

Le-ma'an Ziony



Le-ma'an Ziony:
Essays in Honor of
Ziony Zevit

edited by

FREDERICK E. GREENSPAHN
& GARY A. RENDSBURG



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LE-MA'AN ZIONY

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On the Tolerative/Permissive *Hiph'el*

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The causative nuance of the *hiph'el*, and of its Aramaic and Akkadian counterparts the *haph'el* / *'aph'el* and *šuprus*, respectively, includes not only actions in which the subject causes the object (another person or a thing) to do something, but a range of other ways in which the subject is responsible for the object's action, such as allowing it, enabling it, tolerating it, or granting permission to do it. That all these types of action can be seen as related is manifested, in a different way, in the fact that in certain Indo-European languages verbs meaning "let" connote both "cause" and "allow" (e.g. German *lassen*, French *laisser* and, sometimes, English "let").¹ To distinguish between verbs that are literally causative and the other nuances, I will term all the latter "tolerative."²

*It is a pleasure to take part in this tribute to Ziony Zevit, a good friend and polymathic scholar from whom I have learned much. I am grateful to Richard Steiner, David Stern, Saul Wachs, and Cornelia Wunsch for advice on several points, and especially to W. Randall Garr for his good counsel and for valuable comments on a draft of this paper. Needless to say, any mistakes here are mine alone.

1. For "let" see, e.g., *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 775, s.v. "let": "5. to allow; permit . . . 6. to cause to; make: usually with *know* or *hear* [*let me hear from you*]."

2. Scholars sometimes refer to the tolerative nuances as "permissive," but since this term is related to permission, which is a specific verbal action, I prefer the broader term "tolerative" except in cases involving explicit grants of permission. This term is used in a

The tolerative nuance of the *hiph'il* is unevenly recognized in grammars of Biblical Hebrew. I have not found it mentioned by the medieval Hebrew grammarians, though Rashi recognizes it in his commentary to Exod 20:20.³ In modern times it was not mentioned even in König's massive reference grammar,⁴ let alone in GKC,⁵ Bauer-Leander,⁶ or Bergsträsser.⁷ On the other hand it was mentioned in Green's grammar,⁸ in Joüon's grammar and Muraoka's revision thereof,⁹ in Waltke and O'Connor's *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*,¹⁰ and in student grammars, such as Lambdin's *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*.¹¹ Some of the grammars that do mention it identify one or another semantic characteristic of its use, but they provide less than a handful of examples. The only systematic study I know of is that of Jean Margain, who studied the tolerative use of both *pi'el* and *hiph'il* and lists 44 instances of the latter, but he rarely indicates why he considers them tolerative.¹²

similar but distinct sense with reference to the tolerative *niph'al* (*niph'al tolerativum*, to allow something to happen to oneself, GKC § 51c; Joüon-Muraoka, *Grammar*, § 51c).

3. On the clause *אֲשֶׁר אֶזְכֹּר אֶת־שְׁמִי*, Rashi explains: *אשר אתו לך רשות*: "where I will give you permission to pronounce my proper name." See Levine, *Numbers 1–20*, 228: "In every cult site where I *allow my name to be pronounced*" [emphasis original – JHT]. This is a notoriously difficult clause. Elsewhere I have supported the view that the original reading of *אֶזְכֹּר* was *תִּזְכֹּר*, as reflected in the Peshitta, some of the Targumim, and some passages in rabbinic literature; see Tigay, "The Presence of God and the Coherence of Exodus 20:22–26," 203–4. See also Glucker, *Mi-Silvester 'ad Ziqne Siyyon*, 37–39, kindly brought to my attention by Alexander Rofé. However, understanding *אֶזְכֹּר* as a tolerative *hiph'il* is an attractive alternative that has the virtue of preserving the reading of the MT and the Samaritan Pentateuch, which is also reflected in the LXX.

4. König, *Lehrgebäude*.

5. GKC § 52g does recognize the permissive *pi'el*.

6. Bauer and Leander, *Historische Grammatik*.

7. Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik*.

8. Green, *Grammar*, 110, sec. 79.1, n. a.: "The causative sense in both *piel* and *hiphil* is sometimes weakened into a simple permissive."

9. Joüon, *Grammaire*, 123, § 54d; Joüon-Muraoka, *Grammar*, 163, § 54d. Muraoka (164, n. 3) adds, "Margain [see below – JHT] seems to exaggerate slightly the notion of 'tolerative' *hifil* (and *piel*)." I agree that many of Margain's examples are unconvincing, but many others might be added.

10. Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction*, 445–6, § 27.5, s.v. Modal Senses.

