



Gregor Geiger, Das hebräische Partizip in den Texten aus der judäischen Wüste

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Published in:
Dead Sea Discoveries

Publication date:
2015

Document version
Peer-review version

Document license:
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Citation for published version (APA):
Holst, S. (2015). Gregor Geiger, Das hebräische Partizip in den Texten aus der judäischen Wüste. *Dead Sea Discoveries*, 22/1, 126-128.

Das hebräische Partizip in den Texten aus der jüdischen Wüste. By Gregor Geiger. STDJ 101. Leiden: Brill, 2012. Hardcover. Pp. xvii + 591. € 188.00/US\$ 261.00. ISBN 978-90-04-20286-3. With CD-ROM.

The author of the present monograph modestly states, on its first page, that it is primarily descriptive in nature, that in order to describe, one must collect and classify – and that collection, therefore, has taken up a major part of the working hours as well as the paper and printing ink that has gone into the creation of the book, and that the same will probably hold for the benefit to be derived from its use: “Whoever is looking for a [specific] participle from a Qumran scroll will find it here, listed together with identical or similar forms, comparable constructions or with other forms derived from the same root, and will also find a great amount of references to further discussion” (1); complete comprehensiveness is aimed at in terms of the material covered, and achieving this is certainly no small feat, dealing with a textual corpus that comprises all Biblical and non-Biblical Hebrew manuscripts from the Judaean Desert, including sites other than Qumran, as well as the Geniza manuscripts of the Damascus document, and employing as material for comparison not only the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible, but also the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Nash papyrus, Origen’s *secunda columna*, transcriptions of Hebrew in Jerome, Hebrew inscriptional material, The “Gabriel inscription”, Geniza manuscripts of Ben Sira, as well as the Mishnah. And this is only the material for which the author promises that “As far as the morphology of the participle is concerned, these *corpora* are treated comprehensively: If a textual *corpus* goes unmentioned in relation to a given stem or a class of verbal root, this means that no corresponding examples are attested there” (14); in addition, Aramaic and other sources are drawn upon where relevant.

The bulk of the book (32-487) is made up of three huge chapters dedicated to morphological, syntactic and semantic analyses of this material. The chapter on morphology doubles as a complete database for the following work, and therefore each and every occurrence of a participial form is noted, whether it exhibits any peculiarities or not. The chapter deals with the distribution of *plene* vs. *defective* spellings, but also takes thorough stock of the problems of definition inherent in an effort of complete stocktaking, and the author lays out in detail how cases are tackled where the unvocalised text leaves the parsing of a form as e.g. either *qatal* or participle ambiguous, or a word has the morphological characteristics of a participle, but seems to be employed exclusively as a noun. Among the findings of the chapter is a tendency for three quite rare groups of participial forms to display a morphological distinction between participles in verbal and nominal usage (178-83); in other words, it is almost universally the case that such a distinction is *not* found.

Syntax is dealt with first on the phrase level, and second on that of the clause. On the level of phrases, the author identifies the distribution of several phenomena as being related to the distinction between texts of Qumranic and non-Qumranic origin respectively: The participle in construct state before a preposition is widespread in “sectarian” texts (225), and a participle in construct state governing a noun, but having a verbal function in the clause, is found exclusively in these texts (229-31), whereas participles with pronominal suffix in a verbal function are not found at all (232).

On the clause level, it is found that the participle most often expresses circumstantial information, but especially in cases of a clause initial participle followed by the subject, the sense expressed is either performative (the state of affairs described by the participle is occasioned by the act of the utterance itself), or one of contemporaneity with the act described (282-83), that is, something approaching an actual present tense (492). A very large number of the attestations of a performative function concern the passive participles אריר and ברך (273), but the author maintains that the reason for this is not lexical, but related to the semantics of performativity as such (482).

The semantics of the participle is treated first in relation to roots that do not (or do not only) form the participle according to the paradigm of the relevant stem; this takes the form of an almost dictionary-like collection of analyses of 229 verbal roots (373-442). Second the meaning of the participle within the framework of the “tense system” of Hebrew is described. The author chooses to refrain from taking any stance regarding the question of whether the Hebrew “tenses” fundamentally express *tempus*, aspect or something else (454f), and this section is altogether more modest in scope than the preceding impressively ambitious investigations. Six pages consisting almost entirely of footnotes (455-62) testify, however, that this is in no way due to a lack of familiarity with previous scholarship. The section investigates especially sentences where adverbial elements signify a temporal nuance of meaning, as well as cases where quotations, paraphrases or parallel expressions show a participle taking the place of another verb form. The conclusion arrived at is that the participle used in a verbal function generally expresses contemporaneity, and may occur in most of the more specific uses attested in Biblical Hebrew, with two notable exceptions: Contemporaneity with the past is not found in the Hebrew of the scrolls (484f), and neither is modality – the few cases where a participle seems to express modality being explained as determined by other factors than the participle itself (486).

The findings are summed up in the book’s last chapter, under the rubric of three questions: a) How and to what extent can we know whether a given participle functions verbally or nominally? b) What is the relation, in terms of what the participle expresses, between the Hebrew of the Scrolls and Biblical Hebrew? c) What are the specific points at which differences between the two are found? (the latter summary takes the form of a 12-page list of keywords and references to relevant paragraphs).

The book is accompanied by a useful CD-ROM containing a 231-page PDF file with a full list of the participles treated and a number of indices (actually, one might easily have put a copy of the entire book on the disk as well, thus making full-text searches possible).

The author is to be congratulated for his extraordinarily thorough and painstaking work. The book will not appeal to readers who would want to be led by a short and colourful route to spectacular conclusions: When, having sailed a 500-page ocean of philological detail, one arrives, on the last page of the English summary, at the statement “The main finding of the study is that the biblical Hebrew tense system continues to be used in QH”, this may feel a little anticlimactic; it is, after all, what anyone who reads a lot of Qumran Hebrew instinctively knew to be the case anyway. But for anyone who enjoys having their instincts backed up by solid evidence, the book is a valuable contribution, and it will be a useful reference tool.

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