

עֲזָרָה

(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: n f.

Occurrences (Total: 33): 26x OT, 0x Sir, 7x Qum, 0x inscr.

Qum: 1QM 1.16; 13.13, 14; 16.11; 4Q160 3-4.ii.2; 4Q372 1.18; 4Q381 24a+b 8

Text Doubtful:

A.1 In Nah 3.9 בְּעֲזָרְתֶּךָ should be emended as in BHS and most modern commentaries to בְּעֲזָרְתָּהּ with LXX and Peshitta.

Qere/Ketiv: Ezk 12.14 Kt עֲזָרָה Qr עֲזָרוּ or emend to עֲזָרָיו ‘his helpers’ (cf. BHS), following LXX, Syr. and Tg.

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 [See עֲזָר]

2. Formal Characteristics

A.1 *qitl / qitlat* form, in which the *seghol* appears after a guttural (cf. JM:§ 97Aa).

A.2 The form עֲזָרְתָּהּ in Ps 44.27, 63.8, and 94.17 appears only these three times in the OT (cf. *masorah parva*) and in 4Q160 3-4 ii.2, and appears to be the old accusative ending, particularly frequent with feminine nouns. The absence of the definite article may indicate the antiquity of the phenomenon (Hurvitz 1985:116–19), although this is not conclusive (JM:§93j n.1). This form with feminine nouns only appears in poetry (Tsevat 1955:21–22) and it may have been chosen to avoid the contact of two successive stressed syllables (JM:§93j). Sawyer suggests that it has a quasi-verbal function (ET:447). עֲזָרְתָּהּ, found in Ps 60.13=108.13, is another variant ending of this noun (GK §80g).

3. Syntagmatics

A.1 עֲזָרָה is the subject of the verb הָיָה ‘to be’ 4Q160 3-4.ii.2 .

A.2 עֲזָרָה is the direct object of יָהַב ‘to give’ (Ps 60.13; 108.13) and רָאָה ‘to see’ (Jb 31.21).

A.3 עֲזָרָה is found as the predicate of אֱלֹהִים ‘God’ (Ps 46.2; 4Q381 24a+b 8), and of יהוה (Ps 94.17), and (with the verb הָיָה ‘to be’) of פוֹט וְלוֹבִיִּים ‘Put and the Libyans’ (Na 3.9) and of אֱלֹהִים ‘God’ (Ps 27.9; 63.8).

A.4 עֲזָרָה is found as the nomen regens of יהוה ‘Lord’ (Jdg 5.23 [2x]), פְּעֻלֵי אָוֶן ‘doers of evil’ (Is 31.2), פְּנֵיכֶם ‘your face’ or פְּנֵי עֲלֵיכֶם ‘help of your works’ [text unclear] (1QM 13.14), and בְּנֵי חוֹשֶׁךְ ‘sons of darkness’ (1QM 16.11).

A.5 עֲזָרָה is followed by the preposition בְּ ‘in’ or ‘with’ (Jb 6.13), indicating the source of help, and also in Judg 5.23; Ps 46.2 and Jb 31.21, referring to the situation in which help is required.

A.6 עֲזָרָה is followed by מִן ‘from’ + צָר ‘trouble’ (Ps 60.13=108.13).

A.7 עֲזָרָה is preceded by the preposition אֶל ‘unto’ (La 4.17).

A.8 עֲזָרָה is preceded by the preposition בְּ (*beth essentiae*) + ‘to be’ (Nah 3.9), + קוּם ‘to rise up as’ (Ps 35.2) and + יִפֵּעַ hiph ‘shine forth as’ (1QM 1.16). For a different account of the use of בְּ in such expressions see Brockelmann 1956, §106g.

A.9 עֲזָרָה is governed by the prepositions בְּ ‘because of’ (1QM 13.13, with גִּיל) and כְּ ‘like’ (1QM 13.14).

A.10 עֲזָרָה sometimes follows a verb and the preposition לְ, to express the purpose of seeking help, e.g. + נוּם ‘to flee to...for’ (Is 10.3; 20.6), לְ + יָרַד ‘to go down ... for’ (Is 31.1).

