# FROM HEBREW TO GREEK: VERBS IN TRANSLATION IN THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

by

LUKE GORTON

(Under the Direction of Jared Klein)

## ABSTRACT

This study discusses the translation of the Book of Ecclesiastes from Hebrew into Greek, focusing specifically on verbs and on their manner of translation. Using the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint, each of the relevant Hebrew verbal categories is considered in turn, noting the various ways in which the translator renders these categories. The study aims to come to an understanding of how the translator viewed the verbal categories of both Hebrew and Greek, while also comparing this translational philosophy with what might otherwise be expected. Definite conclusions are given concerning the translator's understanding of Hebrew verbal categories (aspect and stem) in relation to the categories of the Greek verb (tense, voice, mood, aspect). Finally, the ramifications of these conclusions are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Hebrew, Greek, Ecclesiastes, Septuagint, Verbs, Translation

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......... iv

CHAPTER

1 FROM HEBREW TO GREEK: VERBS IN TRANSLATION IN THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES .......... 1

Method .......... 1

Style of Translation .......... 4

2 THE VERBAL SYSTEMS OF HEBREW AND GREEK .......... 6

The Hebrew Verbal System .......... 6

The Greek Verbal System .......... 9

3 HEBREW PERFECTIVES .......... 13

The Qal Perfect .......... 13

The Piel Perfect .......... 21

The Hiphil Perfect .......... 22

The Niphal Perfect .......... 24

Other Perfects .......... 26

4 HEBREW IMPERFECTIVES .......... 28

The Qal Imperfect .......... 28

The Existential Verbs *yēš* and *ʼēn* .......... 35

The Piel Imperfect .......... 36

The Hiphil Imperfect ..... 38
The Niphal Imperfect ..... 39
Other Imperfects ..... 40
5 HEBREW PARTICIPLES ..... 43
The Qal Participle ..... 43
The Qal Passive Participle ..... 47
The Piel Participle ..... 47
The Hiphil Participle ..... 48
The Niphal Participle ..... 49
The Pual Participle ..... 50
6 HEBREW INFINITIVES ..... 51
The Qal Infinitive ..... 51
The Piel Infinitive ..... 53
The Hiphil Infinitive ..... 54
The Niphal Infinitive ..... 55
7 HEBREW IMPERATIVES ..... 56
The Qal Imperative ..... 56
The Piel Imperative ..... 57
The Hiphil Imperative ..... 57
The Niphal Imperative ..... 58
8 RAMIFICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS ..... 60
REFERENCES ..... 68

# CHAPTER 1

# FROM HEBREW TO GREEK: VERBS IN TRANSLATION IN THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

## Introduction

This study will discuss the translation of the Book of Ecclesiastes from Hebrew into Greek, focusing specifically on verbs and on their manner of translation. Using the Masoretic Text[1] and the Septuagint, we will consider each of the relevant Hebrew verbal categories in turn, noting the various ways in which the translator renders these categories. The purpose of this study is to come to an understanding of how the translator viewed the verbal categories of both Hebrew and Greek, while also comparing this translational philosophy with what we might otherwise expect. Also, we will explain as much as possible the reasons behind the translation of any given verb category by another. Finally, we will explore some potential ramifications in our conclusion and note the possibilities for further study.

## Method

For this study, data was collected via a line-by-line reading of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Each verb was written down and identified for all of its relevant grammatical categories. Almost always, a clear one-to-one correspondence existed between a Hebrew token and its Greek translation. If a correspondence was less clear, a judgment was made on whether a given Greek verb did in fact translate a given Hebrew verb. The general guidelines for this involved a comparison of syntactic environment, semantic value, and the expected categories of the translated verb. The final criterion was only used as a last resort, as otherwise accurately translated verbs were not always translated as expected with respect to verbal categories.

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[1] It has been asked how one can be sure that the translator made use of a forerunner of the Masoretic Text and not of some other Hebrew textual variant. As it turns out, the extremely literal style of translation (see below) makes it clear that the translator had a very similar Hebrew text in front of him to the one we have today. Nonetheless, the possibility of textual variation is a real one and is noted in appropriate places throughout the thesis.

Essentially, two different scenarios existed to cause a verb to be excluded from this study. First, if a Greek non-verbal is used to translate a Hebrew verbal (or vice versa), such tokens are not considered. An example:

(1) *mətūqāh šənāt* ***hā‘obēd****...* (5:11)

“Sweet (is) the sleep **of the one serving**…

*glukùs húpnos* ***toû doúlou****…* (5:11)

“Sweet (is) the sleep **of the servant**…”

As can be seen, the Hebrew participle is rendered by a Greek noun in this case. Since the goal of this thesis is primarily to compare verbs and verbal categories, a translation as a nominal or other part of speech is outside the bounds of our study.

Secondly, if a verb was deemed not to in fact translate another verb, it was excluded. For instance:

(2) *kī ’et-kol-zeh nātattī ’el-libbī wə****lābūr*** *’et-kol-zeh...* (9:1)

“For all this I gave to my heart **to explain** all this…”

*hóti sùn pân toûto édōka eis kardían mou kaì kardía mou sùn pân* ***eîden*** *toûto...* (9:1)

“For all this I gave into my heart and my heart **saw** all this…”

There were only three exclusions of the latter type, and with good reason. A simple mistranslation was not enough to cause the token to be excluded; rather, as in the above case, it had to be clear that the Hebrew construction was misconstrued and that a completely different Greek construction was supplied in its place. As can be seen, both the semantic and syntactic structure are significantly different in the Hebrew and the Greek. Since this was not deemed to substantiate a one-to-one verbal correspondence, the token could not be used for the purposes of this study.

The decision was made to exclude the categories of person, number, and (for Hebrew) gender from the study. As to gender, only Hebrew verbs are inflected for this category; as such, it cannot be carried over into Greek. Besides, very few of the tokens agree with a feminine noun in Hebrew. Person and number are indeed translated from Hebrew to Greek, but they show virtually no variation (i.e., a 3rd person singular Hebrew verb is nearly always rendered by a 3rd person singular Greek verb) and provide little insight into the mind of the translator or the workings of the language. Thus, our study will focus on the categories of tense, voice, mood, aspect, and stem.

The examples from Hebrew and Greek are generally transliterated according to accepted norms, with a couple of exceptions. Specifically, the pharyngeal h in Hebrew (the letter *ĥet*) is transcribed with the character *ĥ* rather than the typical h with a dot underneath. Additionally, the morphophonemic variations of the so-called begadkepat letters are not noted: as is often done, these are always transliterated by the stop rather than their corresponding fricative.

This study is divided into chapters based on the aspect of the Hebrew verbs under consideration in each chapter. Specifically, the first chapter is devoted to the translation of Hebrew perfective verbs into Greek, the second chapter to the translation of Hebrew imperfective verbs into Greek, and so on. Within each chapter, subdivisions are made by Hebrew stem. Thus, within the chapter on Hebrew perfective verbs, the first subdivision is given over to the translation of Qal perfective verbs, the second to the translation of Piel perfective verbs, and so on.

## Style of Translation

The translator of the Book of Ecclesiastes from Hebrew into Greek was very much a literalist. He (or perhaps she) took great pains to produce a slavishly literal translation for the Greek-speaking Jewish community, perhaps convinced that the translation of a holy book must proceed not by general approximation but by a word-for-word rendering of the venerable Hebrew original. The result of this philosophy on the part of the translator was what might be described as a piece of Hebrew literature with Greek vocabulary plugged into the syntax and idiom of the former. In fact, this translation surely must have been originally intended only for use by Jews who knew at least enough Hebrew to be able to refer back to the original manuscript when the translation descended into nonsensicality; it seems difficult to imagine that the Greek version would have even been comprehensible to those who did not have a semi-intuitive knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of Hebrew. For example, we are told in the Greek version that

(3) *hóti éstin ánthrōpos, hoû mókhthos autoû en sophíāi kaì en gnōsei kai en*
For there.is man of.whom labor of.him in wisdom and in knowledge and in

*andreíāi, kaì ánthrōpos, hòs ouk emókhthēsen en autō̃i, dṓsei autō̃i merída*
virtue and man who NEG labor-3.S.AOR in it give-3.S.FUT to.him share

*autoû* (2:21)
of.him

“For there is a man, of whom his labor in wisdom and in knowledge and in virtue, and a man, who did not labor in it, he will give to him his share.”

Far from exhibiting the flowing style of typical Greek prose, this passage is not only disjointed but somewhat difficult to understand. However, a glance at the Hebrew of this verse will explain things:

(4) *kī-yēš ’ādām še‘ămālō bəĥokmāh ūbəda‘at ūbəkišrōn ūlə’ādām*
for there.is man who.labor.his in.wisdom and.in.knowledge and.in.skill and.to.man

*šello’ ‘āmal-bō yittnennū ĥelqō* (2:21)
who.NEG work-3.M.S.PERF in.it give.3.M.S.IMPF.him share.his

“For there is a man who his labor (was) in wisdom and in knowledge and in skill, and to a man who did not work in it, he will give him his share.”

The Greek syntax follows that of the Hebrew almost exactly, almost to the point of unintelligibility for the native Greek speaker. The translator makes a few minor, uncharacteristic mistakes in this verse, mistakes which add to the level of unintelligibility; however, this sort of word-for-word translation of the Hebrew, errors aside, is normative for the entire Greek translation of the Book of Ecclesiastes as found in the Septuagint.

This very literal style of translation provides an opportunity to profitably carry out the goal of this thesis, namely to compare verb forms in both the Hebrew and the language of translation with as many other variables as possible excluded. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, the vast majority of tokens in the Greek can be unquestionably traced back to specific tokens in the Hebrew: not only is the semantic quality of the verb almost always preserved, but the correlation in word order between the two nearly always will put to rest any doubts. The above example, for instance, shows two verbs in Greek and two in Hebrew (besides the verbs of being); each is in the same place in the sentence, and each matches up semantically quite well with its counterpart. To be sure, instances will arise where this correlation does not occur, and such cases will be noted where significant; on the whole, however, the above schema is followed by the translator, and this allows for the analysis which follows of verbs in translation.

# CHAPTER 2

# THE VERBAL SYSTEMS OF HEBREW AND GREEK

## Introduction

In carrying out a study of this type, it is necessary to first discuss the verbal systems of the languages in question in order to have a basis for the material that follows. Thus, we will note the major features of verbs in Hebrew and Greek before beginning to discuss the data itself. The verbal systems of these two languages are widely divergent, and this should come as no surprise: Hebrew is a member of the Semitic family of languages, while Greek belongs to the Indo-European family. The common lack of a one-to-one correspondence between grammatical categories among these two languages will yield a wealth of observations when we examine verbs in translation.

## The Hebrew Verbal System

The Hebrew verbal system is primarily characterized by two axes, namely stem and aspect. Aspect is perhaps the more important of the two for this study, so we will discuss it first. Essentially, Hebrew has two aspects, perfective and imperfective. To speak very generally, the perfective aspect denotes some sort of completed action, while the imperfective denotes some sort of incomplete action. Historically, the perfective conjugation descends from an old adjectival base with pronominal endings, so it should come as no surprise that stativity is a subset of the perfective aspect’s semantic set. Often, the perfective is used to discuss action in the past, although we will see that this is not always the case. On the other hand, the imperfective conjugation in the synchronic grammar of Biblical Hebrew is a melting pot of several older verbal classes which have fallen together by the time of the writing of the earliest books of the Bible; these classes include the preterite, modal verbs, and the old imperfective, thus providing a wide variety of possible meanings for the Hebrew imperfect. As we will see, the preterite and the modals are still generally identifiable, the former in a construction known as the 'waw consecutive' and the latter by the shortening of the verb or by context, but this still leaves a host of possible meanings for the imperfective proper. Since only the aspect is identified with no reference for tense, the imperfective can refer to ongoing action in any time, whether past, present, or future. Context must largely determine the appropriate meaning.

In addition to these two aspects, the Hebrew verb can take three additional forms which stand outside this two-way distinction. These forms are the participle, the imperative, and the infinitive. The infinitive functions as a non-finite verb, as its name suggests, much as an infinitive in European languages. Hebrew has two infinitives, the infinitive construct and the infinitive absolute; the former is much more common and generally functions as the 'true infinitive', while the latter is somewhat more flexible, as we will see. The Hebrew imperative is used much as the imperative in European languages: it signals a direct command to a second person (imperatives of the first and third person are expressed via modals and hence fall together with the imperfective). The Hebrew participle straddles the boundary between the categories of verb and adjective, as does any participle, and thus can be used in many ways: these include attributive adjective, substantive adjective, and even as the main verb in the sentence. When used in this last way, the participle lends an air of immediate ongoing action to the sentence. The action is often considered to be occurring in the present, although naturally the participle depends on neighboring finite verbs and on context for its full temporal realization.