11. Lambdin, *Introduction*, 212.

12. Margain, "Causatif et toleratif." Margain describes the tolerative sense as an attenuation of the causative sense (pp. 25, 26). See also the brief discussion by Charlesworth, "Beth Essentiae." Charlesworth discusses a few examples and gives his reasons for preferring permissive translations in two cases. In the case of a Talmudic prayer (אל תביאני לידי חטא, b. Ber. 60b), "a literal translation, recognizing only the causative force of the *H binyan*, would be inelegant" and "[t]he syntax seems clear." In the case of the

Similarly regarding Akkadian, the tolerative nuance of the *šuprus* is not mentioned in GAG's or Ungnad-Matouš's sections on the *š*-stem,¹³ but it is mentioned briefly by Huehnergard in his *A Grammar of Akkadian*.¹⁴ It is not mentioned in the Aramaic grammars of Rosenthal¹⁵ or Bauer and Leander,¹⁶ but it is recognized in some citations in Muraoka and Porten's Egyptian Aramaic grammar.¹⁷ In comparative Semitic grammars it is mentioned by Brockelmann ("Vergünstigung")¹⁸ and by Kienast, who quotes Brockelmann and adds that "das Kausativ ist tolerativ."¹⁹

On the other hand, reference dictionaries that are attentive to nuances more frequently point out the tolerative sense.²⁰ But it is translators who, forced by context, have long translated many *hiph'el* forms with a tolerative nuance. Even the KJV, which is much less inclined to "dynamic translation" than more recent translations, rendered the *hiph'el* as tolerative in many verses.²¹

In order to learn more about how tolerative *hiph'el* verbs function, I have gathered a number of examples and have made a very preliminary attempt to classify them. The present article is more a study of semantics than of grammar in the narrow sense, since tolerative *hiph'el* verbs are not morphologically different from causative ones. The only guide to distinguishing between them is context, but determining what the context requires—or at least what is consistent with the context—can be a very subjective task. To assist in this task it is helpful to consult different translations of the same passage. For this purpose, in addition to gathering examples from grammars and dictionaries, I searched (though not systematically) the online

fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer he prefers the translation "do not allow us to enter into temptation" based on the *af'el* form of the verb [תעלן] in the Old Syriac version, in place of the common translation "do not lead us into temptation" which he finds "theologically perplexing" (p. 78).

13. von Soden, GAG; Ungnad-Matouš, *Grammar*.

14. Huehnergard, *Grammar*, 301, § 27.2 (f). (Huehnergard adds: "Such renderings must be derived from context.")

15. Rosenthal, *Grammar*.

16. Bauer-Leander, *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen*.

17. Muraoka-Porten, *Grammar*, 190, § 49d, and 191, § 49f.

18. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, vol. 1, 526, § 257 h β.

19. Kienast, *Historische semitische Sprachwissenschaft*, 214, § 188.1 (b).

20. See BDB s. vv. גמא, כרת, לעט, פדה, נפל, רעב, רשי, שוב and רש. For Akkadian see the *š* forms of the verbs *erēbu*, *kašādu*, *aḫāzu* and *šalālu* (see lexical section in the relevant CAD entries), and the *š* forms of the verbs *etēqu*, *ḫalāqu*, *labāru*, *naparkū* II, *niāku*, *pašāḫu*, *rabāšu*, and *šalālu* in CDA, pp. 84, 101, 174, 238, 251, 268, 293, 332.

21. See, for example, KJV at Gen 24:17; Gen 25:30; Exod 21:8; Lev 2:13; 1 Sam 3:19; 1 Sam 21:14; 1 Kgs 2:6; Ezek 39:7; Ps 107:38; Prov 10:3; Job 11:14; Song 2:14.

or electronic versions of KJV, RSV, NJPS, NAB, NRSV, and NJB for verbs such as “permit,” “allow,” “let” (when it has the same meaning),²² and the like. In such a search one quickly discovers disagreements about whether a *hiph'il* is tolerative in a particular passage, because the causative and the various tolerative meanings sometimes overlap²³ and because of different perceptions of what the context implies. At times it seems that translators were motivated, at least partly, by what sounds best, or reads most smoothly, in English,²⁴ rather than a conscious attempt to determine the precise category of *hiph'il* that the context implies. In any case, the very disagreements between translations—and sometimes within the same translation—can sharpen the issues involved. Essentially, then, in what follows we will sometimes be trying to determine the intention of the Biblical authors and sometimes to divine the translators' thinking when they decided whether to translate a *hiph'il* verb as causative or tolerative.²⁵ This is, in other words, as much a study of translations as it is a study of the Biblical text. Sometimes, what we are discussing is not necessarily what the context requires but what the context is patient of.

Here, then, are some examples that have been perceived as toleratives, gathered under three partially overlapping headings:

- (1) Allowing the object to do what the root means, granting a request, explicit or implicit.²⁶
- (2) Enabling the object to undergo an experience that is “welcome or agreeable” to it.²⁷
- (3) Allowing the object to do something by (the subject's) refraining from a contrary action.

22. I.e., excluding cases where for example, it is used as an auxiliary or in translating a cohortative verb.

23. As Kienast observes, “Der kausativbegriff kann sehr mannigfaltig gewandt werden; wobei es gelegentlich Überschneidungen in der Interpretation sein kann.” Kienast, *Historische semitische Sprachwissenschaft*, 214–5, § 188.1.

24. Cf. Charlesworth, “Beth Essentiae,” quoted above, n. 12.

25. Once the translators have made this decision, those on either side of the issue basically agree in how they translate the passage in question, except for minor variations in wording. In general I have cited only one translation to represent each interpretation of a passage.