A.11 When governed by the preposition לְ, עֲזָרָה frequently follows verbs of motion and can itself have a verbal quality like that of an infinitive construct, to express the intention of helping, e.g. + בּוֹא ‘to come ... to help’ (Jdg 5.23), + אֶצֵּץ ‘to go out...for’ (Jr 37.7); חוֹשׁ + paragogic *hē* ‘to rush ... to’ (Pss 22.20; 38.23; 40.14; 70.2; 71.12 [Qere]; cf. 2Ch 28.21).

A.12 עֲזָרָה is also used with a quasi-verbal sense without the preposition לְ following a verb of motion, e.g. קוּם + paragogic *hē* ‘rise up’ (Ps 44.27).

A.13 עֲזָרָה is the (logical) object of עַל + קוּם ‘to rise up...against’ (Is 31.2).

A.14 עֲזָרָה is found with the particle כֹּל ‘all / any’ (4Q372 1.18).

B.1 Dahood proposes that the presence of the preposition מִן in Ps 60.13=108.13 indicates that עֲזָרָה in these instances (and עֲזָר at Dt 33.7) denotes ‘liberation’ (1970:95; 1973²:82). He compares it to the use of the Ugaritic *wy’drk byd* ‘to liberate you from the hand of’ at UT 3 Aqht: rev.12–14 = KTU 1.18.1.12-14 (where it occurs in parallel with *plṭ*). In a similar manner to the verb יָשַׁע having two meanings, ‘to help’ and ‘to rescue’, Ug *dr* and Heb עֲזָר normally signify ‘to help’ or ‘help’, but with certain prepositions denote ‘to rescue, liberate from’ (Dahood 1970:95). Dahood gives further examples of this phenomenon, although it might be noted that the Ugaritic along with Sir 51.2–3 and 1QH 2.34–35 that he cites in support, all include the noun *yd/ḏ* with the preposition. The immediate context of Ps 60=108 is a request for God’s presence and help in battle rather than removal from it. It thus suggests that עֲזָרָה has the sense of divine presence providing protection from enemies (cf. the use of עֲזָר + מִן in Ez 8.22).

4. Versions

a. LXX:

ἀντίλημψις (Ps 22[21].20);
βοήθεια (Jdg 5.23; Is 20.6; 31.1; Jr 37[44].7; Ps 35[34].2; 38[37].23;
60[59].13; 70[69].2; 71[70].12; 108[107].13; Jb 31.21; La 4.17; 2Ch 28.21);
βοηθέω (Is 10.3; Ps 40[39].14; 44[43].27; 94[93].17);
βοηθός (Jdg 5.23; Nah 3.9; Ps 27[26].9; 40[39].18; 46[45].2; 63[62].8);
[[ἐλπίζ]] (Is 31.2);
[[πέποιθα]] (Jb 6.13).

Minor Greek Versions [MRN] :

ἀντιλαμβάνω (Ps 44.27 A1);
βοήθεια (Jdg 5.23 B-text [2x]; Ps 27.9 Aq; 60.13 Symm);
βοηθέω (Ps 40.14 Aq?; 70.2 A1);

b. Peshitta:

m'drn (Jr 37.7; Ps 40.18; 46.2; 63.8); 'helper'
'*wdrn*' (Jdg 5.23 [haplography]; Is 31.2; Nah 3.9; Ps 22.20; 35.2; 38.23;
40.14; 60.13; 70.2; 71.12; Jb 6.13; La 4.17);
'*dwr*' (Ps 27.9??; 94.17);
Pael '*dr*' (Ps 44.27; Jb 31.21);
Ithpael '*dr*' (Is 10.3; 20.6; 31.1);
[[Aphel *hrr* (2Ch 28.21)]];
[[*hyl*' (Ps 108.13)]]

c. Targum:

TgJ

קעויד (Jdg 5.23 [2x]);
Pael סעד (Is 10.3; 20.6; 31.1, 2; Jr 37.7);
סעךא (Nah 3.9);

TgPsa

Pael סעד (Ps 63.8; 70.2);
סעךא (Ps 35.2; 60.13; 71.12; 94.17; 108.13);
סיועא (Ps 22.20; 27.9; 38.23; 40.14, 18; 44.27);
Pael סיע [variant noun סיוע] (Ps 46.2)

TgJob

סיועא (Jb 6.13; 31.21);