The second axis upon which all Hebrew verbs are founded is that of stem. There are a fair number of stems in Hebrew, but only a few are extremely common. By far the most common stem is the Qal stem; Qal means ‘light’ in Hebrew and is so named because this stem carries little semantic baggage. In other words, it is considered to be the ‘default’ stem which lends no special meaning to a verb inflected in it. (Incidentally, over eighty percent of verbs found in the Book of Ecclesiastes are in the Qal.) Moving on, the Piel stem is often (although not always) characterized by intensive or repeated action; for instance, a verb which means ‘to walk’ in the Qal may mean ‘to pace to and fro’ in the Piel. This is by no means normative, however, and many verbs occur regularly in the Piel with no Qal forms whatsoever and seemingly no special semantics attached to them. Other verbs carry a sense of causality with passive or stative nuance; a Qal verb ‘to live’ can mean ‘to cause to be alive’ in the Piel. Also, the Piel stem is frequently denominative. Thus, the Piel, not surprisingly, is the focus of much discussion among Hebrew grammarians. The Hiphil, another moderately common stem, regularly lends a sense of active causality to a verb, such that a verb meaning ‘to see’ in the Qal means ‘to cause to see’→ ‘to show’ in the Hiphil. These are the primary active stems in use in Biblical Hebrew, and specifically in Ecclesiastes; each has a passive counterpart. The Niphal stem is considered to be the passive to the Qal, and as such has reliably passive meaning. It was once more properly a reflexive stem, though, so this must be kept in mind when approaching the Niphal. (Incidentally, a Qal passive participle does exist, albeit rarely, which is distinct from the Niphal participle.) The Pual is the passive stem analogous to the Piel, and it thus carries the same general semantic contours of the Piel, only passive. The Hophal is the passive stem analogous to the Hiphil, but it is only mentioned here for symmetry’s sake: it does not occur in Ecclesiastes. Finally, the

Hithpael is a reflexive-type stem which spans the range of mediopassivity from true reflexivity to reciprocity to passivity itself .

Three additional stems occur in Ecclesiastes which are in fact closely related to the above stems semantically but are set apart due to morphological differences. The Pilpel and the Poel are essentially Piels to a certain class of verbs which are structurally unable to take the characteristic mark of a Piel, a geminated middle root letter, and which are therefore marked in other ways. Additionally, the Hithpoel stem exists in lieu of the Hithpael for this same class of verbs. Thus, we have six main stem classes of verbs which occur in Ecclesiastes, the Qal, Piel, Hiphil, Niphal, Pual, and Hithpael stems, as well as three sub-classes, the Pilpel, Poel, and Hithpoel stems.

## The Greek Verbal System

The Greek verbal system is quite unlike the one discussed above. While Hebrew has an aspectual distinction based on a dichotomy between perfective and imperfective verbs, Greek has a multifarious system in which both aspect and tense are distinguished, with each playing a part in different parts of the verbal system. Greek also has the categories of voice and mood, which Hebrew does not specifically have. We will consider each of these individually.

Greek has a large number of tenses which descend from Proto-Indo-European aspects and which still retain some aspectual value. These tenses are used only in the indicative mood: other moods have retained the aspectual distinction completely (see below). The present tense is rather self-explanatory and can be used in a simple or a progressive manner. The imperfect tense, which is essentially the past tense of the present both morphologically and historically, is used to discuss ongoing action in the past. Opposed to the imperfect is the aorist tense, which is the past tense of punctual action. An aspectual distinction can clearly be seen between these two; the former is imperfective, the latter perfective. Added to these is the perfect tense, which is used to describe action occurring in the past but having ramifications in the present. As this tense descends from an old stative, it can still occasionally have stative value; one verb in particular (*oîda* ‘know’) essentially has present value although inflected in the perfect. Finally, Greek has a future tense which is used to describe action taking place in the future. A pluperfect tense also exists, but it does not occur in Ecclesiastes.

Greek has several moods, the most common of which is the indicative. The indicative mood is used to make simple statements, and, as already mentioned, is inflected for tense. The subjunctive mood denotes a sense of uncertainty or probability, and largely occurs in subordinate clauses (although it is also often used in negative commands). The imperative mood is used in positive commands and has both second- and third-person forms, while the infinitive is simply the non-finite form of the verb. These latter three are inflected not for tense but for aspect: each has an imperfective (‘present’) variety which denotes ongoing or incomplete action and a perfective (‘aorist’) variety which denotes punctual or completed action. Thus, an aorist subjunctive should not be mistaken for a ‘past subjunctive’ just because the term ‘aorist’ refers to a past tense in the indicative mood; rather, the aorist subjunctive is simply a subjunctive with some sort of punctual value. Likewise, the difference between aorist and present imperatives is one of aspect (‘Do this’ versus ‘Continue to do this’), and so also with infinitives.

The participle, another verbal form, also takes part in this two-way aspectual distinction. Present participles refer to incomplete or atelic action with regard to the main verb, while aorist participles refer to complete or telic action with regard to the main verb. However, there also exist two more participles besides the present and the aorist variety. The perfect participle is distinct from the aorist or perfective participle in much the same way as the perfect and aorist tenses differ for indicative verbs, while the future participle is used to describe action taking place in the future. (Hence, participles do in some sense have tense, but largely because they take their cues on tense from the indicative tensed verb.) The Greek participle can be used attributively or substantively. Finally, an optative mood also exists in Classical Greek, but it is dying out in the Koine period and is not found in Ecclesiastes.

Greek has three voices. The most common is the active voice, which is used to describe action in which the subject is the agent or the experiencer. Opposing the active is the passive voice, in which the subject is the one undergoing the action. In addition to these two more familiar voices, Greek has a middle voice, which, from an Indo-European perspective, describes an action in which the subject is both agent and patient. However, by the time of the Koine period, the true middle voice is rarely used; for the most part, its morphology is retained for use by a large number of 'deponent' verbs. Verbs belonging to this class are not inflected with active morphology; rather, their semantically active forms are expressed via middle morphology. These verbs descend from Proto-Indo-European verbs in which the action was conceived of as necessarily affecting the subject or agent by the verb's very nature. Some Greek verbs, however, are regular active verbs in most tenses but become deponent when inflected in the future tense; this may be due to the fact that the Greek future descends from a desiderative formation whose nature implies some kind of self-interest or self-implication in an action. In most cases, there is little semantic difference in Ecclesiastes between active verbs and deponent middle verbs. To complicate things further, however, middle and passive verbs share the same morphology in the present and the perfect; these 'mediopassive' forms must be identified as middle or as passive based on a knowledge of the deponency (or lack thereof) of a given verb or by context. Also, a few verbs are what might be called 'hyper-deponent': their semantically active forms are often expressed not just by middle but by passive morphology. In other words, the passive is used with active meaning in these verbs. This group includes intransitives like *poreúomai* ‘go’ and statives like *mimnḗskomai* ‘remember’**.**

As can be seen, therefore, the Hebrew and Greek verbal systems share some things in common. Each has an aspectual distinction; also, each has finite verbs as well as imperatives, infinitives, and participles. Beyond this, however, comparison becomes contrast. The general level of distinction between the two systems will make this study profitable, for the translator will not be able to make mindless one-to-one correspondences. Rather, conscious decisions will have to be made which reveal the attitudes held concerning each of these verbal categories we have discussed.

# CHAPTER 3

# HEBREW PERFECTIVES

## The Qal Perfect

We will begin our synopsis of the translation of verbs from Hebrew to Greek by examining those translated out of the perfective aspect, and we will specifically begin with those from the Qal, the ‘light’ Hebrew stem. This is the best-represented stem-aspect class of verbs in this corpus: verbs occurring in the Qal perfect are translated into Greek 156 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes, and by far the most common tense-voice-mood used to translate them is the aorist active indicative. 99 of these 156 tokens are translated as such, representing a solid 63 percent of the tokens of the Qal perfect. This choice on the part of the translator is not surprising, as both the Qal perfect and the aorist active indicative can be used to represent completed action. This can be seen in the following cases:

(5) *wə**nātattī** et-libbī lidrōš*... (1:13)

*kaì **édōka** tḕn kardían mou toû ekzētē̃sai*...(1:13)

“And **I gave** my heart to searching out…”

(6) *rəʼēh zeh **māṣāʼtī ʼāmərāh** qohelet*...(7:27)

*idè toûto **heûron, eîpen** ho ekklēsiastḗs*...(7:27)

“Behold, this **I found**, **said** Qoheleth…”

It should be noted that the final verb in the second example need not be translated as a ‘past tense’; in fact, some English translations use ‘says’ here in place of ‘said’, and so in similar ways throughout the book to describe Qoheleth’s act of pronouncement. Here, it becomes clear that *aspect* is more important in the minds of both the Hebrew writer and Greek translator: the fact that the action of speaking is completed, even if just now, trumps any consideration of when precisely that action took place. Indeed, both the Hebrew perfect and the Greek aorist encapsulate this idea of completeness very well.

An additional 19 instances occur of the Qal perfect being translated by means of the aorist middle indicative. Semantically, this differs little from the examples above, and appears to be little more than a function of the relevant verb in Greek being deponent, at least in the aorist tense.

(7) *ʼănī qohelet* ***hāyītī*** *melek ʻal-yiśrāʼēl* (1:12)
*egṑ ekklēsiastḕs* ***egenómēn*** *basileùs epì israēl* (1:12)
“I, Qoheleth, **was** king over Israel”

Although the Hebrew *hāyītī* is translated with the middle form *egenómēn*, the former is morphologically identical to many verbs which are translated actively into Greek. The difference is that this verb is deponent in the latter language, and thus only takes middle forms. Incidentally, it is not difficult to imagine why this particular verb is deponent, as its meaning is generally closer to ‘became’ than ‘was’, but this reveals more about the structure of Greek than about the interplay of verbs between Greek and Hebrew.

The Qal perfect is translated by means of the imperfect active indicative three times, which in fact represent the only tokens of the imperfect tense in the entire Greek corpus. All three of these verbs are members of the paradigm of the verb of being, specifically either *ē̃n* or *ē̃san*, and their presence as the lone imperfects can be explained due to the fact that Greek has no other ‘past tense’ of the verb of being, not even an aorist. It would seem that the translator, in his quest for a literal translation, could not equate the imperfect to any Hebrew stem/aspect, and so he chose not to use it unless forced to by morphological necessity. Indeed, he almost successfully avoids the use of the Greek imperfect altogether by rendering the Hebrew verb *hāyāh* (when occurring as a perfective) regularly with the Greek verb *gínomai*, as can be seen in the last example. It is not entirely clear why he chose to render that same Hebrew verb with a form of *eimí* in only three cases (see 7:10, 7:24, and 12:7), although it should be noted that each of these instances occurs in some kind of subordinate clause in both the Hebrew and the Greek. This is not normative, however, as *hāyāh* is translated by a form of *gínomai* in other relative clauses throughout the book.

In seven instances, the aorist passive indicative is used to translate the Qal perfect. In each of these cases, the verb carries some sort of stative quality. For instance,

(8) *wəgam lēb bənē-hā'ādām* ***mālē'****-rā'*... (9:3)

*kaí ge kardía huiȭn toû anthrṓpou* ***eplērṓthē*** *ponēroû*... (9:3)

"And indeed the heart of the sons of man **has been filled** with ('**is full of**') evil…"

In these cases, the Greek translator is clearly sensitive to the semantic quality of these Hebrew statives, and he translates them with a form in Greek whose formant, *-e plus the first laryngeal, happens to go back to an Indo-European stative marker. Thus, this representation of the Qal perfect with the aorist passive indicative represents a subset of stative verbs within the Hebrew lexicon which the Greek translator has correctly identified and rendered accordingly.

The Greek perfect active indicative is used twice to render the Hebrew Qal perfect, once in 1:10 and again in 3:15:

(9) *mah-ššehāyāh kəbār hū' wa'ăšer lihyōt kəbār* ***hāyāh***… (3:15)

*tò genómenon ḗdē estín, kaì hósa toû gínesthai, ḗdē* ***gégonen***...(3:15)

"What was already is, and that which (is) to be already **has been**…"

Why, then, was *hāyāh* here not translated with an aorist or even an imperfect as seen above? The data indicates that the presence of the adverb *kəbār* (Greek *ḗdē*) ‘already’ plays a crucial role in the choice of tense. Essentially, if this adverb immediately preceded *hāyāh*, the Greek translator rendered the verb in the perfect rather than in the aorist or the imperfect. The translator must have thought that this adverb modified the sense of the sentence in a sufficient way that the verb could no longer be rendered as a simple past tense. This makes some sense, as especially in later (Koine) Greek the perfect took on a role somewhat like the English perfect. That is to say, the correspondence between the Greek perfect and aorist somewhat resembles that between the English perfect and preterite or simple past. Thus, while the translator could have comfortably translated *kəbār hāyāh* as ‘already was’, ‘already has been’ might well capture the spirit of the Hebrew construction more accurately.

In six instances, the Qal perfect is rendered as a Greek future, once in the active and five times in the middle (see above for the discussion as to the significance of this or lack thereof). This may seem to be an unexpected choice for the translator, as the perfective aspect in Hebrew denotes completed action and does not generally lend itself to a translation in the future tense. However, there is a fairly clear explanation for this choice, specifically the so-called ‘waw reversive’ construction, whereby the conjunction *wə-* (‘and’) attached to the beginning of a perfect verb has the capacity to give that verb imperfective or future value. This occurs several times in this corpus, one clear example being the following:

(10) *wəgam kol-hā’ādām šeyyo’kal* ***wəšātāh*** *wərā’āh ṭōb bəkol-‘ămālō mattat ’ĕlohīm hī’* (3:13)

*kaí ge pâs ho ánthrōpos, hòs phágetai kaì* ***píetai*** *kaì ídēi agathòn en pantì mókhthōi autoû, dóma theoû estin* (3:13)

“And indeed every man who will eat and **drink** and see good in all of his labor, that is a gift of God”

Here, the perfectives *wəšātāh* and *wərā'āh* almost certainly have imperfective value, as they are paired with the initial imperfective *yo'kal.* (See also 2:24 for a similar occurrence.) In this case, it is the affixed *wə*- conjunction which allows these perfects to function in an imperfective way.[2] It should be noted that *wə*- at the beginning of a perfective form does not always license imperfective value: indeed, there are many counter-examples in the Book of Ecclesiastes where such a collocation clearly retains perfective value.[3] However, the examples in this verse (one of which is translated *idēi*, for which see below), in 2:24, in 5:13, and in 12:3 indicate that the waw reversive does come into play in this corpus, even if only sporadically. It would appear that context is the key factor in determining the correct translation, and the Greek translator was generally sensitive to this.