26. Joüon-Muraoka, *Grammar*, 163, § 54d.

27. Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction*, 445–6, §27.5, s.v. Modal Senses.

(1) Allowing the object to do what the root means, granting a request, explicit or implicit.

Terms for “lend,” literally “allow to borrow”.²⁸

Deut 28:12, וְהִלִּיתָ גוֹיִם רַבִּים וְאַתָּה לֹא תִלְוֶה, lit. “you will let many nations borrow (לוה), but you will not borrow” (my translation).

Deut 15:6, וְהִעֲבַטְתָּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים וְאַתָּה לֹא תֵעָבֵט, lit. “you will let many nations borrow (עבט), but you will not borrow” (my translation).

Exod 12:36, וַיְהִי־וְהָיָה נָתַן אֶת־חֶן הָעַם בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרַיִם וַיִּשְׁאַלֵּם, “And the Lord had disposed the Egyptians favorably toward the people, and they let them have their request” (NJPS) (“prop. *let one ask* (שאל) [successfully],” BDB 982c s.v. “Hiph.”).²⁹

Further cases in which the *hiph'il* means granting a request:

Gen 24:18, וַתִּשְׁקֶהוּ, “she . . . let him drink (שקה),” granting the servant’s request of v. 17, וְהִגְמִיאֵינִי נָא מִעֵט־מַיִם מִכַּדָּיִךָ, “Please let me sip (גמא) a little water from your jar.” (NJPS; in v. 45 the request is worded as וְהִשְׁקִינִי נָא, “please let me drink” [my translation]).

Deut 2:30, וְלֹא אָבָה סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הַשְּׁבֹן הָעֵבְרָנוּ בּוֹ, “But King Sihon of Heshbon refused to let us pass through (עבר)” (NJPS).³⁰ Moses’s request is quoted in 2:27, אֶעֱבְרָה בְּאַרְצֶךָ, “Let³¹ me pass through your territory”). The same usage also appears in an Akkadian letter: *tamkaram ša ṭuppi šarrim našû nubałama nušetteq*³² *tamkaram ša ṭuppi šarrim la našû ana Bābilim nutarrašu*, “a merchant who has a document from the king we examine and let pass (*etēqu*), a merchant who has no document from the king we send

28. Cf. Arabic *ʿadāna*, “lend,” from *dāna*, “borrow,” cited by Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, vol. 1, 526, § 257 h β.

29. *שאל* could also mean “enabled them to borrow,” derived from *שאל* = borrow as in in Exod 3:22; 22:13; etc., except that in the context of Exod 3 and 22 “it is . . . not clear that there was any pretext of mere temporary use” (BDB 981d).

30. The translation as tolerative (literally permissive) is confirmed – if it needs any confirmation – by the equivalent passage in Num 21:23: וְלֹא־נָתַן סִיחֹן אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹבֵר, בְּגִבְלוֹ, “But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory.” Essentially the same translation is already found in Targum Onkelos (למעבר למשבקנא) and the Vulgate (*Noluitque Seon rex Esebon dare nobis transitum*).

31. Here “let” is used for a cohortative verb, not a permissive one.

32. *šūtuqu*, from *etēqu*, an Akkadian interdialectal semantic equivalent of *עבר*. See Cohen, “Held Method,” 12.

back to Babylon.”³³ Here the merchants’ request is implicit—they come to the officials asking to proceed and they present their royal *laissez passer*. Neh 2:7 likewise mentions a royal *laissez passer*: אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב אֲגִירוֹת יִתְּנוּ: “If it please the king, let³⁴ me have letters to the governors of the province of Beyond the River, directing them to grant me passage until I reach Judah” (NJPS). Here, too, the request to pass is implicit (though in this case the officials are in no position to refuse).

In Deut 34:4, in which God is the speaker, He says to Moses, הֲרֵאִיתִיךָ, בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְשָׁמָּה לֹא תַעֲבֹר, which NJPS renders “I have let you see (ראה) [the promised land] with your own eyes, but you shall not cross there.” The translative translation (rather than causative “show”) recognizes the fact that this an allusion to the dialog of 3:24–28 and that God is (partially) granting Moses’s request of 3:25, “Let³⁵ me, I pray, cross over and see (אֲעֲבֹרָהּ-נָא) the good land on the other side of the Jordan, that good hill country, and the Lebanon” (NJPS).³⁶

Ps 59:11, אֶלֶּהִים יִרְאֵנִי בְּשַׂרִּי, “God shall let me see (ראה) *my desire* upon mine enemies” (KJV).³⁷ The same idiom appears in the Mesha inscription, “because (Kemosh) let me see (my desire on) all my adversaries” (הראני, line 4), and in Aramaic, in a letter from Elephantine, “we were fasting and praying to Ya’u the Lord of Heaven, who let us see (our desire) upon that Waidrang” (החויזן, Cowley 30:15–16).³⁸ In the Elephantine letter this explicitly comes as the direct result of a prayer (מצלין, line 15), implicitly to

33. Leemans, *Old-Babylonian Merchant*, 105 (translation slightly modified), also cited in CAD E, 393d, sec. 2’ which defines *šutuqu* 5, c as “to allow persons or boats to pass or pass through (customs).” The text is also cited also in CAD T (s.v. *tamkaru*), 134b, sec. 7.