TgLam

Pael סיע [variant noun סיוע] (La 4.17)

TgChr

קעויד (2Ch 28.21);

d. Vulgate:

adiutorium (Jdg 5.23);
adiuvo (Ps 40[39].14 [gerund]; 70[69].2; 71[70].12 [gerund]);
auxiliator (Ps 94[93].17);
auxilior (Ps 44[43].27);
auxilium (Jdg 5.23; Is 10.3; 20.6; 31.1, 2; Jr 37.7[6]; Nah 3.9; Ps 22[21].20;
27[26].9; 35[34].2; 38[37].23; 40[39].18; 46[45].2; 60[59].13; 63[62].8;
108[107].13; Jb 6.13; La 4.17);
prosum (2Ch 28.21);
[[*superior* (Jb 31.21)]].

A.1 The primary translation is that of 'help' in the LXX (βοήθεια and cognates; ἀντίληψις), Pesh (*m'drn*), Tg (אָׁׁׁׁ and cognates), and Vg (*auxilium* and cognates).

A.2 ἀντίληψις (see Margolis 1972 for Hebrew equivalents), a later form of ἀντίληψις, is derived from ἀντιλαμβάνομαι 'to help, take part with, assist' (LSJ:157) or 'to come to the assistance of' (Lv 25.35; Muraoka 2002:43). The noun in *koine*

often denotes ‘defence, succour’ (LSJ:158; cf. LEH:55), and is attested with such a meaning in papyri, the LXX and the NT.

A.3 Vg’s unique choice of *prosum* ‘be useful, of benefit’ for *לְעִזְרָה* in 2Ch 28.21 may result from the subject of the clause being (or being seen as) impersonal. In Jb 31.21 (*cum viderem*) *me (in porta) superiorem* is a paraphrase which specifies the result of the speaker having help (*עִזְרָתִי*) as superiority in a legal dispute, rather than representing precisely the meaning of the original.

A.4 The Peshitta at Ps 108.13 has *hyl* ‘power’ for *עִזְרָה*, whereas in the identical Ps 60.13 it has *wdrn* ‘help’. The translator knew what *עִזְרָה* meant, but evidently decided here to specify the kind of help that was needed in a military crisis (compare the occasional use of *ισχυς* for *עֶזֶר* and of *ισχυω* and compounds for *עֶזֶר*). In 2Ch 28.21, as in the previous verse, the translator has rewritten his original in the light of the whole of vv. 16-20. For *וְלֹא לְעִזְרָה לּוֹ* he has put ‘so that he would not harm him (in a time of trouble)’. The final words are taken from the beginning of v. 22 and are made to refer back to the Edomite and Philistine attacks in vv. 17-19. Then instead of reporting the failure of Ahaz’s approach to Tiglath-pileser with MT (with its echo of v. 16) the translator explains its intention in a *d*-clause, in effect seeing the ‘help’ sought (and not provided) as the avoidance of harm (*dl’ nhrywhy*, from *hrr* Aphel). In both verses, therefore, the Peshitta provides no direct evidence for the meaning of *עִזְרָה*.

A.5 In all the Versions verbs are used to render *עִזְרָה* on several occasions.

B.1 Job 6.13 appears in the LXX to be a paraphrase of the sense of the Hebrew. *πέποιθα* ‘to trust [in]’ (LEH:477) provides the rendering ‘I have not trusted in him’ in place of the Hebrew ‘my help is not in me’. It should be noted, however, that the noun in parallelism *תְּשׁוּבָה* (‘effective aid’) is translated by *βοήθεια*, the most frequent equivalent for *עִזְרָה*. The LXX could be justification for emending *תְּשׁוּבָה* to *תְּשׁוּעָה*, but it is not necessary.

B.2 The LXX rendering *ἐλπίς* (Is 31.2) appears in a translation of the Hebrew phrase ‘the helpers of those who perform iniquity’. The LXX appears to have understood this passage as simply ‘their vain hope’, omitting the verb *פָּעַל*. The difference between the Hebrew and Greek is great enough for no reliable semantic information to be drawn from the version to this verse.

