18.3, 49, 40.18, 70.6). The object may be mediated by Lamedh in Ps 56.8 (assuming that this is not nominal, or to be emended), and perhaps also in 2Sm 22.2 and Ps 144.2.

A.3 Action complemented by מן followed by ריבי עמי ‘strife with my/a people’ (2Sm 22.44), רשע ‘the wicked’ (Ps 17.13), רשעים ‘the wicked’ (18.44), ריבי עם ‘strife with a people’ (37.40 [cf. 4Qpsa fr3-10 4.20]), ‘those who are deceitful and unjust’ (43.1), יד רשע ‘the hand of the wicked’ (82.4 in par.), ‘my judge’ (Jb 23.7), כל ‘all’ (1QSb 1.7).

A.4 Inf is nomen rectum of רני (Ps 32.7).

B.1 [nil]

4. Versions

a. LXX:
ρύομαι (2Sm 22.44, Ps 17[16].13, 18[17].44, 22[21].5, 9, 37[36].40a, Ps 43[42].1, 71[70].4, 91[90].14); ρύστης (Ps 18[17].3, 49, 70[69].6, 144[143].2); σῴζω (Ps 56[55].8); διασφόμενος (Mc 6.14b, Jb 21.10); εξαιρούμενος (2Sm 22.2); ρύομαι + εξαιρέω (Ps 31[30].2); εξαιρέω (Ps 37[36].40b, 71[70].2, 82[81].4); λυτρόω (Ps 32[31].7); ύπερασπιστής (Ps 40[39].18); εξάγω (Jb 23.7).

b. The Three:
Thd ρύομαι (Ps 18.44); Sym ρύομαι (Ps 18.44, 56.8); Aq διασφό (Ps 31.2, 32.7, 43.1, 56.8); Sym διασφό (Ps 31.2); Thd σφό (Ps 56.8); Quinta διασφομένος (Ps 56.8).

c. Pesh:
mpṣyn ’ (2Sm 22.2, Ps 18.3, 40.18, 56.8, 70.6, 144.2 [probably]); plt peal (Jb 21.10); plt pael (2Sm 22.44, Mc 6.14, Ps 31.2); plt ethpaal (Jb 23.7);
psy pael (Ps 17.13, 18.44, 49, 22.5, 9, 37.40 [2x], 43.1, 71.2 [= תַצִילֵנִי וּתְּפַלְּטֵנִי], 4, 82.4, 91.14);

pwrqn’ (Ps 32.7).

d. Tg:

יָגַד (2Sm 22.2, 44, Mc 6.14, Ps 18.3, 44, 22.5, 9, 31.2, 37.40 [2x], 40.18, 43.1, 71.2, 4, 82.4, 91.14, 144.2, Jb 21.10);

אַלְשָׁחֵיב (Jb 23.7);

צָא (Ps 17.13);

שָׁבָתא (Ps 32.7, 70.6);

רֹוָּז (Ps 56.8).

e. Vg:

salvator (2Sm 22.2, Ps iuxta Hebraeos 18[17].3, 70[69].6, 144[143].2);

salvo (2Sm 22.44, Mc 6.14, Ps iuxta Hebraeos 17[16].13, 18[17].44, 22[21].5, 9, 31[30].2, 32[31].7, 37.40 [1x], 43[42].1, 71[70].4, 82[81].4);

salutare (Ps iuxta Hebraeos 40[39].18);

salvus (Ps iuxta Hebraeos 56[55].8);

pario (Jb 21.10);

pervenio (Jb 23.7);

libero (Ps iuxta Hebraeos 71[70].2, 91[90].14);

qui servas me (Ps iuxta Hebraeos 18.49[17.48 ad finem]);

zero (Ps iuxta Hebraeos 37[36].40 [1x]).

A.1 Hasel (1989:595 = 2001:557) 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”, “so daß die Entronnenen des MT in der LXX zu Geretteten werden.” With similar phraseology (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.” See, however, Conclusion.

A.2 The use of both ῥύομαι and ἔξαιρεῖο in LXX Ps 31(30).2 is due to assimilation to Ps 71.2 within the Greek or Hebrew textual traditions.