34. Here “let” is used for a jussive verb, not a permissive one.

35. Here “let” is used for a cohortative verb, not a permissive one.

36. Three verses earlier (34:1) NJPS and others translate “the LORD showed him (ויראהו) the whole land.” I assume that the translators’ choice is based on the assumption that in 34:1 the narrator is giving a more “neutral” description of the event than God does in v. 4. Only KJV translates the verb as causative in both verses: (1) the LORD shewed him all the land . . . (4) I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes.

37. Our translations all agree that the idiom implicitly refers to seeing the discomfiture of one’s enemies, though they express it differently: RSV/NRSV: “will let me look in triumph on my enemies;” NJB: “will let me feast my eyes on those who lie in wait for me;” NAB: “show me my fallen foes;” NJPS: “God let me gloat over my watchful foes.” See also Pss 54:9; 92:12; 112:8; 118:7, as well as Mic 4:11; 7:10b.

38. TAD A4.7 lines 15–16 (TAD 1, 68–71), where it is translated “let us gloat over that Vidranga.”

see the defeat of Waidrang; we may presume such prayers to be implied in Ps 59 and the Mesha inscription as well.³⁹

(2) Enabling the object to undergo an experience that is “welcome or agreeable” to it.

The *hiph'il* of ראה is rendered “let see” in many other passages where the action of the subject (very often God) is not in response to a request. In some cases we may think of these cases as responses to an implicit hope, but many seem to bring us to a broader semantic situation in which the *hiph'il* refers to letting or enabling the object experience something that is welcome or agreeable, pleasant, beneficial, or a privilege, without necessarily presupposing a request or hope.

In cases like these a causative construction of הראה would be expressed by “show” or the like instead of “let see.” It is true that “show” can sometimes mean “allow to see” (*OED* and others), so that even when a translation uses “show” it is conceivable that the translators recognized the tolerative force of the *hiph'il*. But at least when they use “let see” in contradistinction to their predecessors, or to their own translation of nearby or similar passages, it is reasonable to assume that they are trying to make their tolerative construction of the verb more explicit, to convey the sense of concession or benefaction.

In Gen 48:11, Joseph brings his sons to Jacob who expresses his gratification at the fact that, whereas he never expected to see Joseph again, הראה, אֶת־בְּנֵי־יֹסֵף, “God has let me see your children as well” (NJPS).⁴⁰

In 2 Sam 15:25 David, fleeing from Absalom, tells Zadok to take the Ark back to Jerusalem and explains, אִם־אֶמְצָא חַן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וְהִשְׁבֵּנִי וְהָרַאֲנִי אֹתוֹ, וְאֶת־נְוָהוּ, “If I find favor with the LORD, He will bring me back and let me see it and its abode” (NJPS).

In Deut 3:24 Moses begins his plea to God אַתָּה הַחֲלוּתָ לְהָרְאוֹת אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ, אֶת־גְּדֻלָּתְךָ וְאֶת־יְדֵי הַחֲזָקָה, which most of our translations render with a causative verb, such as “thou hast only begun to show thy servant thy greatness and thy mighty hand” (RSV). NJPS, however, renders with a tolerative verb: “O Lord GOD, You who let Your servant see the first works of Your greatness

39. Cf. Jeremiah’s plea אֶרְאֶה נִקְמַתְךָ מֵהֶם, “Let me see Your retribution upon them” (Jer 11:20; 20:12); see also Ps 54:9 (וּבְאֵיבֵי רָאִתָּה עֵינִי) “let me gaze triumphant upon my enemies”; 118:7 (יְהוָה לִי בַעֲזָרִי וְאֲנִי אֶרְאֶה בְשִׁנְאָי) “With the Lord on my side as my helper, I will see the downfall of my foes”; 143:12 (וּבְחִסְדְּךָ תַצְמִית אֵיבֵי וְהָאֲבֹדֹת כָּל־עַרְבִי) “As you are faithful, put an end to my foes; destroy all my mortal enemies”).

40. Only KJV renders as a causative: “shewed me.”

and Your mighty hand.” I presume that NJPS’s choice was motivated by the continuation of Moses’s plea in the next verse, *אָעֲבֹרָהּ נָא וְאָרָאָהּ*, “Let⁴¹ me, I pray, cross over and see.” The context is patient of either translation.

Allowing agreeable experiences is by no means limited to visual ones. In Exod 21:8, all our translations render *וְהִפְדָּהּ* as a tolerative, such as KJV: “then shall he let her be redeemed”—literally, “let (someone) redeem (פדה) her.” It is to the girl’s benefit and her family’s to let her out of a situation in which her master broke faith with her.

