

נצל niphāl

(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 niphāl.

Occurrences: Total 15x OT, 2x Sir, 5x Qum, 0x inscr.

Sir (numbering of Beentjes 1997): 31.6 (MS B, retroversion from Syr that is lacking in Greek; see Text Doubtful B.3); 46.8 (emended; see Text Doubtful A.1).

Qum: CD 4.18; 16.6; 1QH 15.17; 1QpMic 8; 4QpPs 2.9.

Text doubtful:

A.1 At Sir 46.8 the text reads נאצלו, apparently the niphāl of אצל (cf. Sir 42.21b), which might mean ‘were set aside’ (cf. *DCH*:I, 363). It is clear, however, from the sense that we should have here the niphāl of נצל, as indicated by the LXX reading the passive of διασώζω. The confusion between אצל and נצל may be implied in the LXX to Jr 7.10, although there it is uncertain (see Versions A.4).

B.1 At Ezk 14.14 the piel נִפְצְלוּ is translated in the LXX as a passive (and without a direct object). The LXX and *salvi erunt* in MS S of OL imply a niphāl (Cooke 1936:156), but the LXX should perhaps not be followed (cf. its passive rendering of the hiphil in verse 16). There are similar differences between the MT and the LXX in the case of the piel of מלט (Am 2.15b; Ps 33.17) and so this may be part of a wider ‘corrective’ by the LXX. The Vg, Pesh and Tg of Ezk 14.14 all render as the MT with a direct object.

B.2 Although on literary grounds one may wish to consider the occurrence in Mc 4.10 as part of an addition (so BHS), it should remain as part of our semantic evidence for the MT.

B.3 Sir 31.6c-d seems to be an addition in the Syr, which has been retroverted into Hebrew by MS B (Skehan & Di Lella 1987:380–81). The preceding Hebrew לא מצאו ‘they did not find (a way)’ in Sir 31.6c is explicable as a misreading of the Syr *l’ škhw* ‘they were unable’.

Qere/Ketiv: none.

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 [See נצל hiphil]

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 [See נצל hiphil]

A.2 If the reading נימול at CD 16.6 should be ניצול, then we have a Mishnaic form of the niphāl containing *ō* instead of *ā* (Segal 1927:79).

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 The subject of נצל niph may be the nouns נפש ‘life’ (Gn 32.31), עֶבֶד ‘servant’ (Dt 23.16), בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ‘sons of Israel’ (Am 3.12), גְּבוּר ‘the mighty’ (Ps 33.16),

and the pronouns אַתָּה ‘you’ (2Kg 19.11; Is 37.11), הֵמָּה ‘they’ (Ezk 14.16) and הֵם ‘they’ (Ezk 14.18).

A.2 Following נצל niph the indirect object is indicated by the preposition בָּ + רַב־כֹּחַ ‘great strength’ (Ps 33.16).

A.3 Following נצל niph is followed by the preposition אֶל + suf 2p m s (Dt 23.16)

A.4 Motion away from something may be expressed after נצל niph by מִן ‘from’ + the nouns מִלְּפָנֵי מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר ‘before the King of Assyria’ (Is 20.6), כַּף־רָע ‘evil arm’ (Hb 2.9), יָד ‘hand’ (Pr 6.5 [LXX implies מַצּוֹד or צִיָּד]), יָד יָקוּשׁ ‘hand of the fowler’ (Pr 6.5), and שׂנְאָי ‘those that hate me’ and מַעְמַק־יַמִּים ‘deep waters’ (Ps 69.15), + preposition עִם + noun אֲדֹנָי ‘master’ (Dt 23.16).

A.5 The inf cstr of נצל niph is found in apposition to עֲזָרָה ‘help’ (Is 20.6).

B.1 At Am 3.12 נצל niph is followed by the preposition בָּ + פֶּאֶת מִטָּה ‘the corner of a couch’ and דְּמִשְׁקַ עֲרֹשׁ ‘part of a bed’. Various interpretations and emendations have been suggested by scholars to explain the preposition, and a range of proposals have been laid out by Harper (1905:80–82). The most likely explanation is that proposed by Andersen & Freedman (1989:408–409), among others, who suggest that the pieces of furniture resemble the parts of the ‘rescued’ animal, indicating that only a few miserable pieces will be rescued. The ב then either expresses accompaniment or is a *beth essentiae* (so Rabinowitz 1961:228–31). Mays (1969:66–67), Rudolph (1971:164–65) and Wolff (1969:234), however, take the ב as dependent on הַיִּשְׁבִּים. It is clear that the ב is not an instrumental as it is in A.2 above.

