Introduction

Grammatical Type: n. m.

Occurrences: (Total: 13)
Hebrew Bible – 11 occurrences: 1 Sam 9:9 (2x), 9:11, 9:18, 9:19, Isa 30:10, 1 Chr 9:22, 26:28, 29:29, 2 Chr 16:7, 16:10.¹
Epigraphy – none.
Qumran – 2 occurrences 1QSb 5:4; 4Q446 f2:3.
Ben Sira – none.

Text doubtful

A.1 NONE

B.1 Traditionally, רֹאֶה in 1 Chr 2:52 has been interpreted as a name, but it could be the professional title 'seer'. If the tradition underlying the Masoretic accents is not followed, there is no reason why רֹאֶה should not be interpreted as the title רֹאֶה, either attributed to Kiriath-jearim ('Kiriath-jearim, the seer') or, less unlikely, why it should not be interpreted as a verbal participle ('Kiriath-jearim who saw half of Menuhoth').

B.2 The active qal participle of רָאָה is employed 18x in Qumran in its verbal sense rather as the technical term 'seer'.³

B.3 In 2 Chr 16:12 Jastrow suggests emending רָאָה to רָאָם.² This emendment has not caught on.

B.4 According Jeffers 2 Sam 15:27 attributes the title רֹאֶה to Zadok the priest.⁴ However, according to MT the text is vocalised as an interrogative ה. Most of the versions follow MT with the exception of the Peshitta which translates הָרֹאֶה (‘seer’). If the emendment were to be accepted the resulting Hebrew syntax would be somewhat unusual, if still possible.

Qere/Ketiv: NONE.

1. Root and Comparative Material

See the verb רָאָה (in preparation).

¹ JEFFERS (1996:99) counts only nine times because she disregards Isa 30:10 and 2 Chr 16:10.
² The term is used as a participle in CD 5:7, 1QM 10:10, 4QPešIsa' (163) f17:1, 4QPešNah (169) f3-i:2, 4QPapJub (223-224) f2ii:3, 4QpapJub (223-224) f2v:9, 4QDam' (266) f13:3, 4QDam' (270) f4:2, 4QRewPent⁶ (364) f25a-c:7, 4QRewPent⁶ (364) f30:3, 4QPsJaJos⁶ (379) f4:2, 4QLetHa² (394) f8ii:20, 4QLetHa² (394) f8iv:1, 4QLetHa² (396) f1-2i:3.
³ JASTROW (1909:49 nt.23).
A.1 רָאָה is the common Hebrew root for ‘to see’. In other Semitic languages, the root appears most commonly in Old South Arabic as r‘j, Ethiopic רֵ֣וַֹ֣יֵ֣הָ֣יָ֥א, and Arabic ra‘ā with the same meaning.5

A.2 The attestation of the verb in the Meša-stele in lines four (H-Stem) and seven (G-stem) indicates that Moabite shared the root with Hebrew.6

A.3 Ugaritic and Akkadian use the root ʾmr for the verb ‘to see’.

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 qōtel of a הָ, nominalised qal masculine active participle.

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 רֶּּמֶּ is the subject of רֶּּמֶּ (Isa 30:10).

A.2 Additionally, the following verbs are used for individuals who are identified as a רֶּּמֶּ in the same pericope: אַּרְאֶּה (‘say’) in 1 Sam 9:23.24 and 2 Chr 16:7, אַּרְאֶּה (‘come’) in 2 Chr 16:7, אַּרְאֶּה pr. (‘bless’) in 1 Sam 9:13, אַּרְאֶּה pr. (‘speak’) in 1 Sam 9:25, אַּרְאֶּה (‘take’) in 1 Sam 9:22, אַּרְאֶּה pr. (‘anoint’) in 1 Sam 9:16, אַּרְאֶּה (‘go up’) in 1 Sam 9:14, אַּרְאֶּה qal (‘answer’) in 1 Sam 9:19, אַּרְאֶּה (‘go out’) in 1 Sam 9:14, אַּרְאֶּה hif. (‘dedicate’) in 2 Chr 26:28, אַּרְאֶּה (‘to see’) in 1 Sam 9:17, אַּרְאֶּה pr. (‘to send’) in 1 Sam 9:19.

A.3 רֶּּמֶּ is the object of בַּּמֶּ (2 Chr 16:10).

A.4 רֶּּמֶּ occurs as the subject for the predicate יֵּּשׁ (1 Sam 9:11) and יֵּּשׁ (1 Sam 9:19).

A.5 רֶּּמֶּ is the nomen rectum for רֶּּמֶּ (1 Sam 9:18).

A.6 Samuel (1 Chr 9:22, 26:28, 29:29) and Hanani (2 Chr 16:7) are given the title רֶּּמֶּ.

A.7 The following prepositions are used with רֶּּמֶּ: יְּדַר (1 Sam 9:9), יְּדַר (Isa 30:10).

4. Versions

a. LXX:

βλέπων 1 Chr 9:22, 29:29, 1 Sam 9:9 (2x), 9:11, 9:18.