Nonetheless, a few errors seem to have been made going each way. In 4:14, the perfective *yāşāh* is translated by the future *exeleúsetai* without any morphological or contextual reason; this must simply be chalked up to error, or at best an idiosyncrasy of the translator. Similarly, in 12:3, one perfect-with-waw-reversive is rendered correctly as a Greek future, while another in the same sentence is dubitably rendered an aorist. Despite the generally extremely methodical nature of the Greek rendering of Ecclesiastes, mistakes do in fact occur from time to time.

There are three instances in which the Hebrew perfect is translated by a Greek present indicative form- two active, one mediopassive- and each of these can be explained as occurrences of the gnomic perfect, a term which refers to perfective verbs in Hebrew which describe some sort of general or proverbial truth. Two of these tokens occur in 1:5 to describe the everlasting cycle of days and nights:

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[2] Isaksson (1987: 94) holds that the *wə*- conjunction does not so much license imperfective value as carry over the imperfective value of the first verb by continuing the discourse, at least in cases like this where the series of verbs seem to comprise a syntactic unit.

[3] Isaksson (1987) attempts to show that each *wə*- prefixed to a perfective form in Ecclesiastes effects some sort of semantic or aspectual change for that verb. The Greek translator, however, clearly did not hold this view, as he translates many such forms as though they were simple perfectives. Ultimately, it is not necessary for us to decide who is right: it is our intention to describe the philosophy of the translator rather than to judge it.

(11) *wə**ẓāraĥ** haššemeš ū**bā’** haššāmeš*…(1:5)

*kaì **anatéllei** ho hḗlios kaì **dúnei** ho hḗlios*…(1:5)

“And the sun **rises** and the sun **sets**…”

Although the *wə-* conjunction is prefixed in each of these cases, it does not seem necessary to conceive of these verbs as waw-reversives; rather, it is the gnomic quality of the construction which allows the Greek translator to render these perfects as presents. See 2:23 for an instance of a gnomic construction lacking a *wə-* which is nonetheless translated as a present indicative.

We have now encompassed the 138 instances in which the Qal perfect was rendered by a Greek verb in the indicative mood. However, there are 11 cases in which it is translated as a participle and 6 instances in which a subjunctive is used. We will consider these below, starting with the participles.

The Greek translator did not make excessive use of any participles except the present variety in his translation. This immediately sets his style apart from that of Koine Greek, in which participles which are often aorist frequently carry the narrative along. In fact, only nine aorist participles are used in translation in the entire book, and seven of them are used to render a Qal perfect. Out of these, one is active, four middle, and two passive. The four aorist middle participles are all forms of *gínomai* which translate forms of *hāyāh*. Here we see yet another means by which the perfect of this Hebrew verb is rendered, and again we must search for a reason. The answer here is that a Hebrew relative clause, whether introduced by *še-* or *’ăšer*, greatly increases the likelihood of a Greek participle following to render a Hebrew nonparticipial form. This proclivity for using participles instead of relative clauses is simply a stylistic feature of Greek, as can be seen below:

(12) *gam miqneh bāqār wāṣo'n harbēh hāyāh lī mikkol še***hāyū** *ləpānay* (2:7)

*kaí ge ktē̃sis boukolíou kaì poimníou pollè̄ egénetó moi hupèr pántas toùs* ***genoménous*** *émprosthén mou* (2:7)

"Indeed I had a great possession of cattle and sheep over all those who **were** (Greek: 'all those **having been**') in my presence (or 'before me')"

The clitic relative pronoun *še-* calls forth the participle here. We might formulate a general rule of translation, then: when a Hebrew finite verb (particularly *hāyāh*) finds itself in a relative clause, the odds increase that the Greek translation of that verb will be a participial form. This is despite the fact that all-around participle usage is still well below that which would be expected of a typical piece of Koine literature.

This tendency can be seen in other places where a Hebrew perfect is rendered as a participle. In the one case in which the perfect active participle is used to translate the Qal perfect (1:9), the Hebrew verb *hāyāh* is immediately preceded by *še-*, thus bringing about the environment described above which is conducive for participial translation. Here, however, the perfect *gegonós* is used instead of the aorist *genómenon*; even without a *kəbār* in the immediate vicinity, the translator must have felt that a perfect participle would more accurately convey the sense of the sentence. Additionally, the one instance of a present active participle translating a Qal perfect occurs in a relative clause: in 7:19, *hāyū* is translated as *óntas* following *'ăšer*. (As Greek participles generally choose their tense based on the main verb, the choice of present tense here for the participle should not be surprising, especially since there is no aorist participle for the verb of being.) A similar occurrence can be seen in 4:2, where the aorist active participle *apothánontas* is used to translate *mētū* in a relative clause.

There are even a couple of instances in which a Greek passive participle is used to render a Qal perfect in a relative clause. This is simply dependent on the semantics of the sentence, as seen below:

(13) *rə'ēh ĥayyīm 'im-'iššāh 'ăšer-'āhabtā kol-yəmē ĥayyē heblekā 'ăšer* ***nātan****-ləkā taĥat haššemeš kol-yəmē heblekā* (9:9)

*idè zōḕn metà gunaikós, hē̃s ēgápēsas, pásas hēméras zōē̃s mataiótētós sou tàs* ***dotheísas*** *soi hupò tòn hḗlion, pásas hēméras mataiótētós sou* (9:9)

"Behold life with (the) woman whom you (have) loved, all of the days of your life of meaninglessness, which **he gave** (Greek 'those **given**') to you under the sun, all of the days of your meaninglessness"

Here, the Greek participle is called forth by the relative *'ăšer* preceding it, but why use a passive participle to translate an active verb? The answer has to do with the fact that there is no clear subject for the verb *nātan* in the Hebrew. It might be assumed that God gave, but the Greek translator did not wish to add a subject that was not there; instead, he turned it into a passive construction, thus downplaying the verb's agency and highlighting the action instead. This is a rare example and should not be considered normative, but it does provide a window into the way the Greek translator approached his task.

The Qal perfect was translated as an aorist active subjunctive seven times throughout the course of Ecclesiastes. As the subjunctive mood carries with it a note of uncertainty or even futurity, we should expect to see it show up in some of the same places that a future indicative would, and we do indeed find that. In fact, one of these seven examples can be found above in (10), where following the highlighted verb in the future one finds *ídēi* translating *wərā'āh*, which, as we have seen, is a perfect form given imperfective value via the *wə-* conjunction. In this example, it would seem that the future indicative and the aorist subjunctive have virtually the same function. See also 12:2-3 for a similar example where these two Greek verbal categories seem to freely interchange with each other to translate Hebrew verbs with imperfective value.

Of course, the subjunctive also carries with it an aspect of uncertainty that need not necessarily have future quality, and thus the Greek translator could choose to render a perfective verb with the subjunctive if he deemed it to refer simply to a possibility. For instance, in 9:14-15, four perfectives (with *wə-*) are rendered as subjunctives, most likely because the translator took them to be part of a parable rather than relaying actual events. Thus, at times a verb comes out as a subjunctive in Greek for no other reason than that the translator considered it to be a scenario divorced from reality.

### The Piel Perfect

Having looked at the translational landscape for tokens of the Qal perfect, we will now examine those in the perfect of other stems in the hopes of noting some differences. Beginning with the Piel perfect, we first notice that there are many fewer tokens of verbs outside the Qal; in this case, only 12 Piel perfects occur in the entire Book of Ecclesiastes. However, even with these 12 we get a fairly good distributional pattern from which we can see that, in general, the perfects of the Piel stem pattern in a way similar to those of the Qal stem. This should not come as a surprise, as the Piel stem does not differ dramatically or reliably from the Qal; in fact, a large number of the Piel tokens in the Book of Ecclesiastes are verbs such as *dibbēr* which occur only in the Piel with no noticeable difference in meaning from a Qal verb. Thus, the behavior of Piel perfects is similar to that of Qal perfects: to begin, 6 of 12 are translated by the aorist active indicative, yielding a percentage only slightly under that of Qal perfects for the same category. Only one of these involves a verb which also occurs in the Qal:

(14) *‘ōd* ***limmad****-da‘at ’et-hā‘ām…*(12:9)

*éti* ***edídaxen*** *gnō̃sin sùn tòn laón…*(12:9)

“Still, **he taught** knowledge to the people…”

The verb *lāmad* means ‘learn’ in the Qal and ‘teach’ in the Piel, but Greek does not simply take the verb ‘learn’ and change its stem as Hebrew would. Instead, Greek accounts for the difference in meaning by changing lexical items and then inflecting in the usual manner (i.e., the aorist active indicative). Thus, Piel verbs do not show a great difference from Qal verbs in translation, at least not exclusively in the perfective aspect.

The other six occurrences of the Piel perfect show a similar resemblance to phenomena already discussed under the Qal perfect. The one Piel perfect translated as an aorist passive indicative (12:3) is a stative in Hebrew; the lone instance of a translation as a future active indicative (9:15) as well as one of the three instances as an aorist active subjunctive (5:5) are due to the *wə-* conjunction (although the latter’s mood should be attributed to its placement in a *hína* clause); and the other two instances of the aorist active subjunctive are translated in such a way due to their inclusion in *(e)án* clauses, which take a subjunctive due to their irrealis nature (7:13 and 10:10). Finally, there appears to be one instance of a translation of a Piel perfect as a future middle indicative where the Greek translator simply didn’t know what was going on (12:9); he uncharacteristically bungles the entire verse, rendering what appears to be a statement of past action as a future. In general, however, the Piel perfect patterns with the Qal perfect for purposes of translation. (Trends will, however, become clear as we examine other aspects.)

### The Hiphil Perfect

The Hiphil perfect is represented by only eight tokens throughout the Book of Ecclesiastes, and these pattern with the Qal perfects and the Piel perfects. Although the Hiphil stem has causative meaning in Hebrew, the Greek translator was able to create the same effect in translation simply by choosing lexical items with causative meaning. For instance:

(15) *wə**hōlīd** bēn wə'ēn bəyādō mə'ūmāh* (5:13)

*kaì **egénnēsen** huión, kaì ouk éstin en kheirì autoû oudén* (5:13)

"And he begat a son, and there is nothing in his hand"

In Hebrew, the verb *yālad* in the Qal means 'to give birth'; thus, its Hiphil equivalent as seen above means 'to cause to give birth', and thus 'to beget'. In Greek, however, these two concepts are embodied in different lexical items rather than forming two grammatical parts of one lexical item; thus, the Greek translator was able to use a simple aorist active indicative to translate a Hiphil perfect. This will generally be the case with verbs in the Hiphil, allowing them to largely (although not completely, as we will see) fall together with verbs in the Qal or Piel in the Greek translation.

Five of the eight tokens of the Hiphil perfect (one of which is seen above) were rendered with an aorist active indicative, yielding nearly the same percentage as in both the Qal and Piel perfects. Of the other three, one is rendered as a future active indicative (2:24), and another as an aorist active subjunctive (12:1); each of these has the *wə-* prefix in Hebrew, and additionally the subjunctive token is placed in a clause of uncertainty by the Greek translator, thus calling forth the mood of the verb. Finally, one Hiphil perfect, namely the form *higdaltī* (1:16), is rendered as an aorist passive indicative; not surprisingly, this verb is translated with a form of *megalúnō*, a stative verb with causative meaning. Interestingly, that very same Hebrew verb form is translated as an aorist active indicative (again, of *megalúnō*) only six verses later (2:4); the reason appears to be that in the latter instance, the Hebrew verb takes a direct object and thus is not stative. That is to say, in 1:16, *higdaltī* means 'I became great', but it means 'I made X great' in 2:4. The Greek translator demonstrates his sensitivity to this fact by adjusting his translation of the verb accordingly. (Incidentally, some texts have the Qal *gādaltī* in 1:16, which would in fact make more sense given the fact that there seems to be no causative sense to that instance of the verb. Perhaps the Greek translator even had a manuscript with *gādaltī* in front of him when he rendered it as a passive; this would explain why only one other Hiphil verb is translated as a passive in the entire corpus, and that one dubiously.)

The Niphal Perfect

The Niphal stem is essentially the passive to the Qal, and as such we will see for the first time a marked departure from the translation norms of the Qal perfect. Out of the 18 instances of the Niphal perfect in the Book of Ecclesiastes, 17 are translated with a passive or mediopassive Greek verb; one is translated with an aorist active subjunctive (12:6), although this occurs in a loosely translated verse. (Note, however, that this token does have the *wə-* prefix, which we have come to associate with licensing imperfective value for perfective verbs.)