(3) Allowing the object to do something by (the subject’s) refraining from contrary action. (Possibly a subcategory of [2])

Num 22:33: the angel says to Balaam *כִּי עַתָּה גַם־אֶתְכֶּה הֲרִגְתִּי וְאוֹתָהּ הֲחַיִּיתִי* “surely just now I would have slain you and let her (Balaam’s ass) live (חיה)” (RSV). In Aramaic the *haph’el / ’aph’el* of *חיה* sometimes has the same nuance: (a) Dan 5:19,⁴² *מִחָא הֲנֹה צָבֵא הַטֵּל וְדִי־הֲנֹה צָבֵא הֲנֹה מְחָא*, “Whomever he (Nebuchadnezzar) willed, he would kill or let live” (NAB). (b) Elephantine *Ahiqar*, col. 4, line 51: *וְלֹא זִי הַחִיתֵךְ עַל זִי הַחִיתֵךְ וְלֹא*, “Moreover, abundantly Sennacherib the king loved me because I let you live and did not kill you.”⁴³ In these cases the verbs are clearly not causative (bring to life, restore to life, keep alive by feeding). The subject allows the object to live by refraining from killing it.

In 1 Kgs 2:6 David charges Solomon, *וְלֹא־תוֹרֵד שִׁיבְתוֹ בְּשָׁלֶם שְׂאֵל*, “and let not his (Joab’s) hoar head go down (ירד) to the grave in peace” (KJV)—that is, don’t allow him the luxury of dying in peace by failing to send him to the grave with blood, as David commands regarding Shimei in v. 9 *וְהוֹרֵדְתָּ שְׂאֵל בְּדָם שִׁיבְתוֹ בְּדָם שְׂאֵל*, “his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood” [KJV].⁴⁴

In the following examples the verbs mean “let the time for an action pass by not performing the requisite action”:

Jer 46:17: *קָרְאוּ שָׁם פְּרָעָה מְלֹךְ־מִצְרַיִם שְׂאוֹן הָעֶבְרִי הַמְזוּעֵד*, “There they called Pharaoh king of Egypt: Braggart who let the hour [literally, set time] go by (עבר)” (NJPS).⁴⁵ This difficult verse apparently means that the

41. Here, as noted above, “let” is used for a cohortative verb, not a permissive one.

42. The more expected form is *מְחָא*.

43. Porten and Yardeni, *TAD* 3, 32–33 (C1.1).

44. In all the other cases of this idiom the translation is causative: if disaster befalls Benjamin it will cause Jacob to die in grief (Gen 42:38; 44:29, 31).

45. *עבר* is likewise used in rabbinic Hebrew for the passing (i.e., missing) of the time (*יום, זמן*) set for an action.

Egyptian king missed his chance by some military miscalculation.⁴⁶ While the verb could be translated as a causative (postponing the set time), the tolerative translation is supported by an equivalent idiom in Akkadian, as in the following examples. (a) *warḥam ēribam ina UD.14.KAM niq pagrā'i linnepi[š] mimma nīqam šētu la ušettequ*, “on the 14th day of the coming month let the *pagrā'u* offerings be made, they must on no account let (the term of) that offering to pass (*etēqu*),”⁴⁷ that is, let the day pass [= let the deadline lapse] by failing to make the required offerings; (b) *ūmī eli warḥim ištēn ušētiqma*, “if he allows more than one month to elapse (without returning a fugitive slave or stray animal he has seized)” (LE 50).⁴⁸

Lev 2:13, *וְלֹא תִשָּׁבֵית מֶלַח בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיךָ מֵעַל מִנְחֹתֶיךָ*, “you shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be lacking (שבת) from your cereal offering” (RSV). Here the idea is “do not let the salt be lacking by failing to add it,” as commanded in the preceding and following clauses. Elsewhere the *hiph'il* of שבת followed by מן (מן השבית) is causative, meaning “destroy,” “put an end to,” “remove what is there,” none of which would make sense here; here the sense is “fail to add.” As NJB paraphrases the verse:⁴⁹ “You will put salt in every cereal offering that you offer, and you will not fail to put the salt of the covenant of your God on your cereal offering; to every offering you will add an offering of salt to your God.”

1 Sam 3:19, *וְלֹא־הִפִּיל מִכֶּלֶד־בְּרִיו אֶרְצָה*, “and (the Lord) did let none of his words fall (נפל) to the ground” (KJV),⁵⁰ that is, God did not allow any of Samuel’s words to go unfulfilled by failing to fulfill them. This is the *hiph'il* of נפל, “fall,” used in the sense of allowing a prophecy to go unfulfilled.⁵¹ The tolerative translation is preferable to a causative one (“[the LORD] did not cause any of his words to fall to the ground”), which would make the statement too obvious to require saying.

Ps 107:38, *וַיְבָרְכֵם וַיִּרְבּוּ מֵאֹד וַיְבַהֲמֵם לֹא יִמְעִיט*, “He blesses them and they increase greatly; and He does not let their cattle decrease” (NJPS). That is, God doesn’t let their cattle decrease by failing to bless them (with fertility; cf. Deut 7:13–14; 28:4, 11; Ezek 36:11). A causative translation of *יִמְעִיט*

46. See Hoffmeier, “New Insight”; McKane, *Jeremiah*, vol. 2, 1129–30.

47. ARMT 26, 220:22, cited in CAD P, 11d s.v. *pagrā'u* (partly my translation). Cited previously in CAD E, 392d sec. 3' from the earlier edition ARM 2, 90:23.