προφήτης 1 Chr 26:28, 2 Chr 16:7, 16:10, Isa 30:10.

αὐτός 1 Sam 9:19.

b. Pesh:

nby 1 Chr 9:22, 29:29, 2 Chr 16:7.

hzwy 1 Chr 26:28, Isa 30:10, 1 Sam 9:9 (2x), 9:11, 9:18, 9:19.

dwq 2 Chr 16:10.

c. Targum:

נבי 1 Chr 9:22, 2 Chr 16:7, 16:10, Isa 30:10.

חזין 1 Chr 29:29.

רא 1 Sam 9:9 (2x), 9:11, 9:18, 9:19.


6 In line twelve the hapax legomenon ryt used to be the accepted reading, based on Clermont-Ganneau (1887). Lemaire (1987) suggested a reading hyt, which has been generally accepted. Schade (2007) recently challenged this reading arguing that the old reading (ryt) is correct but Lemaire (2007) has defended his new reading.
d. Vulgate:
videns 1 Chr 9:22, 26:28, 29:29, 2 Chr 16:10, Isa 30:10, 1 Sam 9:9, 9:11, 9:18, 9:19.
videre 1 Chr 2:52 (name in MT).
propheta 2 Chr 16:7.

A.1 The versions regularly translated נביא with a participle from a verb ‘to see’.
A.2 Alternatively, they use a word with the meaning ‘prophet’.

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)
A.1 נביא is explained as the obsolete term for נביא (1 Sam 9:9).
A.2 נביא is used in parallel with חז’a (Isa 30:10).
A.3 The primary connection of נביא is to Samuel in his function as diviner (1 Sam 9, 1 Chr 9:22, 26:28, 29:29).

6. Exegesis
A.1 Zorell translates videns. KBL 3 and Ges 18 translate ‘Seher’. BDB and DCH have ‘seer’.
A.2 It is common, as the dictionaries do, to regard נביא and חז’a as synonymous, with נביא as the older and חז’a as the younger term. 7 The possibility that both are synonymous with the נביא is usually denied but the dictionaries point to 1 Sam 9:9 where נביא is explained as the older term for חז’a. 8
A.3 The attestations of נביא are clustered in 1 Sam 9 and 1-2 Chronicles (5x each). This indicates that temporal distinction does not explain any possible difference between חז’a and נביא.
A.4 As morphologically נביא is the qal active participle of the verb נ嫔 (‘to see’) the standard translation to be found in the dictionaries (‘seer’) seems justified.
A.5 As a direct title נביא is attributed to Samuel three times and once to Hanani in 1-2 Chronicles. In addition, the five attestations in 1 Samuel 9 all refer to Samuel as well, which means that eight out of thirteen attestations of the term refer to Samuel. 9
A.6 Jastrow links the נביא with the Babylonian bârû as a priestly seer, similar to the חז’a, but – in contrast to the חז’a – access to whom is open to the wider public and not restricted to the royal court. 10 He bases this on the observation that Samuel is approached by common people while Gad – the חז’a par excellence – is closely linked to the court.
A.7 1 Samuel 9 has long been recognised as a composite text with verse 9 as the centre-piece around which the narrative evolves. According to Petersen it is unclear why ‘the original רע’eh was supplanted by ‘יש (הא)’לוהים in the initial part of the folk tale is unclear. 11 His solution that the author may have chosen a title with ‘wider currency’ than the ‘archaic רע’eh’ does not convince, since the antiquity of the title נביא rests on 1 Samuel 9 itself.

7 See e.g. VETTER (1976:699).
8 In addition to the dictionaries see e.g. HENTSCHKE (1957:150), RENDTORFF (1968:809-810), VETTER (1976:699).
9 BLENKINSOPP (1995:124-125) focuses on 1 Sam 9 and the parallel use of נביא and חז’a there.
10 JASTROW (1909:46-49).
A.8 As Petersen points out, the רֹאֶה is active in an urban setting and that he is not itinerant.

A.9 According to Petersen, the רֹאֶה was ‘held in honor (1 Samuel 9:6)’, based on the accuracy of their prediction. While it is likely that a successful diviner would be well respected, the text in question refers to the ‘man of god’ rather than the רֹאֶה. The same is true for the question of payment in the folk- etymology of נביא in vss 7-8.

7. Conclusions
The semantics of the verb רָאָה suggest that רֹאֶה, the qal participle of the verb, means ‘seer’ and the dictionaries translate it accordingly. The only person referred to as a רֹאֶה more than once is Samuel in 1 Samuel 9 and in 1 Chronicles (eight of thirteen attestations) and it is possible that the title is specifically attributed to him. In the basic meaning ‘seer’ there does not appear to be any difference to the חֹזֶה, and both titles are mainly used in late texts. The traditional distinction with רֹאֶה as the older title and חֹזֶה as the newer one therefore appears difficult uphold. The main distinction between them appears to lie in the focus of the רֹאֶה on Samuel, and that of חֹזֶה on figures who are situated at David’s court; it is possible to interpret the חֹזֶה as a court diviner and the רֹאֶה as a diviner available to the wider public.

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