The most common tense-voice-mood of translation for the Hebrew Niphal perfect is the Greek perfect mediopassive participle, which occurs eight times. Each of these eight occurrences is a form of *ʿāśāh*, seven the singular *naʿăśāh* and one the plural *naʿăśū*, and all are translated by the Greek *pepoiēménon* (or the appropriate form in context). An example:

(16) *wəmah šen**naʿăśāh** hū’ šeyyēʿāśeh*…(1:9)

*kaì tí tò **pepoiēménon**, autò tò poiēthēsómenon*…(1:9)

“And what **has been done**, that (is) what will be done…”

Each of these eight tokens occurs in a Hebrew relative clause introduced either by *še* or ’*ăšer*. This strengthens the theory we formulated above concerning Qal perfects translated as participles. There is less clear evidence for why the perfect and not the aorist tense was used to translate the verbs (no *kəbār* is present), so it must be chalked up to the preference of the translator. The perfect participle is somewhat stronger in this context, although the aorist participle would have been acceptable as well.

Twice, the Niphal perfect (1:13) is translated as a present mediopassive participle, even though in both instances the Hebrew word is the same as in the example above (*naʻăśāh*). This is an unusual choice for the translator, and may either indicate that the vowel pointing was interpreted differently (for instance, *naʻăśeh*) or that he indulged in a rare case of *ad sensum* translation. In any case, these two instances of participial translation are nonetheless in relative clauses in Hebrew.

Four times, the Niphal perfect is translated as an aorist passive indicative. This might be considered the expected translation which best corresponds to the semantic features of the Niphal stem and the perfective aspect in the Hebrew, just as the aorist active indicative is for the previous stem-aspect classes we have considered. Three times, however, the Niphal perfect is rendered as a perfect mediopassive indicative. Twice (8:9 and 8:14), there seems to be no discernible reason for not translating with a perfect mediopassive participle or an aorist passive indicative, but another time the reason is clear:

(17) *mah-ššehāyāh kəbār* ***niqrā’*** *šəmō...*(6:10)

*eí ti egéneto, ḗdē* ***kéklētai*** *ónoma autoû...*(6:10)

“That which was, its name **has** already **been called**…”

Again, we have an example of a verb which could easily have been translated as an aorist but which is displaced to the perfect due to the presence of the adverb *kəbār*.

All in all, then, the Niphal perfect displays many traits similar to the Qal perfect in translation. Its most notable difference, of course, is its distinctly passive nature, which is recognized by the Greek translator and accounted for accordingly.

## Other Perfects

Three other stems exhibit one token each of the perfect in the Book of Ecclesiastes. One is the Hithpael, a generally reflexive stem, whose lone perfect *(wə)hit'awwətū* in 12:3 is translated by the Greek *diastraphō̃sin*, an aorist passive subjunctive. Since the verb essentially means 'bend themselves' or 'are bent', it makes sense that a Greek passive would be used to render it; the subjunctive mood can be explained both by the *wə-* prefix and the fact that the verb is in an *eán* clause. (We will see more about Hithpaels in the imperfective aspect.)

One example exists of a Pilpel perfect (10:10), a stem which essentially functions as a Piel for geminates and hollow verbs. In this case, the token is *qilqal*, and it is (dubiously) translated by *etáraxen*, an aorist active indicative. Although the translator may not have rendered this word or the phrase as a whole completely correctly, he does translate it in a way commensurate with Piel perfects, which is what we would expect for a verb of this stem.

Finally, there is one token of a Pual perfect (12:4). The Pual stem is essentially the passive to the Piel, and so it is odd that we find its one perfect representative in Ecclesiastes translated by the future active indicative:

(18) *wə**suggərū** dəlātayim baššūq…*(12:4)

"And doors **will be closed** in the street…"

*kaì **kleísousin** thúras en agorā̃i…*(12:4)

"And **they will close** doors in (the) marketplace…"

The future tense is explainable by the *wə-* conjunction, but the translation of a verb of an essentially passive stem by an active verb in Greek is less so. It must be assumed that the Greek translator was essentially carrying over the subject from the previous verse, where 'they' are mentioned; rather than leaving the agent undetermined, he chose to specify. This, however, goes against the general tactic of the translator to be as literal as possible. Perhaps a different reading of the vowel points (a Piel *siggərū*, for instance) is to blame.

# CHAPTER 4

# HEBREW IMPERFECTIVES

## The Qal Imperfect

Having examined all of the translational permutations of perfective verbs, we now turn to imperfective verbs, beginning with those in the Qal. There are 154 Qal imperfect verbs in the Book of Ecclesiastes, only four less than the number of Qal perfect tokens; and of these, 82 are translated as future indicatives into Greek, a 53-percent rate. Of these 82, a full 50 are in the middle voice, while 22 are active and 10 passive. We will take up the first two categories together, as the choice of one over the other is generally a lexical one (i.e., it is decided by the deponency or lack thereof of a given Greek verb in the future) and thus would seem to have little bearing on questions of translation.

The future active or middle is as close as we can come to identifying a 'default' translation for the Qal imperfect in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Although the imperfective aspect need not have future value in Hebrew (it could refer to ongoing action in any period of time), it appears to be used to refer to future tense quite often by the Hebrew author of Ecclesiastes, and the Greek translator renders it accordingly.

(19) *lo'-**yihyeh** lāhem zikkārōn*...(1:11)

*ouk **éstai** autoı̃s mnḗmē*... (1:11)

"There **will be** for them no ('they **will** not have') remembrance…"

(20) *kī ’ādām ’ēn şaddīq bā’āreş ’ăšer* ***ya‘ăśeh****-ṭōb wəlo’* ***yeĥeṭā’*** (7:20)

*hóti ánthrōpos ouk éstin díkaios en tē̃i gē̃i, hòs* ***poiḗsei*** *agathòn kaì oukh* ***hamartḗsetai*** (7:20)

“For there is no man righteous in the land who **will do** good and **will not** sin”

Although the translator was reluctant to translate the perfective of *hāyāh* with a form of the Greek verb *eimí*, he does so freely when *hāyāh* is an imperfective, as can be seen above. Incidentally, *eimí* is one of many Greek verbs whose paradigms are not deponent save for their future forms; this morphological fact of Greek explains why such a large proportion of the Greek future tokens used to translate the Qal imperfect in the Book of Ecclesiastes are in the middle voice.

The ten instances of a future passive indicative being used to render a Qal imperfect follow a pattern which we first noted in the Qal perfect. Specifically, these verbs are stative in nature, and are thus rendered best by a Greek passive:

(21) *wərā’ītī kī ’ēn ṭōb mē’ăšer* ***yiśmaĥ*** *hā’ādām bəma‘ăśāyw…* (3:22)

*kaì eī̃don hóti ouk éstin agathòn ei mḕ hò* ***euphranthḗsetai*** *ho ánthrōpos en poiḗmasin autoû…* (3:22)

“And I saw that there is no(thing) good except that man **will be happy** in his works…”

The passive translation is necessitated by the stative quality of the Hebrew verb. (Incidentally, one non-stative verb translated as a passive in this corpus is *zākar*, ‘remember’; this is due to the fact that its Greek equivalent is itself a stative, meaning essentially ‘to be mindful’. Thus, it occurs most often in the passive.) Interestingly, one would almost expect a subjunctive in the above example; the fact that a future is used illustrates the fact that the two are somewhat interchangeable in the mind of the translator.

This leads us into the discussion below of the well-attested, although slightly less common, rendering of the Qal imperfect as a Greek subjunctive. Of the 69 Greek subjunctives specifically translating a Hebrew verb in Ecclesiastes, 56 translate a verb in the imperfective aspect, and 42 of these translate Qal imperfects. Next to a translation as a future indicative, then, a subjunctive is the most likely grammatical category one would expect to see to render a Qal imperfect. What, then, is the common denominator among those imperfects rendered as subjunctives? The answer is that nearly all are linked by their presence in a subordinate clause, often in Hebrew and almost always in Greek. The clause is usually a relative one headed by *’ăšer* or one of its de facto compounds (*‘ad ’ăšer*, *ka’ăšer*, etc.), but the clause can also be headed by *’im*. The Greek uses such particles as *hína*, *(e)án*, *héōs*, *hópōs*, and *hótan* to translate these, each of which calls forth the subjunctive. An example:

(22) *gam ləkol-haddəbārīm ’ăšer yədabbērū ’al-tittēn libbekā ’ăšer lo’-**tišma‘** ’et-‘abdəkā məqaləlekā* (7:21)

*kaí ge eis pántas toùs lógous, hoùs lalḗsousin, mè thē̃is kardían sou, hópōs mḕ **akoúsēis** toû doúlou sou katarōménou se* (7:21)

“Indeed to all the words they say do not give your heart, so that **you might** not **hear** your servant cursing you”

The Hebrew of Ecclesiastes makes use of no special relative clause of purpose, and Hebrew in general has no special morphology to indicate a verb in such a clause, but Greek has both. As such, the Greek subjunctive often gets used in cases where the Hebrew simply makes do with an imperfective in a relative clause, as here. Clearly, however, not every Hebrew subordinate clause is rendered by a Greek subjunctive clause: context is key.

The example above also reveals the second reason why a subjunctive may be used to translate an imperfect, namely in prohibitions or negative commands such as *’al-tittēn* and *mè thē̃is* in (22) above. Although less common than the use of the subjunctive in relative clauses, this phenomenon is nonetheless sprinkled throughout the Book of Ecclesiastes, and it accounts for several instances of the Qal imperfect being translated as a subjunctive.

Thus far, we have dealt only with Qal imperfects translated as aorist active subjunctives (which are, to be sure, the majority, with 30 tokens). One aorist middle subjunctive is used (3:22), as are eight aorist passive subjunctives. These are all in subordinate clauses, and the passives can be explained in several ways: many are statives, as we have seen, but a few are ‘hyper-deponent’ verbs such as *phobéomai* ‘fear’ (3:14) which are regularly found in the passive with essentially active meaning. Additionally, there are two present mediopassive subjunctives and one present active subjunctive (5:17), the latter the only such token in Ecclesiastes. It is unclear why a present subjunctive was chosen over the much more common aorist subjunctive in that case, but there does seem to be something of a trigger which is shared by two of the three present mediopassive subjunctives that occur in Ecclesiastes:

(23) *šəmor ragləkā ka’ăšer* ***tēlēk*** *’el-bēt hā’ĕlohīm…*(4:17)

*phúlaxon póda sou, en hō̃i eàn* ***poreúēi*** *eis oîkon toû theoû...* (4:17)

“Guard your foot while **you go** to the house of God…”

It is noteworthy that the clause containing the Greek subjunctive is introduced by the Hebrew *ka’ăšer*, which roughly means ‘while’ or ‘during’. The difference between the aorist and present subjunctive is one of aspect; the aorist views the action of the verb as completed or punctual, while the present sees it as ongoing. It makes sense, then, that a term meaning ‘while’ would trigger a present subjunctive in its clause to convey the idea of continuing action. It would seem that little else is capable of doing so, as only four of the sixty-nine subjunctives in the book are present rather than aorist.

In eight instances, the Qal imperfect is translated as a present indicative: five of these are active and three are mediopassive. These will be considered together, as the mediopassives are to be translated actively (two are deponent and one is a stative). The Qal imperfect can often be comfortably translated by a verb in either the future tense or the present tense; such is the nature of a verb which is specified for imperfective aspect and little else. Thus, it would seem surprising that the Greek translator did not make a more equitable distribution between future and present translations, as many of the verbs translated as future could easily have been rendered as present. On the contrary, he translated only eight imperfective verbs as present indicative while rendering over ten times that number as future indicative. One might think, then, that these eight cases exhibited some clear reason for which the translator felt compelled to make use of a Greek present rather than a future. That does not, however, appear to be the case:

(24) *šōmēr mişwāh lo’* ***yēda‘*** *dābār rā‘ wə‘ēt ūmišpāṭ* ***yēda‘*** *lēb ĥākām* (8:5)

> “The one keeping a command **will** not **know** an evil word, and a wise heart **will know** (the right) time and judgment”
>
> *ho phulássōn entolḕn ou* ***gnṓsetai*** *hrē̃ma ponērón, kaì kairòn kríseōs* ***ginṓskei*** *kardía sophoû* (8:5)
>
> “The one keeping a command **will** not **know** an evil word, and a heart of a wise man **knows** a time of judgment”

Here we have a selection which contains two identical tokens of the verb *yāda‘* in the imperfect. One would expect that the Greek translator would render them identically as futures (or even as presents), but instead he chooses to translate one as a future and one as a present. There does not seem to be a clear reason for this, unless it is due to the fact that he seems to interpret the latter half of the verse as a general gnomic statement while attempting to relate the first half to what came immediately before. As it turns out, most (although not all) of the eight present indicatives in question relate general truths, so we might say that the translator’s modus operandi was to translate such pronouncements with the present tense. As can be seen above, however, this oftentimes simply reflected his subjective judgment on what was or was not a gnomic statement. Thus, a few of the Qal imperfects rendered as presents should almost certainly be rendered in the future tense, while many verbs rendered in the future tense would come across better as presents.

