Hebrew *niphal* and Greek aorist in -(θ)η- in the Pentateuchus: Convergencies from a historical and functional perspective

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This paper investigates the functions and the distribution of Greek aorist in -(θ)η- and Hebrew *niphal* in the Septuagint's Pentateuchus, with the aim of clarifying: 1) the relationship between these two categories, 2) the principles underlying their patterns of change. Greek aorist in -(θ)η- shows a progressive merger between passive and middle voice (Prévot 1935, Horrocks 2010, Voitila 2016). Hebrew *niphal* is traditionally associated with passive or reflexive meanings (Joüon&Muraoka 1996), although it displays other functions (van Wolde 2019). The study reported here allows us to explain the functional organisation of both categories, in a diachronic perspective, and to evaluate the Hebrew-Greek interference effect on it (Blass et al.1961, Janse 2007).

A complete *corpus* of the occurrences of the *niphal* and corresponding Greek forms in the Pentateuchus was created and a contrastive analysis was conducted, at the morphosyntax/lexical semantics interface. The relationship between unaccusativity (Levin&Rappaport 1995), passive (Haspelmath 1990), tense, and voice were examined, as these are crucial to the understanding of the functions and distribution of the categories under investigation (Joüon&Muraoka 1996, Magni 2008, García Ramón 2014, Romagno 2014).

In 30.76% of cases, the *niphal* corresponds to the prototypical (and archetypical) function of the ancient form of aorist in -η-, that is the expression of anticausative values (Romagno 2014): Gen.7:11. The *niphal*/aorist in -(θ)η- also has passive (25.82%) and reflexive (8.79%) meanings: in 50% of these, verb semantics includes agent-oriented components (Haspelmath 1993). Moreover, the *niphal* is used with translational motion (10.43%: Ex.40:36), reciprocal (2.74%: Gen.32:25), and emotion and cognition verbs (11.5%: Gen.24:67). In these cases, the aorist in -(θ)η- is scarcely used: most of the corresponding Greek forms are active aorists (22%), futures (42%), and perfects (11%).

Our results show that: 1) the *niphal* and aorist in -(θ)η- in the Pentateuchus frequently express anticausative values, which correspond to the original function of the Greek category; 2) a common principle underlies anticausative, passive, and reflexive *niphal*/aorist in -(θ)η; this principle is related to specific semantic properties of the verb lexeme; 3) the *niphal* is used as a middle voice marker, covering a range of functions that centres around the expression of unaccusativity and includes the encoding of translational motion and reciprocal events, as well as of emotion and cognition. In conclusion, this study contributes to clarifying the relationship between Hebrew *niphal* and Greek aorist in -(θ)η- and provides new evidence on their functional organisation and pattern of change.

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