48. Roth, *Law Collections*, 67 (also cited in CAD E, 392a with a less precise translation). Cf. the use of *etēqu* for a deadline (*adannu*) passing (CAD A1, 99ac; CAD E, 387cd); for letting the term of a loan pass, see CAD E, 392, f1'.

49. The full verse reads: *וְכֹל־קִרְבָּנוֹ מִנְחֹתֶיךָ בְּמֶלַח תִּמְלֹחַ וְלֹא תִשָּׁבֵית מֶלַח בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיךָ מֵעַל מִנְחֹתֶיךָ עַל כָּל־קִרְבָּנֶיךָ תִּקְרִיב מֶלַח מִנְחֹתֶיךָ*.

50. NJPS more loosely: “He did not leave any of Samuel’s predictions unfulfilled.”

51. For נפל, “fall” used in the sense of a prophecy or promise going unfulfilled, see Josh 21:45; 23:14 (2x); 1 Kgs 8:56; 2 Kgs 10:10.

would mean that God did not diminish the numbers of the cattle, and in a verse describing God's blessing it seems unnecessary to state that he did not act in such a punitive way.

Prov 10:3, לֹא־יִרְעֵיב יְהוָה נֶפֶשׁ צַדִּיק, "The Lord will not let the righteous go hungry" (NJPS). That is, he will not allow the righteous to go hungry by failing to provide them food. A causative translation ("God will not make the righteous go hungry") would make the point of the verse too obvious to state.

(4) Ambiguous cases

If the above examples are (at least in my estimation) fairly unambiguous, in many other passages disagreements among translations, and seeming inconsistencies within the same translation, encourage speculation about the translators' reasoning and their exegetical decisions.⁵² Here the subjectivity of the enterprise is apparent in full force.

Returning to *hiph'il* forms of רָאָה (see above)—if welcomeness is, indeed, the reason for a tolerative translation of הִרְאָה, we might expect less welcome experiences to be translated as causatives, e.g., "make see" or "show," which are more neutral. As indicated above, while these terms do not by themselves imply unwelcomeness, they avoid the impression of concession or benefaction that "let see" does. This might explain the following:

In Deut 3:24, as we saw, NJPS renders לְהִרְאוֹת in Moses's words as a tolerative, "You who let Your servant see the first works of Your greatness and Your mighty hand." In Exod 9:16, on the other hand, it renders a similar phrase in God's words to Pharaoh, וְאוֹלָם בַּעֲבוּר זֹאת הֵעֲמַדְתִּיךָ בַּעֲבוּר הִרְאָתְךָ, with a causative verb, "Nevertheless I have spared you [i.e., let you survive] for this purpose: in order to show you My power." In rejecting the option of "let see" here, the translators may have been motivated by the fact that whereas Moses regarded seeing God's power as a welcome experience, for Pharaoh the same experience was a disagreeable one.

Similar reasoning could likewise explain the difference between the way NJPS (following RSV) translates Deut 5:21 and 4:36 (NJPS's verse numbering). In 5:21 the people, after hearing the Decalogue, tell Moses: הִן הִרְאָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת־כְּבוֹדוֹ וְאֶת־גְּדֻלוֹ, "The LORD our God has just shown us His

52. To be sure, inconsistencies within a translation are not always intentional. Some may be due to the passage of time between the translation of one book and another, or to the fact that different parts of what is published as a single translation were done by different committees, or to simple forgetfulness. I have tried to limit the selections here to passages that were presumably translated by the same committee.

majestic Presence.” As their following words indicate (“Let us not die, then, for this fearsome fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, we shall die”), to them this was not a pleasant experience, and the translators may have rejected a tolerative translation for that reason. On the other hand, in 4:36, where Moses reminds the later generation of the same event, NJPS (and others; see just below) translates the key verbs as toleratives: מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם הִשְׁמִיעַ אֶת־קוֹלֹ לְיִסְרֹךְ וְעַל־הָאָרֶץ הִרְאָה אֶת־אֱשֵׁי הַגְּדֹלָה, “From the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; on earth He let you see His great fire.” Perhaps the translators’ reasoning was that, despite the frightening nature and disciplinary intention of the event (לְיִסְרֹךְ), from Moses’s perspective the experience was—like the exodus (v. 34)—a privilege (as implied by 4:32b–33).