B.1 [nil]

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 It is widely recognised that the roots פַּלְט and מָלַט are intimately connected (Jenni 1968:106-07, 122, Klein 1987:509, Hubbard 1997b:621, see also Root and Comparative Material A.10 of פַּלְט Qal). Their relationship has been explained as one of “complementarity” (Sawyer 1972:98), with the root פַּלְט providing the nominal forms for the root מָלַט (Hubbard 1997b:621). Ruprecht (1979:423) argues that the two verbs are not distinguished in meaning. Differences of distribution have been noticed between the roots (see references below), but these are generally by-products of the fundamental difference between the roots; the meanings of the roots, though deeply related, are generally to be distinguished (Williams 2002). This is illustrated if the process of escape from danger
and arrival at safety is divided into the following five sections, or points: a. initiation of departure from danger, b. motion away from danger, c. motion towards safety, d. point of arrival at safety, e. state of safety. יִלָּט root lexemes focus on a. and b., though they may include c. and d., whereas פְּלַט root lexemes must include c., d. or e., though they may also include other points. Alternatively, it may be that יִלָּט words view the whole event from the horizon of departure, and פְּלַט words from the horizon of arrival.

That יִלָּט nip is a verb focusing on departure from danger is shown as וַיִלָּט precedes וַיִבְרָח in 1Sm 22.20, i.e. the occurrence it denotes precedes the motion towards safety. On the other hand, פְּלַט (Jb 23.7), or עד עולם (1QH 9.29) meaning “for ever” is used as a complement of the event described by the root פְּלַט because the lasting nature of the condition reached is stressed. This distinction between the roots produces a number of side-effects. Since יִלָּט focuses on the horizon of departure there is a greater tendency for the preposition מִן to occur with יִלָּט than there is with פְּלַט. Thus Sawyer (1972:108) calculated that יִלָּט has 69% separation (use with מִן), while פְּלַט only has 12%. There is also a greater number of occurrences of נֶפֶשׁ with יִלָּט, because it focuses on departure from Sheol/danger. On the other hand, there is a greater tendency to use פְּלַט piel with God as subject than to use יִלָּט piel with God as subject, because frequently the resulting safety of God’s salvation is stressed. However, of the root יִלָּט Hubbard says, “The root refers primarily to human actions rather than to divine intervention” (1997a:950). Exceptions to this tendency can be explained as when Ps 41.2 uses יִלָּט piel with God as subject, because its focus is on the evil day from which deliverance has been given, not on what the person has been delivered to.

For a similar reason nominal forms occur exclusively with the root פְּלַט since nominal forms focus on people in a state, and thus better describe people in the later stages of the process of rescue to safety. Furthermore, the root פְּלַט forms many proper names in Hebrew and in cognate languages because it stresses that rescue to safety is given by God or the gods. On the other hand, the only BH proper name from the root יִלָּט is מְלַטְּיָה (Neh 3.7).

Although the process of giving birth normally focuses on the point of departure and therefore יִלָּט is used, e.g. Is 34.15, 66.7, פְּלַט is used in Jb 21.10 to describe how the cattle of the godless give birth to offspring that then live safely. 1QH 3.9-10 shows a progression from יִלָּט to פְּלַט. It uses יִלָּט (3.9) when the woman is in pain as she is delivering, or about to deliver and then פְּלַט once the child, identified as a גֵּר (3.10), has emerged to safety. The use of פְּלַט piel for giving birth draws quite close to the meaning in Modern Hebrew פָלַט ‘emit’.

Although it might be thought that Ps 22.5-6 shows פְּלַט and יִלָּט to be synonymous, this is not the case. In fact, Ps 22.6b provides a litotic parallel (which merely denies a negative) for the equally understated יִנָּלֵט “and they escaped” (6b), which has no focus on arrival at safety.