Seven Qal imperfects are translated as aorist active indicatives. This may seem like an odd choice until we take into account the ‘waw consecutive’, a special construction whereby an imperfective verb is prefixed by the conjunction *wa-* together with the doubling of the prefixed pronoun in order to create what is essentially a verb with perfective aspect. An example:

(25) *wəšabtī ’ănī* ***wā’er’eh*** *hebel taĥat haššāmeš* (4:7)

*kaì epéstrepsa egṑ kaì* ***eîdon*** *mataiótēta hupò tòn hḗlion* (4:7)

“And I turned and **saw** a meaningless thing under the sun”

Here, the imperfect-with-waw-consecutive is paired with a perfect verb (one which, incidentally, has a *wə-* prefix not to be read as a waw reversive), and both have perfective value. This construction occurs in two other places (1:17 and 4:1). In another instance, 6:12, it appears that the Greek translator mistook an ordinary *wə-* conjunction prefixed onto a Qal imperfect for a waw consecutive and translated accordingly. This leaves three relatively unexplainable instances (3:14, 9:12, 10:14) of the aorist active indicative being used to translate a Qal imperfect, however. In these three cases, it is unclear what motivated the choice of translation, but it should be noted that two of the tokens are from the *yāda‘/gignōskō* paradigm (‘know’).

Seven times, the Qal imperfect is translated as a participle. Each of these seven instances translates a form of *hāyāh*, either with a form of *eimí* or of *gínomai*, and all of them are middle participles. Additionally, all appear in relative clauses, something we have come to expect. Four are future participles, a category dying out in the Koine period but still alive here:

(26) *kī-’ēnennū yodēa‘ mah-šey****yihyeh****…* (8:7)

*hóti ouk éstin ginṓskōn tí tò* ***esómenon****…* (8:7)

"For there is no one knowing what **will be**…"

One Qal imperfect is rendered as a present participle (2:18), a choice whose motivations are difficult to discern but which still lies within the bounds of translational propriety for the Qal imperfect. In two instances, however, an aorist participle is employed. In each of these cases (1:11 and 10:14), it seems clear that future time is in view, and so it is unclear why the Greek translator used a participle which implies completed action. It should be noted, though, that the instance of this in 10:14 is adjacent to one of the instances of the Qal imperfect being translated as an aorist active indicative (see above); it would seem, then, that the translator took a whole clause which is imperfective in Hebrew and rendered it as if it were perfective. Although it might be argued that he simply thought it sounded better this way (as it causes the clause in question to contrast with the next one), this seems unlikely in view of the translator's general philosophy of literality. Perhaps, then, he had a variant Hebrew text at hand which had this reading.

In three instances, the Qal imperfect is rendered as a Greek infinitive. Although this is clearly something of a stylistic choice on the part of the translator, it does seem to have a trigger, as we will see:

(27) *ṭōb ’ăšer lo’-****tiddor*** *mišše****ttiddōr*** *wəlo’ təšallēm* (5:4)

*agathòn tò mḕ* ***eúxasthaí*** *se ḕ tò* ***eúxasthaí*** *se kaì mḕ apodoûnai* (5:4)

"(It is) good for you not **to vow** rather than for you **to vow** and not make good on it"

Both here and in the other case where an articular infinitive is used to translate a Qal imperfect (7:18), the verb is preceded by the Hebrew phrase *ṭōb ’ăšer*; this phrase, when translated literally, works best when followed by an articular infinitive in Greek rather than by a finite verb.

(A New Testament author most likely would have used a *hína* clause here; the translator shares more in common with Attic style than with Koine style in this instance.) The infinitives above are aorist middle, while the one in 7:18 is present middle; there is a slight difference in aspect between them (the latter may be interpreted to mean continual action), but we will have to wait until we have examined more infinitives to discuss this.

Finally, the Qal imperfect is translated as an imperative five times. Three of these are instances of the Hebrew jussive:

(28) *bəkol-ʻēt* ***yihyū*** *bəgādeykā ləbānīm wəšemen ʻal-ro'šəkā 'al* ***yeĥsār*** (9:8)

*en pantì kairō̃i* ***éstōsan*** *himátiá sou leuká, kaì élaion epì kephalḗn sou mḕ* ***husterēsátō*** (9:8)

“At all times **may** your clothes **be** white, and **may** oil never **be lacking** upon your head”

Here, we see two jussives (the other can be found in 5:1); the Greek present imperative is used to refer to ongoing action (“may they *continue to be*” or “may they *always be*”) while the aorist indicates a one-time event (“may it not be lacking *at any point*”). The other two cases of the Qal imperfect being translated as an imperative are instances of prohibitions: although the aorist subjunctive is more commonly used for this, the present imperative can do so as well. (See 7:16 and 7:17, where *'al təhī* is translated twice by *mḕ gínou*.)

The Existential Verbs *yēš* and *'ēn*

In many ways, the two existential verbs of Hebrew, *yēš* ‘there is/are’ and *'ēn* ‘there is/are not’, defy categorization. Morphologically speaking, they are not perfective or imperfective or anything else; however, since their meaning is largely ‘Qal imperfective’, we will discuss them here.

The verb *yēš* is translated into Greek 15 times in Ecclesiastes, and every time it is translated as a present active indicative, specifically as the verb *éstin*. The verb *'ēn* is somewhat more common, being translated 37 times, 35 of which are rendered as the present active indicative *ouk éstin*. An example of both:

(29) ***yēš*** *’eĥād wə**’ēn** šēnī…* (4:8)

***éstin*** *heîs, kaì **ouk éstin** deúteros…* (4:8)

“**There is** one, and **there is not** a second…”

Only twice is *’ēn* translated differently. In 1:7, it is translated by the future middle (deponent) indicative *ouk éstai*; this appears to be simply a stylistic choice. In 4:10, it is rendered by the present active subjunctive *ē̃i*; this is due to its presence in a subordinate clause introduced by the Greek *hótan*. Thus, the verbs of being behave much like verbs in the Qal imperfect, except for the rather important distinction that they are almost always translated as presents rather than futures.

The Piel Imperfect

The Piel imperfect shows many of the same trends as does the Qal imperfect, just as the two largely pattern together in the perfective aspect. Out of 19 occurrences of the Piel imperfect, 9 are translated as future active indicative, a 56-percent rate. An example:

(30) *wəyitrōn da‘at haĥokmāh **təĥayyeh** bə‘āleyhā* (7:12)

*kaì perisseía gnṓseōs tē̃s sophías **zōopoiḗsei** tòn par’ autē̃s* (7:12)

“And an abundance of knowledge of wisdom **will cause to live** those (Greek ‘him’) possessing it”

Many of the verbs occurring in the Piel imperfect in the Book of Ecclesiastes have clear semantic differences from their Qal counterparts, such as in the example above. However, as already noted, Greek generally deals with this change in meaning via lexical rather than morphological means. Here, though, the Greek translation makes a game attempt at literality, as the verb *zōopoiéō* has much the same relation with its constituent *záō* as the Piel of *ĥāyāh* does with its

Qal form. In both cases a causative element is introduced, although Greek does so in a much more analytic way.

Four times, the Piel imperfect is rendered as an aorist subjunctive, twice active and twice middle. All of these (5:3, 7:9, two in 10:20) occur in prohibitions, something we have already examined in the Qal imperfect. Twice, the Piel imperfect is translated as a present active indicative (7:7 and 10:19); as these are proverbial pronouncements, it makes sense that the translator chose a present translation. The Piel imperfect is rendered once as an aorist active infinitive (see the last word of (27) above), the reason being its context more than anything else. Finally, the Piel imperfect is translated twice as a present active imperative, both in prohibitions in 5:1.

Additionally, the Piel imperfect is rendered once as an aorist passive:

(31) *ūbəkēn rā'ītī rəšā'īm qəburīm wābā'ū umimməqōm qādōš* ***yəhallēkū*** *wəyištakkəĥū bā'īr 'ăšer kēn-'āśū…* (8:10)

*kaì tóte eîdon asebeîs eis táphous eisakhthéntas, kaì ek tópou hagíou* ***eporeúthēsan*** *kaì epēinéthēsan en tē̃i pólei, hóti hoútōs epoiēsan…*(8:10)

"And then I saw evil men buried (Greek "led into tombs"), and they **went** from the holy place and were forgotten (Greek "were praised") in the city since they did so…"

Clearly, there is more going on in this verse than the simple odd translation of a Piel imperfect: for instance, the Greek translator read (mistakenly or due to a variant manuscript) the verb *šābaĥ* 'praise' rather than *šākaĥ* 'forget', changing the meaning of the verse entirely. (Incidentally, the Hebrew letters for 'b' and 'k' look rather similar, and so it is not hard to see how this could have happened.) However, for now we will keep the discussion to the grammatical properties of the verb in bold print, together with the immediately following one. Both our Piel imperfect and the Hithpael imperfect which follows (see below) are translated as aorist passive indicatives. *Eporeúthēsan* is a deponent, which explains the passive voice, but why are two imperfective verbs in a row translated as aorists? Since the answer to this question is that the context clearly demands it, why then are imperfectives to be translated as 'past tense'? It helps to remember that the imperfective has no tense distinction: it could refer to ongoing action *at any point in time*. It just so happens that its point in time is almost always in the present or the future, but here it would seem that we have examples of what may be referred to as 'imperfects' in traditional European grammars. Why, then, were they not translated as such into Greek? As mentioned, the Greek translator simply did not make use of imperfects (except in three cases of the verb of being), so he went with the next best thing. Even so, this would have been the optimal time to use the Greek imperfect.

### The Hiphil Imperfect

The Hiphil imperfect occurs 26 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes, and 15 times it is translated as a future active indicative, a 58-percent rate. The Hiphil imperfect patterns much like the Qal imperfect and the Piel imperfect, just as these three stems in the perfect are translated similarly. An example of a translation as a future:

(32) *kī 'im-yippolū hā'eĥād* ***yāqīm*** *'et-ĥabērō*...(4:10)
*hóti eàn pésōsin, ho heîs* ***egereî*** *tòn métokhon autoû*...(4:10)
"For if they fall, the one **will raise** his companion…"

Again, the causative of the verb 'to stand' is expressed via stem alternation in Hebrew but by a different lexical item in Greek.

Five times, the Hiphil imperfect is translated as an aorist subjunctive. Two of these occur in negative commands (7:18 and 10:4), and three occur in subordinate clauses (6:3, twice in 12:5). (One of these is in fact passive, but this fact seems to be a result of fuzzy interpretation more than anything else.) Three times, the Hiphil imperfect is rendered as a present (2:18, 10:14, 11:3); these can generally be classified as proverbial statements, although here there can be seen some room for translator license. Also, twice the Hiphil imperfect is translated as an imperative, once present and once aorist (11:6 and 11:9); these examples are jussives in the Hebrew.

Once, the Hiphil imperfect is translated as a present active participle. Besides being the only instance when an imperfect of any stem is translated in this way in Ecclesiastes, this may also be noteworthy for being one of the few examples in the book in which the natural tendency of Greek to carry the narrative via participles shines through:

(33) *wə**yōsīp** da‘at yōsīp mak’ōb* (1:18)
“And (he/it) **will add** knowledge, (he/it) will add pain”
*kaì **ho prostitheìs** gnō̃sin prosthḗsei álgēma* (1:18)
“And **the one adding** knowledge will add pain”

It would seem, however, that the Greek translator may be taking this verb as a Qal participle (a possible reading with different vowel pointing) rather than a Hiphil imperfect. If so, his translation is much less remarkable, as the translation of a participle by a participle is much more common (see below). In fact, a Hebrew participle may make better sense in the context, if indeed the verse is to be understood as the translator thought it should be.

The Niphal Imperfect

The Niphal imperfect occurs 12 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes, and of these seven are translated as future passive indicatives. Given what we know about the translation of the Niphal and of the imperfect, this is hardly a surprise:

(34) *kol-‘ămal hā’ādām ləpīhū wəgam-hannepeš lo’ **timmālē’*** (6:7)
*pâs mókhthos toû anthrṓpou eis stóma autoû, kaì ge hē psukhḕ ou **plērōthḗsetai*** (6:7)
“Every effort of man (is) for his mouth, and indeed the soul **will** not **be filled**”

In another place, the Niphal imperfect is rendered as a future passive participle (1:9); this can be explained by its presence in a relative clause. Thus, the translator chose to render the Niphal imperfect as some sort of future passive the majority of the time.

Three times, we find a translation as an aorist passive subjunctive. Two of these occur in 12:6 and one in 11:3, and all three appear in subordinate clauses which occasion the translation as a subjunctive. The passive rendering is, of course, to be expected due to the fact that it is the Hebrew Niphal which is being translated. Finally, the Niphal imperfect is translated once as a future active indicative. Why is a Niphal token translated here by the Greek active voice? The answer is a rare translation-via-lexical-choice of a Niphal token by the Greek translator:

(35) *bōqēa‘ ‘ēşīm* ***yissāken*** *bām* (10:9)

*skhízōn xúla* ***kinduneúsei*** *en autoîs* (10:9)

“The one cutting trees **will be endangered** by them”

Here, the idea of the verb is passive, and the Hebrew stem choice reflects this. However, the Greek verb *kinduneúō* can itself have the stative or passive meaning ‘be in danger’ while nonetheless being an active verb. Thus, the Greek translator makes a rare (correct) translation of a verb in the Hebrew Niphal by means of a non-passive Greek verb.

