

## מלט piel

(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 piel.

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

Sir (numbering of Beentjes 1997): 51.12.

Qum: CD 7.21; 1Q27 1.4 [=4Q300 3.4] (DJD XX); 4QpPsa 1–10 iv 20 (=4Q171); 4Q183 1 ii 3 (?), 4Q171 3-10 iv 20 (DJD V); 11QPs[=11Q5] 22.9 (=4QPs<sup>f</sup>/4Q88 8.11).

Text doubtful:

**A.1** Most commentators have argued that at 2Kg 10.24 the verb מלט niph in the MT should be read as a piel (e.g. Burney 1903:305).

**A.2** At Am 2.15b the passive of διασώζω in the LXX implies the reading of the niphל מלט (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 נפץ with the verb in the next line.

**A.3** 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.

**B.1** Although at Ps 33.17 the passive of σώζω in the LXX implies the reading מלט (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 מלט at Is 34.15 as ‘laid’ and therefore proposes that the word should be deleted from the context there. Since the hiph מלט at Is 66.7 and 1QH XI 9, and the piel פלט 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 מלט. Alternatively, one could follow Kaiser, and perhaps suggest that the piel of מלט 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 ולמלט[.]ול should probably be read as simply מלט[.]ול, 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 פלט is found, there is no reason to emend the reading of מלט at 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> 1–10 iv 20 (=4Q171). Perhaps the original text did include מלט rather than having two adjacent instances of פלט, or a scribe corrected the text in order to avoid this in the Qumran text. A similar discrepancy appears in 1QIs<sup>a</sup>, although there the biblical MS (Is 31.5) has מלט hiph whilst the Qumran text has פלט hiph.

Qere/Ketiv: none.

## 1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 [See מלט niphāl]

## 2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 [See מלט niphāl]

## 3. Syntagmatics

A.1 The subject of מלט piel is primarily either a human or an animal. It may be עֶבֶד ‘servant’ (2Sm 19.6), קפוז ‘owl’ (Is 34.15), הוּא denoting מֶלֶךְ ‘king’ (2Sm 19.10), אִישׁ ‘man’ (Jr 51.6, 45), גְּבוּר ‘the mighty’ (Am 2.14), קַל בְּרַגְלָיו ‘swift of foot’ (Am 2.15), רֹכְבֵי הַסּוּס ‘riders’ (Am 2.15), סוּס ‘horse’ (Ps 33.17), רָשָׁע ‘wickedness’ (Qoh 8.8), and הוּא denoting אִישׁ מְסֻכֵּן חָכָם ‘a poor wise man’ (Qoh 9.15). In a possible four instances the subject is God: יהוה ‘the Lord’ (Ps 41.2; Ps 107:19–20), אֱלֹהִים ‘God’ (in Jb 22.30 as emended in BHS), and the divine name in palaeo-Hebrew script (4Q183 1 ii 3).

A.2 The direct object of מלט piel may be נַפְשׁ ‘soul, life’ (1Sm 19.11; 2Sm 19.6; 1Kg 1.12; Jr 48.6; 51.6, 45; Ezk 33.5; Am 2.14, 15; Ps 89.49; 116.4; 1Q27 1.4), עֵצָם ‘bone’ (2Kg 23.18) מִשָּׂא ‘burden’ (Is 46.2), עָנִי ‘the poor’ (Jb 29.12), בַּעַל ‘master, practitioner’ (Qoh 8.8), עִיר ‘city’ (Qoh 9.15). It may also be followed by the verbal suffixes 1ppl (2Sm 19.10), 2p ms (Jr 39.18), 3pms (Ps 41.2), and 1ps (Jb 6.23).

A.3 The apparently intransitive occurrences of מלט piel in Am 2.15a and 11Q5 22.9 are best understood as being due to the ellipse of נַפְשׁ, which is the most frequent object of מלט piel (cf. A.2).

A.4 מלט piel may be conjoined with the verbs טָבַל ‘to carry’ (Is 46.4), נוּס ‘to flee’ (Jr 48.6), and הוֹשִׁיעַ (4Q183 1 ii 3).

A.5 מלט piel may be followed by the preposition מִן (2Sm 19.10; Ps 89.49; 107.20; Jb 6.23; 1Q27 1.4).

A.6 At Qoh 9.15 מלט piel is followed by the indirect object חֵכְמָה ‘wisdom’ + preposition בְּ.

