

מלט hiphil

(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 hiph.

Occurrences: Total 2x OT, 0x Sir, 1x Qum, 0x inscr.

Qum: 1QH XI (*formerly* III) 9.

Text doubtful:

A.1 [nil].

B.1 At Is 31.5 the manuscript 1QIs^a has פלט hiph (והפליט) for מלט hiph. This reading of 1QIs^a corresponds to that of Is 5.29, and may be a case of harmonization in the manuscript. Hasel comments ‘was den Sinn nicht ändert’ (1989:596), although whether a distinction is to be drawn is dependent on the semantic evidence of these two verbs.

It has further been suggested that the hiph inf abs והמליט should be read here (e.g. Stade 1886:189; BHS), which may be implied by the Vg (*salvans*). The same suggestion is made for the previous verb והציל, which also is rendered by a participle in the Vg. This seems to be unnecessary, and the construction of the MT is explicable by reference to GK § 113t (Wildberger 1982:1237; Watts 1985:408).

B.2 The reading at 4Q183 1 ii 3 ומלט could be either piel or hiphil. It is in parallelism with the hiphil הושיע, 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.

Qere/Ketiv: none.

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 [See מלט niphil]

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 [See מלט niphil]

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 The subject of the verb in Is 31.5 is יהנה צבאות. The subject in Is 66.7 is עיר ‘the city’ from the previous verse, although the language used is a metaphorical reference to birds.

A.2 The direct object at Is 66.7 and 1QH XI 9 is זכר ‘male’. In Is 31.5 the implied object from earlier in the verse is ירושקם ‘Jerusalem’.

4. Versions

a. LXX: σῶζω (Is 31.5); τίτω (Is 66.7);

Minor Greek Versions [MRN]:

b. Peshitta: זר (Is 31.5); pl̄t (Is 66.7);

c. Targum: peal עדי (Is 31.5); גלי (Is 66.7);

d. Vulgate: *salvo* (Is 31.5); *pario* (Is 66.7);

A.1 For the most part the Versions select a standard lexeme meaning ‘to save’ for their translations of מלט hiph at Is 31.5. The LXX and Vg render the מלט hiph at Is 66.7 as ‘to give birth’, whilst the Pesh chooses a popular rendering of מלט in all its verbal forms, and the Tg develops a messianic allusion.

A.2 The Tg rendering עדי at Is 31.5 may mean ‘to remove’, as translated by Chilton (1987:62), but in the peal and pael can also mean ‘to produce or conceive’, which is more positive, in line with the other verbs in the Tg, than ‘to remove’. In view of the meaning of the other occurrence of מלט hiph at Is 66.7 there may be some subtlety in such an allusion in the Tg. It is, however, rendered at Is 66.7 by the imprecise verb *pl̄t* in the Pesh, when the other versions are more accurate with renderings denoting ‘to give birth’ (so LXX, Tg and Vg).

A.3 In the Vg the verb *pario* is used for both of the verbs ילד and מלט hiphil in Is 66.7.

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 See מלט niphil.

A.2 מלט hiphil is found in parallelism with the verbs נצל hiph (Is 31.5) and ילד (Is 66.7). It is collocated with the inf abs of פָּסַח in Is 31.5.

6. Exegesis

A.1 The parallelism at Is 31.5 with הִצִּיל suggests that מלט hiph denotes an activity of bringing about safety. The subject from verse 4 is the ‘Lord of hosts’.

A.2 In Is 66.7 and 1QH XI 9 the meaning of the hiphil seems to be causative. The male child is caused to be brought out, i.e. ‘to give birth’. There seems to be no distinction between the hiphil in these texts and the piel at Is 34.15, where the קפוז is said to ‘lay its eggs’ (piel מלט).

A.3 The passage at 1QH XI 9 is modelled on Is 66.7 (Delcor 1962:111). It is clear from both texts that the hiph מלט is transitive, a situation that is not so evident with hiph פלט.

B.1 Sawyer (1972:98) suggests that the hiph of both מלט and פלט are due to interference, at the morphological level, from the more common terms הוֹשִׁיעַ and הִצִּיל. He notes that in the case of מלט hiph it occurs in the same verse as נצל hiph at Is 31.5, which does give support to his case, but the hiphil form can be accounted for as being causative. It would be difficult to prove such interference in Biblical Hebrew.

B.2 Hubbard correctly notes that the hiphil is causative, but then glosses it as ‘to cause to escape a tight spot’ (1997:953). He explains that this refers to the mother’s womb and suggests that it perhaps also refers to the fate of a stillborn. He seems to infer too much from the context. It is true that the Lord promises in Is 31.5 that he will rescue his people who are in difficulty, but there is no evidence that one should conclude that the hiphil denotes rescue ‘from a tight spot’. The hiphil is used of giving birth since the baby is caused to come out, but that the baby was in a tight spot and hence that the verb could also denote the fate of a stillborn is conjecture.

7. Conclusion

The hiph of מלט expresses a causative motion, the attention often being on the action of bringing forth (hence ‘to give birth’ at Is 66.7, 1QH XI 9) or specifically bringing about safety (Is 31.5). It is (at least implicitly) transitive and may be used of God’s action.

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