Other Imperfects

The Hithpael imperfect occurs four different times and is translated in four different ways. As the Hithpael is a reflexive-type stem, its one translation as an aorist passive subjunctive (12:5) is perhaps the most expected one. Also, one instance in a prohibition (7:16) is translated as a present mediopassive imperative. However, two other tokens are not as easily explained. We have already referenced the translation of a Hithpael imperfect as an aorist passive indicative in 8:10 (see (31) above, where *wəyištakkəĥū* is translated by *epēinéthēsan*); in this case, the imperfective should be taken as a continual past tense, which helps to explain the aorist indicative translation of an imperfective since the translator did not willingly use the Greek imperfect. Finally, there is one instance of a Hithpael imperfect translated as a future active indicative:

(36) *wə’ēnennū ĥāsēr lənapšō mikkol ’ăšer-**yit’awweh**…*(6:2)

*kaì ouk éstin husterō̃n tē̃i psukhē̃ autoû apò pántōn, hō̃n **epithumḗsei**…* (6:2)

“And there is no(thing) lacking to his heart from all which **he will desire**…”

The translation of a token of a reflexive stem into the active voice may seem odd, but the Hithpael of the verb in question (*’āwāh*, ‘incline’) means ‘incline oneself’, that is, ‘desire’. Thus, the Greek translator was able to render this idea with the active of the Greek verb *epithuméō*, which simply means ‘desire’. The future active indicative here fits the sense of the Hithpael imperfect well, although ordinarily we might expect a middle or passive verb to render a verb in that Hebrew stem (as indeed we see in every other instance of it in Ecclesiastes.)

The Hithpoel imperfect occurs once (7:16) in the verb *tiššōmēm*, which is rendered by the Greek aorist active subjunctive *ekplagē̃is*. As the Hithpoel is simply the Hithpael for geminates, it is not surprising that the stem fits under the general translational rubric given above. Although a Greek active translates this Hithpoel, the verb *ekplḗssō* can have a mediopassive or reflexive sense to it, thus fitting the expected sense.

The Poel imperfect occurs once (7:7) in the verb *yəhōlēl*, and is translated by the present active indicative *periphérei*. Although a different translation may have brought out the causative nature of this stem based off of the Piel better, this translation nonetheless exhibits the tense-voice-mood we would expect for a Poel imperfect in a proverbial statement. Thus, there is little of note to discuss here.

The Pual imperfect, the passive of the Piel, occurs three times in Ecclesiastes. Twice, it is translated as a future passive indicative:

(37) *ūbaḥ̂ošek šəmō* ***yəkusseh*** (6:4)

*kaì en skótei ónoma autoû* ***kaluphthḗsetai*** (6:4)

"And in darkness his name **will be covered**"

This is the translation we would expect for the imperfective of a passive stem, given the data we have already considered. (This also occurs in 8:1). However, the Pual imperfect is translated once as a present active indicative in 9:4; this apparently is the result of a variant reading (*ḥ̂ābar* 'unite' in place of *bāḥ̂ar* 'choose') which allows an active rendering of that particular instance of the Pual. In this case, the Greek translator is able to use the verb *koinōneî* 'shares' to encompass the meaning of the Hebrew *yəḥ̂ubbar* 'will be (is) joined together'. This, then, is another example of Greek using a different lexeme to render a change of stem in Hebrew.

# CHAPTER 5

# HEBREW PARTICIPLES

## The Qal Participle

The participle is a flexible form in Hebrew; depending on the context, it can function much as a participle would in European languages, or it can act as the main verb in the sentence. This dichotomy leads to a corresponding flexibility in its translation into Greek: out of 85 instances of the Qal participle, 45 are translated as finite indicatives, 38 as participles, one as a subjunctive, and one as an infinitive. Out of these, the large majority, 66 out of 85, are translated as presents, which makes sense since the participle naturally intends some sort of ongoing present action.

The great divide lies between those participles which are rendered as indicatives in Greek and those which are rendered as participles. As we have seen, there is a relatively equitable distribution between the two, so we cannot say that one was simply preferred over the other. Rather, there must have been criteria by which the translator generally chose one over the other. Let us examine a few examples:

(38) *dōr* ***holēk*** *wədōr* ***bā’****...* (1:4)

*geneà* ***poreúetai*** *kaì geneà* ***érkhetai****...*(1:4)

“A generation **goes** and a generation **comes**…”

(39) *hakkol* ***hōlēk*** *’el-māqōm ’eĥād...* (3:20)

*tà pánta* ***poreúetai*** *eis tópon héna...* (3:20)

“All things **are going** to one place…”

(40) *wəla**ĥōṭe’** nātan ‘inyān le’ĕsōp*... (2:26)

*kaì tō̃i **hamartánonti** édōken perispasmòn toû prostheînai*... (2:26)

“And to **the sinning one** he gave a task to gather up…”

(41) *yeš şaddīq **’obēd** bəşidqō*...(7:15)

*éstin díkaios **apollúmenos** en dikaíōi autoû*... (7:15)

“There is a righteous man **perishing** in his righteous(ness)…”

These examples, although limited, reveal some important trends which hold throughout the large majority of the other tokens. As we can see, the Hebrew participle is used in two ways: it can either act in place of the main finite verb in the sentence in order to give an air of immediacy to the aspect of the action, or it can act as a substantive or an attributive. The Greek translator recognized this difference and translated accordingly. When the Hebrew participle is the main verb in the sentence, as in (38) and (39), it is nearly always translated as a finite verb into Greek. When, however, it acts as a substantive as in (40) or as an attributive as in (41), it is generally translated as a participle into Greek. Essentially, if the translation of a Hebrew participle as a Greek finite verb would have required a relative clause to support it, the translator simply rendered it as a participle. This is not surprising, as we have already seen that Greek stylistics prefers participial translations over relative clauses even if there is no participle present in the Hebrew.

This sufficiently explains the 30 instances (19 active, 11 mediopassive/deponent) in which the Qal participle is translated as a present indicative, and the 35 instances (27 active, 8 mediopassive/deponent) in which the Qal participle is translated as a present participle. Only once is a Qal participle translated as a future indicative (9:5); this seems to be a stylistic choice and could easily have been translated as a present indicative. Also, we see one time a translation of a Qal participle as a present mediopassive subjunctive (10:3); this is occasioned by its presence in a *kəše-* (Greek *hótan*) relative clause which introduces a note of uncertainty.

Eight times, the Qal participle is translated by a Greek perfect tense, five active indicatives and three active participles. This may seem a difficult translational choice to reconcile until we note that all but two of these (one indicative, one participle) are instances of the verb *yāda'* translated as a form of *oîda*, a Greek verb which is translated with present value although it is morphologically a perfect. Thus, we in fact find an expected translation for these Hebrew participles, barring the Greek morphological irregularity. The case of the one remaining Qal participle rendered as a perfect active indicative (1:4, *'omādet* translated by *héstēken*) may be influenced by the fact that the Greek lexeme in question has causative nuances in its present form (although an aorist translation might have solved this problem), and the final instance of a Qal participle being translated as a perfect active participle (4:2, *hammētīm* translated by *tethnēkótas*) seems to be occasioned by the semantic nuances of the Hebrew term which can imply completed and not just ongoing action. It should be noted that the general outlines sketched above for predicting where a participle or a finite verb will be utilized in translation continue to operate in all of these instances.

In eight more cases, the Qal participle is translated as an aorist indicative, seven active and one passive. (The passive (12:5) is a form of *poreúomai*, and is thus a 'hyper-deponent' to be translated as an active.) As the Hebrew participle refers to some kind of ongoing action with no reference to time, it is conceivable that the participle should be translated as a past-tense finite verb if the context demands it; however, as little of Ecclesiastes takes place in the past, this generally does not come into play in this book. Only once can the case be convincingly made that the participle should be translated as a past tense:

(42) *tartī bəlibbī limšōk bayyayin ’et bəśārī wəlibbī* ***nohēg*** *baĥokmāh…*(2:3)

*kateskepsámēn en kardíāi mou toû helkúsai eis oînon tḕn sárka mou, kaì kardía mou* ***hōdḗgēsen*** *en sophíāi…*(2:3)

“I considered in my heart to drag my flesh into wine, and my heart **was acting** in wisdom…”

In this instance, it seems clear that the participle refers to past ongoing action, as it is dependent on the main perfective verb. (As such, the Greek imperfect would have been a better choice than the aorist here, but we have already seen the Greek translator’s distaste for using the imperfect.) However, the other seven instances of a Qal participle translated as an aorist indicative do not seem to share this rationale, and indeed at least one (12:5) seems flat-out mistranslated with respect to its tense. Several seem to be in proverbial statements, which is odd since such verbs are usually translated as presents:

(43) *’ăšer* ***ĥoṭe’ ‘ośeh*** *rā‘…*(8:12)

“(He) who **sins does** evil…”

*hòs* ***hḗmarten****,* ***epoíēsen*** *tò ponēròn…* (8:12)

“(He) who **sinned did** evil…”

As we have discussed, proverbial statements are somewhat timeless, so the choice of an aorist in such phrases should not be considered a mistranslation; rather, the oddity is that there seems to be no pattern as to which are translated as presents (or futures) and which as aorists. In any case, there seems to be no better reason for most instances of the translation of a Qal participle as an aorist indicative than some kind of perception on the part of the Greek translator that the action should be completed or punctual, even though this goes against the very nature of the participle.

Once, the Qal participle is translated as an aorist active infinitive (5:7). (Morphologically, the Greek verb in question, *phuláxai*, could also be an aorist middle imperative, although this makes less sense than an infinitive in the context.) There seems to be little reason for this translation, and it may well result from a variant reading of the vowel points.

The Qal Passive Participle

Six Qal passive participles occur in Ecclesiastes, and all are translated into Greek by means of mediopassive participles. Three are rendered as presents and three as perfects. The difference is purely one of context, as can be seen below:

(44) *yēš rā‘āh ĥōlāh rā’ītī taĥat haššāmeš ‘ošer* ***šāmūr*** *lib‘ālāyw lərā‘ātō* (5:12)

*éstin arrōstía, hḕn eîdon hupò tòn hḗlion, ploûton* ***phulassómenon*** *tō̃i par’ autoû eis kakían autoû* (5:12)

“There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: wealth **being guarded** by its owner to his harm”

(45) *‘ēt lāṭa‘at wə‘ēt la‘ăqōr* ***nāṭūa‘*** (3:2)

*kairòs toû phuteûsai kaì kairòs toû ektîlai* ***pephuteuménon*** (3:2)

“A time to plant and a time to uproot **that which has been planted**”

Although there is no distinction in the Hebrew morphology, the Qal passive participle can refer either to ongoing or completed action. The Greek translator thus renders a present or a perfect participle depending on his estimate of what would be most appropriate for the context.

The Piel Participle

The Piel participle occurs five times in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Four are translated as participles (three active, one mediopassive/deponent), and one as a present active indicative. Generally, the same translational patterns discussed for the Qal participle also apply here. One example:

(46) *ra’ītī ’et-kol-haĥayyīm ha**məhalləkīm** taĥat haššāmeš…* (4:15)

*eîdon sùn pántas toùs zō̃ntas toùs **peripatoûntas** hupò tòn hḗlion…* (4:15)

“I saw all those living **walking around** under the sun…”

The Greek translator chooses participial translation because to not do so would require a relative clause. Also, he uses an unusual word to translate *hālak* due to its semantic connotations in the Piel.

The Hiphil Participle

Of the seven Hiphil participles occurring in Ecclesiastes, three are translated as present active indicatives and four as present active participles. These generally follow the rules we have outlined, but two of the instances of an indicative translation are a bit unusual:

(47) *wəyēš rəšā‘īm šem**maggīa‘** ’ălēhem kəma‘ăśēh haşşaddīqīm…*(8:14)

*kaì eisìn asebeîs hóti **phthánei** pròs autoùs hōs poíēma tō̃n dikaíōn…* (8:14)

“And there are wicked whom **it happens** to them in accordance with a deed of the righteous…”

In this instance and another in the same verse, the Greek uses a relative clause rather than simply using a participle. This appears to be due to the fact that the Hebrew participle in question is not in fact an attributive adjective of the previous noun but rather the main verb in a new (albeit relative) clause with a new subject. Thus, what at first glance may appear to be an unnecessary use of a relative clause by the Greek translator is in fact a construction crucial for the verse to make sense (if we could say that the verse does indeed make sense without a more *ad sensum* translation). All in all, then, the Hiphil participle shows no principle of translation different from what we have already considered.

## The Niphal Participle

The Niphal participle occurs eleven times in Ecclesiastes, and, as it is the participle to a passive stem, it is translated as a passive (or mediopassive) into Greek all but once. (The translation of *hannišbāʻ* by the active *omnúōn* in 9:2 is due to the fact that the Hebrew verb is a 'deponent'.) Seven times it is translated as a Greek present, five times as a participle (including the example just mentioned) and twice as an indicative. Apart from the passive nature of the Niphal stem, the same general rules for the translation of participles are followed as outlined above.

Twice the Niphal participle is translated as an aorist passive indicative:

(48) *bəšekkəbār hayyāmīm habbā'īm hakkol* ***niškāĥ****...*(2:16)

"As previously, the coming days all **will be forgotten**…"

*kathóti ḗdē hai hēmérai hai erkhómenai tà pánta* ***epelḗsthē****...* (2:16)

"Just as already, (in) the coming days all **was forgotten**…"

As can be seen, this translation (and the other instance of this in 6:10) is due either to a variant reading or a simple mistranslation. A variant reading would not be surprising, as a shortening of the final vowel of the participle is all that would be necessary to turn this Niphal participle (and several others) into a Niphal perfect.

Finally, the Niphal participle is rendered twice as a perfect mediopassive participle (5:8, 12:14). In the last of these instances, it appears that a translation in the past tense is indeed necessary based on the context; in the first instance, this is not so clear. Nonetheless, just as with the Qal passive participle, we see that the translator was comfortable in using a past tense when he felt the context called for it. It would seem that perfective value is expressed much more naturally by these passive Hebrew participles than by their active counterparts (or rather, the latter require a finite past-tense in the vicinity to be interpreted as perfectives while the former can take such value on their own).