That we are not “parsing” the translators’ choices too finely is suggested by a comparison of how various other translations rendered the verbs הִרְאָה and הִשְׁמִיעַ with reference to the experience at Mt. Sinai. Presuming that the translators of NRSV, NAB, NJB and NJPS were aware of what the KJV and RSV had done, we can regard their deviations from them as probably deliberate. What we find is the following patterns of translation:

KJV (which, as mentioned above, was aware that *hiph'il* verbs can be tolerative) renders all the verbs as causatives: made thee to hear, shewed thee (4:36), shewed us (5:21). NAB, on the other hand, follows RSV and renders the verbs as toleratives in 4:36 where Moses is the speaker, but it also does so in 5:21 where the people speak (“the Lord . . . has indeed let us see”), suggesting that the event was welcome to the people, too, despite their fear. What is more, NAB—alone among all the translations considered—renders even הִרְאָה הָאֱתָה in 4:35 as a tolerative: “you were allowed to see,” emphasizing what a privilege the event was for the people. NRSV, on the other hand, reverts to a completely causative translation in 4:36 and 5:21: “made you hear,” “showed you” (4:36), “shown us” (5:21). That this is a conscious choice, influenced by God’s motive of disciplining the people, is suggested by NRSV’s very free translation of לְדַעַת in 4:35 as “so that you would acknowledge”—as if the people needed to be disabused of any lingering polytheistic notions.⁵³

In Judg 13:23,⁵⁴ in responding to Manoah’s fear that he and his wife would die after seeing a divine being (אֱלֹהִים), referring to the angel, his

53. The only one of our six translations that does not seem to follow a discernable plan here is NJB, which translates “he made you hear,” “he let you see” (4:36), “has shown” (5:21).

54. For the textual issues in this verse see the commentaries and Zakovitch, *Hayye*

wife reassures him, saying—referring to the angel's announcement that she would bear a child (Samson) and instructions about how they should raise him, and to the vision of the angel ascending in fire—*לֹא חִפֵּץ יְהוָה לְהַמִּיתָנוּ*—“Had the LORD meant to take our lives, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and meal offering from us, nor the *הִרְאָנוּ* all these things; and He would not have *הִשְׁמִיעָנוּ* thus.” RSV translates the two *hiph'il* verbs as causatives: “he would not have . . . shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these.” NAB, on the other hand, renders them both as toleratives “Nor would he have let us see all this, or hear what we have heard,” characterizing the entire revelatory experience as a privilege, a welcome and agreeable experience. NJPS, however, treats the two verbs differently: “He would not have . . . let us see all these things; and He would not have made such an announcement to us.” Apparently the NJPS translators—perhaps prompted by the word *וְקָעַת* separating the two verbs—perceive Manoah's wife as speaking differently about the two parts of their experience: she regards the supernatural visual experience accompanying their offering, when they realize that their visitor was divine, as a welcome privilege (“God let us see”), compared to which the visitor's earlier announcement and instructions concerning Samson—received when she and Manoah thought him human—diminishes in importance and becomes primarily information (“he announced”), welcome though it was.

Mic 7:9, *וּדְצִיאָנִי לְאוֹר*. NRSV translates “He will bring me out to the light,” but NJPS renders “He will let me out into the light.” This seems to take its cue from v. 8: the people's suffering is like sitting in the darkness of prison (“Though I sit in darkness”), and their future redemption will be like a release from prison into the light. Cf. Isaiah 42:7: “(I the LORD) . . . Opening eyes deprived of light, Rescuing (לְהוֹצִיא) prisoners from confinement, From the dungeon those who sit in darkness” (NJPS).⁵⁵

Job 10:18, *וְלָמָּה מָרָחֵם הַצִּאתָנִי*. NJPS translates “Why did You let me come out of the womb?” whereas NRSV translates “Why did you bring me forth from the womb?” The tolerative rendering is consistent with the way that birth is described elsewhere in the Bible: the baby comes out (*יצא*) of its mother's womb rather than being taken out (by somebody such as a midwife).⁵⁶

Šimšon, 54–58, 63, 68–69.

55. See Paul, *Isaiah* 40–66, 190.

56. Cf. Gen 25:25; 38:28–30; Num 12:12; Jer 1:5; 20:18; Job 1:21; 3:11; 38:29; Qoh 5:14. Ps 22:10 is uncertain: *כִּי־אֶתָּה גָחִי מִבֶּטֶן מִבְּטִיחִי עַל־שֵׁדֵי אֹמִי*.

Ps 141:4, אֶל־תִּטְּלֵבִי לְדַבָּר | אָרַע. Not only is a causative translation possible here, too, but KJV and others choose this option: “Incline not my heart to *any* evil thing.” NAB and others, however, render the clause as tolerative, “Do not let my heart incline to evil,” and the context favors this option, since in the preceding verse the psalmist asks God to control his speech, in other words to prevent him from sinning: “O LORD, set a guard over my mouth, a watch at the door of my lips.”

In Ps 119:133, וְאַל־תִּשְׁלֹט־בִּי כָּל־אָוֶן. A causative translation would be “do not cause iniquity to dominate me,” but all of our translations agree on rendering the verb as tolerative, essentially “do not let iniquity dominate me” (NJPS).⁵⁸

Both the causative and tolerative translations raise the issue of human freedom, each in a different way: The causative translation implies that God might cause people to sin, and the psalmists ask Him not to. The tolerative translation implies that God can prevent people from sinning, and psalmists ask Him to do so—to take away their freedom to sin.