4. Versions

a. LXX: ἀπέχομαι (?Jr 7.10);

διασφύζω (Sir 46.8);

ἐκσπάω (Am 3.12; Hb 2.9);

ρύομαι (2Kg 19.11; Mc 4.10; Ps 69[68].15);

σφύζω (Gn 32.31; Is 20.6; Ezk 14.16, 18; Ps 33[32].16; Pr 6.3, 5);

προστίθημι (Dt 23.16);

Omitted: Is 37.11.

Minor Greek Versions [MRN]:

b. Peshitta: ʿrq (Dt 23.16);

psʿ (Gn 32.31; 2Kg 19.11; Is 20.6; 37.11; Jr 7.10; Ezk 14.16, 18; Am 3.12; Mc 4.10; Hb 2.9; Ps 33.16; 69.15; Pr 6.3, 5);

c. Targum: פצא (Ps 69.15; Pr 6.3, 5);

ב[ׁ]י[ׁ]שׁ (Gn 32.31; Dt 23.16; 2Kg 19.11; Is 20.6; 37.11; Jr 7.10; Ezk 14.16, 18; Am 3.12; Mc 4.10; Hb 2.9; Ps 33.16);

d. Vulgate: *confugio* (Dt 23.16[15]);

eruo (Am 3.12; Pr 6.5);

liberari possum (2Kg 19.11; Is 37.11);

liberari se puto (Hb 2.9);

libero (Is 20.6; Jr 7.10; Ezk 14.16, 18; Mc 4.10; Ps 33[32].16; 69[68].15; Pr 6.3);

salvus factus est (Gn 32.31[30]);

A.1 In the LXX נצל niph appears to be rendered predominantly by σώζω, a translation that is infrequent with other forms of נצל, perhaps indicating an emphasis on the safety in the niph. The preferences, however, of *libero, ps* and ב[י]ר[י]שׁ in the Vg, Pesh and Tg are consistent with the translations of other forms of נצל.

A.2 The translation of נצל niph by προστέθειται (σοι) at Dt 23.16 is slightly peculiar, but the Heb נצַלְל + לָ is also awkward. Lust (*Lexicon*:405) renders it as ‘to attach oneself to sb’. Wevers glosses as ‘has added himself (to you)’ and explains “i.e. has fled (to you)” and, therefore, sees it as a possible rendering of the Hebrew (1995:371). προστίθημι is not included in the list of equivalents by Muraoka (*Index*:99), arising from its omission by HR.

A.3 The LXX at Is 37.11 omits any equivalent for נצל niph, probably because the hiphil appears as the first word of the next verse.

A.4 Muraoka, on the basis of the translation ἀπέχομαι, suggests that the translator at Jr 7.10 has misread the Hebrew verb as אצל ‘to withdraw’ (*Index*:99). It might, however, be a possible translation of נצל.

A.5 The Targum and Peshitta are generally consistent in their translations and choose renderings that are the most frequent for lexemes in the field of ‘salvation’.

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 [See נצל hiphil]

A.2 נצל niph is used in the same context as מלט niph (Is 20.6), and seems in that verse to be the equivalent of עֲזָרָה ‘help’. It is found in parallelism with ישׁע niph (Ps 33.16; Sir 31.6).

6. Exegesis

A.1 The niph of נצל may either have a passive meaning ‘to be saved’ or a reflexive ‘to save oneself’ (BDB:664; *HAL*:677), although in some instances it is ambiguous.

A.2 The passive meaning at Gn 32.31 denotes the saving of Jacob’s life. In similar fashion at Ps 33.16 it appears to denote safety in battle, and at Is 20.6 escape from battle. There is, however, in Isaiah the further connotation that the means of ‘escape’ will be ‘deliverance’ by God. Likewise, at Ps 69.15, although the verb refers to the escape from enemies, it is in a plea to God and implies a more general deliverance.

A.3 The passive also denotes a more general deliverance, as that from Babylon brought about by God (Mc 4.10). At Jr 7.10 it may be passive in meaning (as BDB:664; *HAL*:677), or possibly reflexive, and denotes the security felt by Israel.

A.4 Although Hb 2.9 could be passive (BDB:664) it seems more likely that it is reflexive (*HAL*:677) in sense, denoting making oneself safe from harm.

A.5 The meaning is clearly reflexive ‘to tear oneself away, deliver oneself’ in Dt 23.16; Pr 6.3, 5; Ezk 14.16, 18. BDB:664 also includes 2Kg 19.11; Is 37.11 as reflexive, but *HAL* (677) is probably correct to treat them as passive.

B.1 BDB:664 suggests the sense ‘be torn out or away’ for Am 3.12, but it would be the only example of this passive meaning and ‘be delivered’ is much more appropriate to the context.

7. Conclusion

A.1 The niph of נצל may have either a passive meaning ‘to be saved’ or a reflexive ‘to save oneself’.

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