The Pual Participle

Only two participles of any other Hebrew stem are translated into Greek in Ecclesiastes, both of them Pual participles. One, *mə‘uwwāt* (1:15), is translated as *diestramménon*, a perfect mediopassive participle; the translation is essentially as we would expect, as the verb seems to describe a completed action. The other Pual participle, though, is somewhat defective:

(49) ***yūqāšīm*** *bənē hā’ādām lə‘ēt rā‘āh…*(9:12)

***pagideúontai*** *hoi huioì toû anthrṓpou eis kairòn ponērón…*(9:12)

"The sons of man **are caught** in an evil time…"

There are two problems with this Pual participle: first, it lacks the preformative *mə-*, and secondly, it lacks a dagesh forte in the middle root letter. The vowel pointing and semantics check out, though. Assuming, then, that this is indeed a Pual participle, we can say that it is translated as we would expect: occurring as it does as the main verb of its clause, it is translated as a finite verb by the Greek translator, and its present tense and mediopassive voice are also nothing out of the ordinary for a participle of a passive Hebrew stem.

# CHAPTER 6

# HEBREW INFINITIVES

## The Qal Infinitive

The infinitive is perhaps the simplest verbal form in any language, and as such it comes over fairly clearly and predictably from Hebrew to Greek. Out of the 85 Qal infinitives translated in the Book of Ecclesiastes, 81 are rendered as Greek infinitives. However, Greek specifies its infinitives for aspect and voice, and so there are in fact five types of infinitives used to translate the Qal infinitive based upon the context. Of these, the aorist active infinitive might be considered the ‘default’ infinitival translation. It is used in 54 of the 85 instances, yielding a 63 percent rate of translation:

(50) *hinnēh ’ăšer-rā’ītī ’ānī ṭōb ’ăšer-yāpeh **le’ĕkōl** wə**lištōt** wə**lir’ōt** ṭōbāh bəkol-‘ămālō…* (5:17)

*idoù hò eîdon egṑ agathón, hó estin kalón, **toû phageîn** kaì **toû pieîn** kaì **toû ideîn** agathōsúnēn en pantì mókhthōi autoû…*(5:17)

“This is what I saw (to be) good, that it is beautiful **to eat** and **to drink** and **to see** goodness in all his labor…”

The choice of the aorist active infinitive to translate the Qal infinitive makes sense in the majority of cases. First, Qal infinitives are generally active in voice, and so Greek active infinitives are used most often to render them. Also, many Hebrew infinitives in Ecclesiastes refer to timeless (aoristic) rather than continuing actions (as in the above cases), and so the Greek ‘perfective’ infinitive renders them better than the Greek ‘imperfective’ infinitive. The eight instances of a translation as an aorist middle infinitive should be added here, as these are of ‘deponent’ verbs which have active meaning. Finally, we can also pass over the eleven aorist passive infinitives translating Qal infinitives without much further discussion: these are either infinitives to ‘hyper-deponents’ (specifically *poreuthē̃nai*) or are translations of stative Hebrew verbs (such as *liśmōaĥ* by *tou euphranthē̃nai* ‘to be happy’). All in all, 73 of the 85 instances of the Qal infinitive in Ecclesiastes are translated via an aorist infinitive.

The Greek present infinitive is used much more rarely, translating only eight Qal infinitives. (Seven are active, and one is the deponent mediopassive *gínesthai*.) These instances are not completely predictable by the context, but the aspectual difference as viewed by the Greek translator is nonetheless generally visible. An example:

(51) *ūbe‘āmāl še‘āmaltī* ***la‘ăśōt****...*(2:11)

*kaì en mókhthōi, hō̃i emókhthēsa* ***toû poieîn****...*(2:11)

“And in the labor which I labored **to do**…”

One might envision this as continuing action rather than as an action viewed as a totality, thus calling forth the present infinitive. On the other hand, the evidence is not always so clear:

(52) *yāda‘tī kī ’ēn ṭōb bām kī ’im-****liśmōaĥ*** *wə****la‘ăśōt*** *ṭōb bəĥayyāyw* (3:12)

*égnōn hóti ouk éstin agathòn en autoîs ei mḕ* ***toû euphranthē̃nai*** *kaì* ***toû poieîn*** *agathòn en zōē̃i autoû* (3:12)

“I knew that there is no good in them but **to be happy** and **to do** good in their life”

Here, we see the juxtaposition of two Greek infinitives, the first aorist and the second present. It seems difficult to posit that one must refer to punctual action and one to continual action, since both occur together in the same context. It is possible that the Greek translator really did mean ‘to be happy (at one point) and to do good (continually)’, but barring this we will simply have to conclude that the rubric used to determine whether a given infinitive should be translated as an aorist or a present was somewhat loose.

Of the four remaining instances of a Qal infinitive in Ecclesiastes, two are translated as aorist active indicatives. These Qal infinitives share something in common, namely that they are the rarely seen infinitive absolute (as opposed to the more common infinitive construct).

(53) *’et-kol-zeh rā’ītī wə**nātōn** ’et-libbī ləkol-ma‘ăśeh…*(8:9)

*kaì sùn pân toûto eîdon kaì **édōka** tḕn kardían mou eis pân poíēma…*(8:9)

“And all this I saw and **I gave** my heart to every deed…”

Both here and in 9:11, an infinitive absolute is translated as an aorist active indicative, and with good reason: rather than functioning as an infinitive normally does, here it clearly has the function of carrying forward the narrative. Since the previous verb with aspectual value was perfective, it is assumed that this verb too should have perfective value and is translated accordingly. This specialized use of the Hebrew infinitive absolute, then, results in its translation in Greek as a finite verb.

Two other times, a Hebrew infinitive (construct) is translated by means of a Greek finite verb, once as a future active indicative (3:18) and once as a present middle participle (6:9). Each of these occurs in syntactically awkward phrases, however, and it would be difficult to render the Hebrew infinitives as infinitives in Greek, literality notwithstanding. Also, especially in the last example, there is the possibility for a variant reading as a participle with different pointing, which could explain the participial translation.

### The Piel Infinitive

The Piel infinitive is translated into Greek ten times, and it shows little variation from the pattern of translation noted for the Qal infinitive. Six of these are rendered by aorist active infinitives, which we have noted as the ‘default translation’ for Hebrew infinitives thus far:

(54) *ka’ăšer tiddor neder lē’lohīm ‘al-tə’aĥer* ***ləšalləmo****…* (5:3)

*kathṑs àn eúxēi eukhḕn tō̃i theō̃i, mḕ khronísēis* ***toû apodoûnai*** *autḗn…* (5:3)

“When you vow a vow to God, do not be slow **to fulfill** it…”

As usual, the Greek translator accounts for the semantics inherent in the Piel stem by adjusting his choice of lexeme (assuming, of course, that the Hebrew verb in question is not a Piel-only verb such as *dibber*). Another instance of the Piel infinitive (2:20) is translated as an aorist middle infinitive; although the translation here appears to be a bit off, the syntax is nonetheless preserved and is as expected. Two more Piel infinitives are translated as present active infinitives (1:8 and 3:7); both of these are the verb *ladabbēr* rendered as *toû laleîn*. The act of speaking was also translated with the present rather than the aorist infinitive in the Qal, so perhaps the translator envisioned it as an inherently continual action. Finally, one Piel infinitive is translated as an aorist active indicative (*(wə)šabbēaĥ* by *epḗinesa* in 4:2); this is another instance of a Hebrew infinitive absolute being used in the manner of a finite verb and being rendered accordingly.

The Hiphil Infinitive

The Hiphil infinitive occurs eight times in Ecclesiastes, and these are rendered as aorist active infinitives without exception:

(55) *‘āśītī lī bərēkōt māyim* ***ləhašqōt*** *mēhem ya‘ar şōmēaĥ ‘ēşīm* (2:6)

*epoíēsá moi kolumbḗthras hudátōn* ***toû potísai*** *ap’ autō̃n drumòn blastō̃nta xúla* (2:6)

“I made for myself basins of water **to water** a grove bearing trees”

Again, just as in the Piel, the semantic qualities of verbs in the Hiphil are rendered in Greek by a shift in lexeme rather than by means of inflection as in Hebrew.

## The Niphal Infinitive

The Niphal infinitive is rare, occurring only two times in all of Ecclesiastes. Once (4:13) it is translated by a present active infinitive; this is not a perfectly exact translation, with the Greek verb *prosékhein* ‘to give heed to (oneself)’ giving a general approximation but not an exact rendering of the Hebrew *ləhizzāhēr* ‘to be admonished’. However, the following is a better example of the translation of a Niphal infinitive:

(56) *wəĥesrōn lo’-yūkal* ***ləhimmānōt*** (1:15)
*kaì hustérēma ou dunḗsetai* ***toû arithmēthē̃nai*** (1:15)
“And (what is) lacking will not be able **to be counted**”

The Niphal infinitive is translated as an aorist passive infinitive, which is expected on several counts. First, as we have seen, the aorist is the default ‘tense’ to translate the Hebrew infinitive; secondly, as the Niphal is generally a passive Hebrew stem, we would expect to see it translated by means of a passive infinitive.

# CHAPTER 7

# HEBREW IMPERATIVES

## The Qal Imperative

The Qal imperative occurs 21 times in Ecclesiastes, and it is rendered by a Greek imperative each time. 16 of these are aorist imperatives, one passive (the ‘hyper-deponent’ *mnḗsthēti* in 12:1) and 15 active:

(57) ***ten***-*ĥēleq ləšib‘āh wəgam lišmōnāh*... (11:2)

***dòs*** *merída toîs heptà kaí ge toîs oktṓ*... (11:2)

“**Give** a share to seven and indeed to eight…”

Incidentally, many Qal imperatives translated as aorist active imperatives are instances of the verb *rə’ēh* rendered as *idé* ‘see, behold’, a particle occurring frequently in the book to carry on the narrative. In any case, the aorist imperative is the ‘default’ translation for the Qal imperative.

In the remaining five cases in which the Qal imperative is translated into Greek, it is rendered as a present imperative, two active and three mediopassive (deponent). As in the case of the Greek infinitive, there is not always a clear reason for the choice of present over aorist, although the aspectual distinction of perfective vs. imperfective generally plays a part. One example:

(58) *bəyōm ṭōbāh* ***hĕyēh*** *bəṭōb ūbəyōm rā‘āh* ***rə’ēh***… (7:14)

*en hēmérāi agathōsúnēs* ***zē̃thi*** *en agathō̃i kaì en hēmérāi kakías* ***idé***...(7:14)

“In the day of goodness **be** (Greek ‘**live**’) in good, and in the day of evil **behold**…”

Here we have a juxtaposition of two imperatives, one translated as a present and one as an aorist in Greek. On the one hand, one may notice a slight aspectual difference between the two actions ("be in good" continually throughout the day of goodness, but "behold" at one point in time within the day of evil); on the other hand, the distinction is not significant enough that we could create a predictive schema for it. Thus, we must ultimately conclude that translator idiosyncrasy is pivotal here even as we delineate some general guidelines.

### The Piel Imperative

The Piel imperative occurs three times in Ecclesiastes, and it is translated twice as an aorist active imperative, as in 5:3 and below:

(59) ***šallaĥ*** *laĥməkā ʻal-pənē hammāyim*… (11:1)

***apósteilon*** *tòn árton sou epì prósōpon toû húdatos*... (11:1)

"**Send forth** your bread upon the face of the waters…"

Once, the Piel imperative is rendered as a present active imperative. This occurs in 11:9, where *hallēk* is translated by *peripátei*; this verb has something of an iterative aspect, and so it is not surprising that this verb would be made a present rather than an aorist imperative by the Greek translator. Additionally, one of the Qal imperatives rendered as a present imperative occurs earlier in this verse, so perhaps the translator viewed this whole sequence as imperfective.

### The Hiphil Imperative

Two Hiphil imperatives occur in Ecclesiastes, both of them in one verse:

(60) *wə**hāsēr** kaʻas millibbekā wə**haʻabēr** rāʻāh mibbəśārekā*...(11:10)

*kaì **apóstēson** thumòn apò kardías sou kaì **parágage** ponērían apò sarkós sou*... (11:10)

"And **remove** anger from your heart and **send away** evil from your flesh…"

In each of these cases, the Hiphil imperative is translated by a Greek aorist active imperative, which we have come to see as normative. Also, as always, the Greek translator accounts for the semantics of the Hiphil stem by choosing terms which reflect the change in meaning occasioned by the stem.