The distinction between the roots may also be used to explain variant readings. Thus 4QpPs⁸ fr3-10 4.20 quoting Ps 37.40 substitutes מַלְצָה מַלְצָה for MT פְּלַט מַלְצָה the first time, but not the second. This produces a progression, which could be overtranslated as, “he rescues them, even rescues them to safety”. 1Qlsa⁸ (Is 31.5) has פְּלַט hiph, of which Hasel comments “was den Sinn nicht ändert” (1989:596 = 2001:558). However, it is possible that the reading of 1Qlsa⁸ is a scribal correction, where a scribe preferred the more comprehensive פְּלַט מַלְצָה to the understated verb מַלְצָה.
A.2 For a comparison of פלט and מלת piel with ישע and נצל hiph see Jenni (1968:122-23, 258).
A.3 2Sm 22.49 has וָלֹצִּי while Ps 18.49 has מְפַלְּטִי. This suggests semantic overlap between the terms.

B.1 [nil]

6. Exegesis
A.1 In Jb 23.7 מְפַלְּטִי piel, as pointed in MT, seems to be used intransitively to mean “be delivered from” (Hubbard 1997b:622). KB (762a) avoids this problem by emending מִשֹּׁפֶט to מִשְּפָט, which is then understood as the object of the verb, i.e. “sein Recht durchsetzen”.
A.2 In Jb 21.10 has the meaning “give birth to” (of a heifer). Alonso Schökel (584b) describes this meaning as “metafórico”. Jenni (1968:107) says that this habitual action focuses “auf das bloße Resultat”, i.e. the factitive making safe of an offspring. This is to be contrasted according to him with the use of מְפַלְּטִי hiph for giving birth in Is 66.7, which also focuses on the continued existence of the child.
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”. Thus מְפַלְּטִי (6x) means “mein Retter”, i.e. someone who habitually saves me, rather than someone who has merely saved me on one or more occasions (Jenni 1968:84). Jenni (1968:106) notes that in all the passages in Psalms where he considers the text certain Yahweh is subject, and Jenni argues that this underscores “seine freie Gnade beim Retten”.
A.4 Zorell (650b) glosses the piel as “salvum evadere fecit, incolinem servavit”, or in the case of Jb 21.10 as “salvum, incolumen peperit”.

B.1 [nil]

7. Conclusion
A.1 The general meaning of פלט piel meaning “rescue” or “save” seems secure from etymology, syntagmatics, the versions and from exegesis. Contrast with מְפַלְּטִי suggests that it concentrates on the more positive aspects of the process of rescue. Although the English terms “rescue” and “save”, and their derivatives, overlap in meaning, at least in the nominal forms “rescuer” and “saviour” the latter is more habitual, and the former occasional. Since it has been established by Jenni that the piel participle is habitual this falls more in the area of “saviour”. Given the potential of מְפַלְּטִי piel to denote habitual events with lasting consequences, the distinction between מְפַלְּטִי piel and Gk σῴζω should not be exaggerated, nor the semantic distinction between מְפַלְּטִי piel and modern theological terms for “salvation”.
A.2 Of course it becomes clear from an examination of the nouns which follow מְפַלְּטִי piel in a construction with מְפַלְּטִי Piel that the ‘salvation’ which the latter represents is generally of an external, this-worldly character (see Syntagmatics A.3; also מְפַלְּטִי Syntagmatics A.3 on Ps 55.9 and מְפַלְּטִי Syntagmatics A.3 on Jr 44.28 and Ezk 6.8): only Jb 23.7 (‘from my judge’, i.e. God, if that is the meaning) uses מְפַלְּטִי in what might be called a ‘redemptive’ context. In the other occurrences with מְפַלְּטִי it is where God (or gods) is the subject of מְפַלְּטִי or
is denoted by the nominalised participle (see Syntagmatics A.1) that a theological dimension is present in the context: saving a person from human enemies or other dangers is something that (only) God can or will do. More generally (the examples involve the noun פליטה): ‘Es fällt auf, dass die Wurzel durchgängig in primär religiös-kultisch gefärbten Kontexten begegnet. Das gilt auch, wenn die Rettung vorwiegend aus kriegerischen Katastrophen heraus gedacht wird…’ (Hausmann 1987:200).

B.1 [nil]

Bibliography

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