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 *עִזְרָה* is found in parallelism with *עֲצָמָה* ‘strength’ (Na 3.9); *נָצַל* hiphil ‘to deliver’ (Ps 40.14; 70.2); *תְּשׁוּעָה* ‘help’ (Ps 60.13=108.13); *תְּשׁוּבָה* ‘wisdom’ (Jb 6.13); and *יָשַׁע* hiph ‘save’ (La 4.17). It is joined by *waw* to *פָּלַט* piel ptc ‘deliverer’ (Ps 40.18).

A.2 It occurs in close collocation with the verbs *קוּם* ‘rise up’ and *פָּדָה* ‘set free’ (Ps 44.27); *נוּט* ‘flee’ (Is 10.3; 20.6); *נָצַל* hiphil ‘to deliver’ (Is 20.6); and with the nouns *עֲצָמָה* ‘might’ (Nah 3.9); *כֹּחַ* ‘strength’ (Job 6.12-13); *אֶזְרוֹתַי* ‘my help’ (Ps 22.20); *אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵי* ‘God of my salvation’ (Ps 27.9); *תְּשׁוּעָה* ‘salvation’ (Ps 38.23); *מִחְסָה* ‘refuge’; *מִלַּט* niphil ‘escape’ (Is 20.6) and *עֹז* ‘strength’ (Ps 46.2).

A.3 Antonyms, such as *עֹזֹב* and *נִטָּשׁ*, occur in the often repetitive Psalms contexts where *עִזְרָה* appears (e.g. Ps 22.20; 27.9; 71.12; 94.14-17).

A.4 Lipiński (1989:17) argues that *עִזְרָה* is synonymous with *עֶזֶר*, and that this is indicated by their both being found with the syntagm *מִצָּר* (Dt 33.7 and Ps 60.13; 108.13). The variant reading *עֶזֶר* for *עִזְרָה* in 1QIs^a at 30.5 gives additional support to

this view. They do differ in distribution, nonetheless, since the feminine form is found primarily in poetry.

6. Exegesis

A.1. עֲזָרָה is absent from the Pentateuch and is found primarily in poetry (Jdg 5 is a poetic composition). It is most frequent in the Psalms (14x). In this it can be contrasted to עֲזָר, which is well attested in the Pentateuch and historical books, as well as being found in the Psalms and Latter Prophets.

A.2. עֲזָרָה, like עֲזָר and the associated verb עָזַר, is used of divine and human assistance in both military and non-military contexts.

עֲזָרָה ‘human help in everyday life’

There appear to be only two examples, although one might have expected this to be the most common use of the word.

In Jb 31.21 Job speaks of his ‘help(er) in the gate’, which probably means someone who would support him in a legal dispute. Since the other party is a יתום, ‘orphan’, Job must imagine himself to be using such support to take advantage of the weak (contrast 29.12, where עֲזָר is used and the context may also be judicial).

In Jb 6.13 אין עֲזָרָתִי בִי (the preceding הָאֵם is difficult (see the commentaries) and perhaps corrupt: BHS suggests that it could mean ‘Truly’ as (?) in Num 17.28) Job is searching for help to survive within himself, i.e. in his own strength, but cannot find any.

A.3. עֲזָרָה ‘human help as national political and military support’

In a number of texts, עֲזָרָה describes the kind of support given from one nation to another in times of crisis such as military attack (e.g. Is 10.3; 20.6; 31.1; Jr 37.7). עֲזָרָה is sometimes used to describe the nation giving such support, defining a particular political / military ally. The relational nature of this usage is marked by pronominal suffixes, e.g. Nah 3.9; La 4.17.

עֲזָרָה can even denote help (not) given to God in a military situation (Jdg 5.23: cf. גְבוּרִים) or the help of a people that is not needed by God because he is גְבוּר and even his ‘finger’ is stronger than any human foe (4Q372 1 18).

A.4. עֲזָרָה ‘divine help in everyday life’

God’s help is frequently sought or welcomed by individuals in their struggles with their personal ‘enemies’ (e.g. Ps 22.20; 27.9; 35.2; 38.23; 63.8; 4Q381 24a+b 8). Sometimes the enemies are explicitly identified as accusers (Ps 71.12) or hostile rulers (Ps 94.17).