## The Niphal Imperative

The Niphal imperative occurs only once in the Book of Ecclesiastes, rendered by an aorist middle imperative:

(61) *bənī* ***hizzāhēr*** *‘ăśōt səpārīm harbēh ’ēn qēş* ... (12:12)

My son, **be admonished:** to making many books there is no end…”

*huié mou,* ***phúlaxai*** *poiē̃sai biblía pollá: ouk éstin perasmós…*(12:12)

“My son, **guard yourself** to make many books: there is no end…”

This is interesting for a couple reasons, beyond the fact that it is (apparently) our only token of the Niphal imperative in Ecclesiastes. First, through an odd conjunction of morphological ambiguities, both the Hebrew and the Greek verbs in question could be considered either imperatives or infinitives. Context, however, seems to demand an imperative, as the verb follows a vocative. Second, the Greek translation *phúlaxai* is interesting in its own right, as it appears to be the only case of a true Greek middle verb in Ecclesiastes (not counting deponents and verbs like *apollúmenos* in (41) above which have become something of a separate lexeme in the middle). The Greek context seems to demand some sort of reflexive verb, and this is confirmed by the fact that it translates a Hebrew Niphal. Historically, the Niphal was more properly a reflexive stem than a passive stem, and that meaning may well shine through here. Of course, given the Greek translator’s customary literality, he may simply have mistaken the Niphal imperative for an infinitive and translated it as such, thus explaining this unique (and late, within the development of the Greek middle from Homeric into Koine) use of the middle. As for the use of the reflexive Niphal imperative in Hebrew, it should be noted that some see the last six verses of Ecclesiastes as a later addition by a different hand; if so, this could explain why a form (the Niphal imperative) and a function (the Niphal with reflexive overtones) occur only at the end of the book and never in the body. (This assumes that this Niphal should be taken as the reflexive ‘admonish yourself’ rather than the passive ‘be admonished’, which is not clear.)

# CHAPTER 8

# RAMIFICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

We have found that the Hebrew perfective aspect is generally rendered by means of a Greek past indicative tense in Ecclesiastes. Although Greek has several past tenses, the translator almost always chooses to use the aorist tense. While it might be said that this is simply due to the fact that the aorist is the most common Greek past tense, we should also note that, from the point of view of aspect, the Greek aorist is the consummate tense of punctuality; action is viewed as a completed whole as opposed to being ongoing in any way. This fits well the aspectual characteristics of the Hebrew perfect, which also connotes completed action. Thus, the Greek translator seems to be sensitive to aspect as much as he is to tense; his almost non-existent use of the imperfect tense reflects this reluctance to cast the Hebrew perfect as a continual past tense. On the other hand, his use of the Greek perfect to render the Hebrew perfect is most often conditioned by the presence of the adverb *kəbār* outside the Niphal.

The Hebrew perfect can be given imperfective value by the *wə-* conjunction prefixed onto it, although, as we have pointed out, this aspectual shift is dependent on the context. When these conditions are met, the perfect is effectively transformed into an imperfect and translated accordingly. The translation of imperfects is discussed below.

The Greek indicative mood is the mood most commonly used to translate the Hebrew perfect, although the subjunctive is occasionally employed (this only when the perfect has imperfective value). Also, a Greek participle is sometimes used to translate the Hebrew perfect; this occurs most often in Hebrew relative clauses where Greek’s preference for participles over relatives shines through. This is important, as the translator rarely deviates from a very literal translation; his use of participles to render such finite Hebrew forms, even only sporadically, reveals an important (and for the translator, ingrained) aspect of the Greek syntax of the period. Nonetheless, the fact that the majority of such instances of participial translation render forms of *hāyāh* may indicate that it is the presence of this particular verb in a relative clause which is the most important factor in the translation of a finite verb as a participle.

The Hebrew imperfect is most commonly interpreted as having future value by the Greek translator, and as such the majority of imperfect tokens of any Hebrew stem (including perfectives converted by the *wə-* prefix) are rendered as futures in Greek. Another large group of imperfective verbs are translated by the Greek subjunctive mood (almost always aorist, rarely present); this is understandable, as the subjunctive carries with it a note of possibility and uncertainty, and hence it has the qualities of a future. The translator does not render imperfective verbs as futures or as subjunctives in free variation, however; subjunctives almost always occur in dependent clauses, while futures almost always occur in independent clauses. Another Hebrew grammatical phenomenon able to call forth the subjunctive in Greek is the prohibition or the negative imperative; while these simply take the form of imperfectives in Hebrew, Greek uses either the aorist subjunctive or (less commonly) the present imperative to render them.

The Greek present indicative is used sporadically to translate imperfective verbs, generally only in what might be considered proverbs or gnomic statements. This is somewhat surprising, as the Hebrew imperfect often seems to call for a rendering as a present tense; the translator, however, favored a future translation over a present translation except in select circumstances.[4] The imperfective is also rarely translated by means of a Greek participle, although only in relative clauses and only where the verb *hāyāh* is concerned.

In very select circumstances, the Hebrew imperfect is translated by a Greek articular infinitive; this occurs only when the phrase of which the verb is a part cannot be rendered comfortably in any other way. Also very rarely, the translator uses an imperative to translate an imperfective verb: this occurs either in a negative command or when the Hebrew verb is a jussive. Finally, a few imperfectives are translated by the Greek aorist indicative: three of these are examples of the rare (in Ecclesiastes) waw consecutive, which converts imperfective verbs into perfective ones. Also, a couple of Greek aorist indicatives render Hebrew imperfectives whose imperfective quality seems to apply to the past tense; the translator correctly identified the past-tense quality of these verbs but was characteristically reluctant to use the imperfect tense to render them.

The Hebrew participle is generally translated either as a Greek participle or as a Greek finite verb, depending upon the syntax of the sentence in question. If the Hebrew participle acts as the main verb in the sentence, the translator renders it as an indicative, most commonly a present tense; if, however, the participle is acting as a nominal (substantive) or an adjectival (attributive), the translator renders it with a Greek participle. We have already noted that the translator avoids relative clauses by resorting to participles as much as possible; here, the participle is simply maintained in translation when not doing so would result in the creation of a relative clause.

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[4] This brings up the question of the dating of the original writing of Ecclesiastes, which has been largely avoided throughout this thesis. In the Second Temple period, the Hebrew imperfect did indeed become something of a future tense, while the participle took on present value. In Ecclesiastes, however, many imperfective verbs seem to call for present value, which is more typical of Biblical Hebrew. Fredericks (1988: 118) concludes on this and other grounds that there is no linguistic reason to assign Ecclesiastes a very late date of composition. Incidentally, the Greek translation clearly *is* (not surprisingly) from a later date, as the translator's understanding of the Hebrew verbal grammar of his day seems to have predisposed him to render imperfectives as futures and participles as presents.

Infinitives and imperatives are translated from Hebrew into Greek with a very low degree of variability. Hebrew infinitives are almost always rendered as such in Greek, and Hebrew imperatives are always translated by Greek imperatives. The Hebrew infinitive construct, however, is rendered three times by a finite verb; this occurs when the infinitive is used in the manner of a finite verb to carry on the narrative.

In essence, six Hebrew stems occur in Ecclesiastes: the Qal, Piel, Hiphil, Niphal, Hithpael, and Pual stems. (The Poel and the Pilpel also occur, but their difference from the Piel is morphological and not semantic. The same is true of the Hithpoel with regards to the Hithpael.) The Qal is by far the best-attested stem, and, as it is the ‘light’ stem, the verbs in the Qal share no one defining characteristic or trait which impacts their translation. The Piel and the Hiphil are causative stems in one way or another, and, as we have seen, their causativity (or intensivity) is overwhelmingly accounted for by the translator simply by choosing a Greek lexeme which takes the semantic properties of the stem into account. One salient detail of the translation of these two stems only visible in the big picture (and therefore not yet discussed) is their overwhelming translation by verbs in the active voice in Greek. The significance of this may not be immediately clear, as these are indeed active and not passive stems, but it should be noted that only a few outliers are even translated by the middle voice (i.e., by deponents) in Greek. For example, if we examine verbs from the Qal, Piel, and Hiphil stems translated as future-tense verbs in Greek, we see that 50 out of 74 Qal tokens are rendered by deponents while only 1 out of 11 Piels and none out of 16 Hiphils are translated in this way. Given the morphological fact of Greek that many futures are indeed deponent, it seems unlikely that this is an accident. Rather, we must account for this disparity by positing that the semantic nuances of verbs in the Piel and the Hiphil occasioned translations by specifically active verbs in Greek rather than by verbs which were active in meaning but morphologically middle. Specifically, this observation calls into question two assumptions we have heretofore made, tacitly or otherwise: first, that the Piel and the Hiphil stems are treated in a manner similar to the Qal by the translator with lexical adjustment only; and, secondly, that the Greek middle is functionally the same as the active (except in rare cases) by the time of the Koine period. We can dispense easily with the first assumption, for naturally the translator recognized these stems as having special semantic qualities. The second assumption, however, is not so easily dealt with, as in the synchronic grammar of Koine Greek deponent middles are generally assumed to be the semantic equal of verbs which make use of the active voice. The data above must be dealt with in one of two ways, then: either we must posit that, from a historical perspective, the specific verbs inherited from Proto-Indo-European as 'medium tantum' were such that they could almost never be used to translate a verb in the Piel or Hiphil; or, alternately, we must hypothesize that the translator, living as he did at a relatively late date in the development of Greek, still carried within his mental grammar a clear understanding of the deponent middle as a separate category from the active and was therefore reluctant to translate a Hebrew verb whose stem had ergative or causative nuance with a Greek grammatical category which carried with it mediopassive overtones. This would be an interesting question for further study: would the data above prove to be simply coincidental, or would this pattern be borne out within a larger corpus?

The Niphal and the Pual are Hebrew stems which carry with them a notion of passivity. Apart from several instances of loose (or mis-) translation, all of the verbs of these stems are translated by means of a Greek passive or mediopassive save an example or two of a lexical translation whereby an active Greek verb successfully carries with it the semantic nuances of the passive Hebrew stem. The Pual appears to pattern completely with the Niphal, just as the Piel largely does with the Qal; and, since the Pual is a passive stem, there is no hint of an aspectual distinction as we have considered above for its active counterpart.

The way in which the Hithpael stem is translated seems to indicate that the translator had no set rubric which he used to translate it. Rather, he went by the context as he understood it. Out of the stem's five occurrences in Ecclesiastes (and additionally one Hithpoel), we might say that three are translated with active value (including one middle) and three with passive value. While six tokens is not enough to make any sweeping claims, it appears that the Hithpael functioned as something akin to the Proto-Indo-European mediopassive in that it could encompass anything from reflexivity to passivity. In fact, it seems as though the stem is used in a largely reflexive fashion in the Hebrew of Ecclesiastes, so if anything the translator errs on the side of rendering it as a passive by translating three of the six as passives. In other words, if the context left him unsure, his default translation of the Hithpael was as a passive.

As to the category of voice in Greek, the default translation for most verbs is active, while, as we have seen, those in the Niphal and the Pual are regularly rendered as passives. Qal (and occasionally Piel) stative verbs, however, are translated as passives into Greek as well. We have discussed the possibility of there being a special quality to the deponent middle in Greek which would cause so few verbs in the Piel and the Hiphil to be translated into it, but this comparison is only made possible by the fact that a sizeable number of Qal verbs are translated by deponent middles. We have even noted that in one case, a true middle may exist in the text. In the vast majority of cases, however, we must conclude that the Greek middle is used as a de facto active voice for those verbs which are not inflected in the active.

As for the use of Greek tense in Ecclesiastes, we can paint a conclusion with broad strokes. Perfective verbs in Hebrew are most commonly translated by means of a past tense verb in Greek; imperfective verbs are most commonly translated by means of a future tense verb into Greek; and participles are most commonly translated by means of a present tense verb into Greek (except, of course, when they are translated by means of a participle). The percentages involved in these conclusions leave little doubt about the translational philosophy of the translator with regard to tense.

As for the Greek grammatical category of mood, we have seen that imperatives and infinitives are largely used to translate their own categories, while participles are used to translate both Hebrew participles not acting as a main verb and some finite verbs which would otherwise require relative clauses. Additionally, subjunctives arise to translate imperfective verbs in subordinate clauses or, more rarely, where the translator perceives a note of uncertainty. Elsewhere, the Greek translation will be by means of an indicative verb.

Finally, we will consider the Greek category of aspect. Just as in Hebrew, Proto-Indo-European had a thriving distinction between imperfective and perfective aspect, and this distinction survives virtually unchanged into Greek, although it has become supplemented by a more clearly defined tense system in the indicative mood. Thus, subjunctives, participles, imperatives, and infinitives all carry a two-way distinction based not on tense but on aspect, although the terms ‘present’ and ‘aorist’ are somewhat confusingly given to describe the dichotomy. In Ecclesiastes, we have seen that aorist or perfective participles are exceedingly rare, while present participles are nearly always the participle of choice. This is no doubt due to the fact that the participle in Hebrew generally refers to ongoing action, which is the province of the present participle in Greek. (We have also noted that passive participles, including those of the Niphal, Pual, and Qal, seem to be used much more often to convey the idea of completed action, and as such these are often rendered by means of a perfect mediopassive participle, originally from an Indo-European stative but well on its way to becoming a past tense in Koine Greek.) As for subjunctives, imperatives and infinitives, however, it is not the present but rather the aorist variety which is the more common by far in the Greek translation of Ecclesiastes; although we have seen certain examples in which an imperfective of one of these three categories was used due to context, the translator overwhelmingly chose to use the perfective variety to translate Hebrew imperatives, infinitives, and imperfectives in subordinate clauses. And finally, although the system of indicative verbs within Greek is somewhat tense-based, we can still see traces of the old aspectual system, such as the distinction between imperfective and perfective past action as seen in the imperfect and the aorist. Although we have noted several cases in which a translation by means of the imperfect tense would have been appropriate, the translator always chooses the aorist when one exists, even though he shows sensitivity to aspectual distinction in other areas. It would seem, then, that with the notable exception of the participle, the translator had a heavy bias toward the aorist or perfective aspect, translating subjunctives, infinitives, and imperatives, and past-tense indicatives as such a large percentage of the time.

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