## 4. Versions

a. LXX: ἀνασώζω (Jr 51[28].6);  
διασώζω (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);  
[[εὐρίσσω (?2Kg 23.18 variant); ]]  
σώζω (1Sm 19.11; Is 34.15; 46.2, 4; Jr 39.18 [2x]; 48.6; Am 2.14, 15; Ps 33[32].17; Jb 6.23; 20.20);  
Large omission: Jr 51.45.

Minor Greek Versions [MRN]:

b. Peshitta: *plṭ* (2Sm 19.6, 10; 1Kg 1.12; 2Kg 23.18; Jr 51.45; Ps 41.2; Jb 6.23; 20.20; 22.30; 29.12);

*prq* (Sir 51.12);

*ps*’ (1Sm 19.11; ?Is 34.15; 46.4; Jr 39.18 [1x for 2x]; 48.6; 51.6; Ezk 33.5; Am 2.14, 15; Ps 33.17 [+ *lrkhh*]; 89.49; 107.20; 116.4);

*šwzb* (Is 46.2; Am 2.15; Qoh 8.8; 9.15);

c. Targum: סלח (Is 46.4);

פרק (2Sm 19.10);  
 Shafel שיזב (1Sm 19.11; 2Sm 19.6; 1Kg 1.12; 2Kg 23.18; Is 34.15; 46.2; Jr 39.18 [2x]; 48.6; 51.6, 45; Ezk 33.5; Am 2.14, 15; Ps 41.2; 89.49; 107.20; 116.4; Jb 6.23; 22.30; 29.12 [= 11QTgJob xiv 6]; Qoh 8.8; 9.15);  
 שתיזב (Am 2.15; Ps 33.17; Jb 20.20);

*d. Vulgate: salvo* (1Sm 19.11; 2Sm 19.10[9]; 1Kg 1.12; Is 46.2, 4; Jr 48.6; 51.6, 45; Ezk 33.5; Am 2.14, 15 [2x]; Ps 33[32].17; 41[40].2; 89[88].49; 107[106].20; 116[114].4; Jb 22.30; Qoh 8.8);  
*salvum facio* (2Sm 19.6[5]);  
*intactus maneo* passive (2Kg 23.18);  
*enutrivit catulos* [to nourish young] (Is 34.15);  
*libero* (Jr 39.18; Jb 6.23; 29.12; Qoh 9.15; Sir 51.12);  
*eruo* [to rescue] (Jr 39.18);  
*possidere posse* (?Jb 20.20).

**A.1** The choice of the verb פרק in the Targum to 2Sm 19.10 (cf. the Peshitta to Sir 51.12) is dictated by the use of Shafel שיזב 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 סלה '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 σώζω 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 σώζω is broader than these scholars allow (see LSJ:1748).

**B.2** The LXX variant εὐρίσκαω 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 מלט appears in parallelism with the hiph נצל (2Sm 19.10), hiph נוה 'to let alone' (2Kg 23.18), רפא 'to heal' (Ps 107.20), פדה 'to ransom' (Jb 6.23).

**A.3** The piel of מלט is in antithetic parallelism to אבד in 11Q5 22.9.

## 6. Exegesis

**A.1** The piel of מלט appears to be primarily factitive 'to make safe, to bring into safety, to save' (cf. LXX σώζω). The piel is the only verbal form of מלט to take נפש 'soul, life' as a direct object (11x OT). In these instances it denotes saving someone's life (e.g. 1Sm 19.11; Jr 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** מלט in contrast to פלט 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 פלט, that appears in four of those occurrences in the Psalms. מלט is also a verb rarely used of God in contrast to פלט (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 מלט (1Sm 19.11; 2Sm 19.6), however, are not “habituell” (1968:83–84). In general he interprets the piel of מלט as “in Sicherheit bringen = retten” (1968:106).

**A.4** The meaning ‘to save or deliver’ for מלט 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 הִיחַ (נוה). The piel at Is 34.15 denotes a bird laying its eggs (cf. הִיחַ מלט at Is 66.7 and 1QH XI 9, and the piel פלט 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 הִיחַ sees its meaning as denoting escape from the place of origin (i.e. the mother’s womb; 1997a:953).

**A.6** The piel of מלט 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 מלט piel is only used of God in nine out of 35 occurrences. When used of God מלט 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 מלט 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 מלט piel continues to denote saving from physical troubles. One usage, which has an equivalent in the hiphil, is מלט piel denoting the laying of eggs (Is 34.15). The piel should be interpreted as factitive ‘to make safe’.

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