A.5. עֲזָרָה ‘divine help as national political and military support’

In the Psalms the nation seeks or rejoices in God’s help against enemy forces (44.27; 46.2; 60.13=108.13); similarly in the Qumran War Scroll the sectarian ‘sons of light’ rely on God’s help (1QM 1.16; 13.13, 14), while Belial girds himself to bring help to the ‘sons of darkness’ in the eschatological battle (1QM 16.11).

A.6. The help given is sometimes support of an undefined kind, whether military (Jdg 5.23; Is 31.1, 2; Jer 37.7; 1QM as above) or not (Ps 94.17; Jb 31.21), but frequently it takes the form of rescue from danger (Is 20.6; Ps 22.20; 35.2; 38.23

etc.; La 4.17) or the provision of a safe refuge (Is 10.3; 20.6; Ps 27.9; 46.2 etc.). Occasionally there is an indication that ‘strength’ is meant (Nah 3.9; Ps 46.2; Jb 6.13; 4Q381 24a+b 8). It is from the surrounding context that it is often possible to deduce that the assistance takes the form of rescue, refuge, protection or strengthening. But this does not change the meaning of the word, only its reference. In almost all cases the help is needed in a situation of conflict or danger, even though the meaning and potential use of the word is much broader.

A.7. עֲזָרָה denotes active support which requires the proximity of the helper: the frequency with which it follows a verb of motion plus the preposition ל reflects this (Jdg 5.23; Jer 37.7; Ps 22.20; 38.23; 40.14; 70.2; 71.12; 94.17; 2 Chr 28.21; 1QM 16.11: cf. Ps 44.27 with paragogic *hē*). In these cases the noun is virtually equivalent to the infinitive of the verb. This is a distinctive use of עֲזָרָה which is not shared by עֲזָר.

A.8. Several times עֲזָרָה has a personal sense, ‘helper(s)’, like the participle of the verb: Is 31.2; Nah 3.9; Ps 27.9; 40.18; 46.2; 63.8; 94.17; Jb 31.21; La 4.17; 1QM 1.16(?); 4Q160 3-4 ii 2; 4Q381 24a+b 8).

A.9. Sometimes the help denoted by עֲזָרָה does not materialise, from Assyria (Is 20.6), Egypt (Is 31.1, contrasted with going to God) or an unnamed nation (La 4.17).

A.10. Perhaps because of its concentration in the Psalms, it is more frequently associated with other ‘salvation’ lexemes (יִשְׁעַ hiph, נִצַּל hiph and פִּלַּט pi: see Lexical/Semantic Fields, A.1, A.2) than is עֲזָר.

7. Conclusion

A.1. עֲזָרָה, like the other words in the ‘help’ group, is essentially a general word for ‘support, assistance’, as can be seen from some examples of its use, both military (Jdg 5.23; Is 31.1, 2; Jer 37.7; 2Chr 28.21; 1QM 1.16; 13.13, 14; 16.11) and non-military (Ps 94.17; Jb 31.21; 4Q160 3-4 ii 2; 4Q372 1 18).

A.2. As such it is closest in meaning to expressions like טובה and הסד, which like it have a strongly active component but are not tied to a specific kind of benefit to others. Antonyms are words or phrases which are equivalent to ‘not to help’, such as עזב, נטש, מן, רחק מן and הסתיר פנים, which occur in the often repetitive Psalms contexts (see Lexical/Semantic Fields, A.3).

A.3. This will also be its meaning in most, perhaps all, contexts which are concerned with rescue, refuge or strength (see Exegesis, A.6). Its association with other words from the ‘deliverance’ field (see Lexical/Semantic Fields) does not (usually) lead to its becoming a synonym of them, rather it presents a different, broader perspective on the intervention that is looked for or experienced, a perspective which may be more relational in character.

A.4. The possible exceptions are in Ps 60.13 and 108.13 (where two different introductions lead into what is essentially the same text): in each case the tight

syntagm: construct state עזרת plus מצר follows the imperative הבה and the sense ‘release’ might seem to be appropriate, especially with תשועה in the parallel stich. But if so, this probably arises from the same kind of ‘pregnant construction’ (GK §119ee-gg) that is sometimes found with verbs (including עזר: see Syntagmatics, A.12, in that entry): ‘give me help from the foe’ is shorthand for ‘give me help *and deliverance* from the foe’, especially as ‘give me help’ is only a transformation of the verbal form ‘help me’.

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