The issue of divine causality is raised even more explicitly by Isa 63:17, in which the exiles living in Babylonia, or the prophet speaking for them, asks לָמָּה תִתְעַנֶּנּוּ יְהוָה מִדְּרָכֶיךָ תִקְשִׁיחַ לִבֵּנוּ מִיִּרְאַתְךָ. NJB renders the verbs as toleratives: “Why, Yahweh, do You let us wander from your ways and let our hearts grow too hard to fear You?” This absolves God of the charge of causing the people to sin. It implies that the people had been tempted or inclined to sin, and God did not prevent them from doing so. Most of our translations, however, render the verbs as causative: “Why, O LORD, do you make us stray from your ways, and harden our heart, so that we do not fear you?” (NRSV).⁵⁹

The point I wish to make here is that, with the exception of Ps 141:4, the context does not seem to favor one translation over the other, and the translators opting for tolerative translations may well be motivated by a

58. For the reverberations of this clause in later Jewish texts, see Flusser, “Qumrān and Jewish ‘Apotropaic’ Prayers”; Greenfield, *‘Al Kanfei Yonah*, vol. 2, 640–43. Certain later Jewish prayers that echo this verse avoid the implication that God causes sin by revising the verb to read וְאַל יִשְׁלֹט בִּ/בְנוּ, “may (an/the evil inclination) not rule over me/us” (see Flusser, “Qumrān and Jewish ‘Apotropaic’ Prayers,” 199, n. 22).

59. NAB adds, in a footnote: “The hardening of the heart (Exod 4:21; 7:3 – JHT) serves to explain Israel’s sins—a motif to induce the Lord to relent.” Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 567, 568, 583–4, accepts the causative translation, but in his view it does not imply that God intentionally or directly causes sin, but that he was ultimately responsible for the people’s continuing to sin after the exile because the destruction of the Temple and Judah led them to despair and stray from his path: “The following verses claim . . . that God’s aloofness is the ultimate cause of their sins, to which they confess [64:4–6]” (quotation from p. 568).

theological concern to avoid implying that God might cause people to sin.⁶⁰ Theologically, it is preferable for worshipers to voluntarily waive their freedom to sin and ask God to prevent them from doing so than to imply that He might cause them to sin. If that is the translators' motive, however, it is undercut by numerous passages in the Bible that indicate that God sometimes does cause people to sin. As Kaufmann explains, citing Isaiah 63:17 and other passages:

Isaiah . . . ascribes such activity to God in his inaugural vision (6:9 f.); the thought is expressed by Elijah (1 Kgs 18:37) and the second Isaiah as well (63:17) . . . [This idea] is the outcome of a desire to comprehend all phenomena as actions of the one God. *While it is axiomatic that sin is man's doing, the religious consciousness of the Bible was unable to reconcile itself entirely with this restriction of God's dominion. There is a tension here between the moral demand that sets limits to the working of God and the religious demand that subjects all to divine control.* This tension is resolved in the eschatological vision of the new heart that man is to get at the end of days which will render him incapable of sinning (Jer 31:31 ff.; 32:39 f.; Ezek 11:19 ff.; 36:26 f.).⁶¹

Eichrodt cites further examples and adds the observation that “Even the innermost life of Man was subjected to the all-pervading divine energy. It is not simply that God allows a man to think thus and not otherwise; he is himself also at work within these acts of personal freedom . . . One will never do justice to the profound grasp of the reality of God which is evinced in these statements by trying to explain them in terms of God's *permissive* [emphasis added—JHT] will.”⁶²

Hence the fact that a causative translation of the *hiph'il* would contradict the idea of free will cannot by itself be grounds for ruling it out in these verses. Without that motivation, the verses in question (except for Ps 141:4) are patient of either interpretation.

Conclusion

The tolerative/permissive *hiph'il*, like its counterparts in Akkadian and Aramaic, is a well-attested phenomenon in Biblical Hebrew, as illustrated by unambiguous examples of different types in which the subject (1) allows the

60. Cf. Charlesworth cited in n. 12 above: “theologically perplexing”.

61. Kaufmann *Religion of Israel*, 75 (emphasis added).

62. Eichrodt, *Theology*, vol. 2, 176–81 (the quotation is from p. 178). See also Greenberg, “ואתה הסבת את לבם אחורנית”.

object of the verb to do what the root means, granting a request, explicit or implicit; (2) enables the object to undergo an experience that is “welcome or agreeable” to it; and (3) (perhaps a subcategory of [2]), allows the object to do something by (the subject’s) refraining from a contrary action. Because the tolerative *hiph’il* is morphologically indistinguishable from the causative *hiph’il*, its identification depends on the ultimately subjective interpretation of the contexts in which it appears, a subjectivity often reflected in translators’ conflicting renditions. In some cases translators’ choices seem to have been influenced by their theological presuppositions rather than the immediate context of a passage. Certain verbs, such as הראה, החיה, and העביר and verbs for lending, may have been used as tolerative *hiph’il* with greater frequency than others. Whether this is really so requires a more thorough study.

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