

Bible Translation

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From Hebrew to Greek: Verbs in Translation in the Book of Ecclesiastes

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Abstract: This article discusses the translation of verbs in the Book of Ecclesiastes from Hebrew into Greek. Each Hebrew verbal category is examined in turn. Qal perfective verbs are found to be primarily rendered via the Greek aorist indicative, while Qal imperfective verbs are translated primarily by both the future indicative and by the aorist subjunctive. Qal participles are rendered almost equally by Greek participles and Greek finite forms (usually present), while Qal infinitives and imperatives are rendered by their equivalents in Greek. With regard to other Hebrew stems, these general trends hold true, but it is noted that Piel and Hiphil verbs are translated overwhelmingly by Greek active forms (almost never deponent or middle), while the Niphal is predictably rendered by passive Greek forms. Besides these general trends, the article makes note of exceptions and oddities which help to elucidate the ancient translator's understanding of both the Hebrew and Greek verbal systems.

Keywords: Bible translation, Septuagint

Introduction

This article 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 Text¹ and the Septuagint, we 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 explain as much as possible the reasons behind the translation of any given verb category by another. Finally, we explore some potential ramifications in our conclusion and note the possibilities for further study.

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

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 (discussed 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.

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accurately translated verbs were not always translated as expected with respect to verbal categories. 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. Secondly, if a verb was deemed not to in fact translate another verb, it was excluded. 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, it had to be clear that the Hebrew construction was misconstrued and that a completely different Greek construction was supplied in its place.

This study is divided into sections based on the aspect of the Hebrew verbs under consideration in each chapter. Specifically, the first section 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 section, subdivisions are made by Hebrew stem. Thus, within the section 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.²

As a starting point for understanding the verbal systems of Hebrew and Greek, we lean on the work of scholars in each field. For the verbal system of Hebrew, we begin with the comprehensive and recent work of John Cook, who promulgates a view of the Hebrew perfect (or perfective) as essentially punctual in aspect, and largely (although hardly entirely) past-tense. The imperfect (or imperfective), in contrast, is essentially durative in aspect and is historically primarily present-future in tense.³ For Greek, we begin with the work of Indo-European linguists such as Andrew Sihler, who describe a similar system of aspectual distinction (perfective/aorist versus imperfective/present-future) in the forebear of Greek and who trace that system into the era of Classical Greek and later.⁴ In the conclusion of this article, we will revisit these viewpoints.

The translator(s) of the Book of Ecclesiastes from Hebrew into Greek were very much a literalist.⁵ They 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

hóti éstin ánthrōpos, hoû mókhthos autoû en sophíai kai en gnōsei kai en andreíai, kai ánthrōpos, hòs ouk emókhthēsen en autōi, dôsei autōi merída autoû (2:21)

“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:

kī-yēš 'ādām še'āmālō bəḥokmāh ūbada'at ūbakišrōn ūl'ādām šello' 'āmal-bō yittennū ḥelqō (2:21)

“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.”

² For a brief but technical summary of the Hebrew verbal system of Ecclesiastes, see Isaksson, *Studies*, 140-41. For a more thorough treatment, see Cook, *Qohelet*.

³ See Cook, *Time* and Cook, *Qohelet*. See also the discussion in Good, *Chronicles*, 50 ff.

⁴ See Sihler, *Grammar* as well as Rijksbaron, *Verb*. A brief discussion is also available in Fortson, *Indo-European*.

⁵ For a readable discussion of modern translation theory, see Gentzler, *Theories*. See especially the discussion of Eugene Nida, an influential Bible translator who believed (quite contrary to the Septuagint translator of Ecclesiastes) that “...the dynamic translator is able to be more faithful than the literal translator by somehow perceiving ‘more fully and satisfactorily the meaning of the original text’” (58).

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 study, 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.

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:

wəṇāṭattī et-libbī lidrōš... (1:13)
kai ēdōka tēn kardían mou tou ekzētēsai... (1:13)
 “And **I gave** my heart to searching out...”

rə’ēh zeh māšā’tī ‘āmārāh qohelet... (7:27)
idē touō heūron, eīpen ho ekklēsiastēs... (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. Furthermore, 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.

The Qal perfect is translated by means of the imperfect active indicative three times, which in fact represent the only instances 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 *ēn* or *ēsan*, 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 aorist of the Greek verb *gínomai*. 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,

wāgam lēb bānē-hā'ādām mālē'-rā'... (9:3)
kaí ge kardía huiōn toû anthrōpou eplērōthē ponērou... (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:

mah-ššehāyāh kēbār hū' wa'āšer lihyōt kēbār hāyāh... (3:15)
tò genómenon édē estín, kai hōsa toû gínesthai, édē 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 *kēbār* (Greek *édē*) ‘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 *kēbār 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). In most cases, this is an apparently correct translation of a Hebrew perfective form with an affixed waw. (Not all perfectives with affixed waws are meant to be construed as future, but the translator is generally sensitive to this.)

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.⁶ Two of these tokens occur in 1:5 to describe the everlasting cycle of days and nights:

⁶ Isaksson, *Studies*, 75 ff. ably discusses various instances of perfective verbs in Ecclesiastes which ought to be translated as presents. In short, there are many more than three. The Septuagint translator, as usual, opts for simplistic one-to-one correspondences over what we might term precise translation.

wəzārah haššemeš *ūbā'* haššāmeš...(1:5)
kaì anatéllei ho hēlios *kaì dūnei* ho hēlios...(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 future-tense; 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 *’āšer*, greatly increases the likelihood of a Greek participle following to render a Hebrew non-participial form. This proclivity for using participles instead of relative clauses is simply a stylistic feature of Greek, as can be seen below:

gam miqneh bāqār wāšo’n harbēh hāyāh lī mikkol šehāyū ləpānay (2:7)
*kaí ge ktēsis boukolíou kaí poimníou pollē egénētó moi hupēr pántas toús **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.

As noted, there are 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:

*rə’eh hayyīm ‘im-’iššāh ’āšer-’āhbtā kol-yāmē hayyē heblekā ’āšer **nātan**-lākā taḥat haššemeš kol-yāmē heblekā* (9:9)
*idē zōēn metā gunaikós, hēs ēgápēsas, pásas hēméras zōēs mataiótētós sou tās **dotheías** soi hupò tòn hēlion, 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 *’āšer* 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 is the one who 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 six 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, in some passages such as 12:2-3, the future indicative and the aorist subjunctive 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. 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 *hīna* 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 did not 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:

wəhōlīd 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 *megálúnō*, a stative verb with causative meaning. Interestingly, that very same Hebrew verb form is translated as an aorist active indicative (again, of *megálúnō*) 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 *‘āśāh*, seven the singular *na‘āśāh* and one the plural *na‘āśū*, and all are translated by the Greek *pepoiēménon* (or the appropriate form in context). An example:

wəmah šenna‘āśāh hū’ šeyyē‘āśeh...(1:9)
kai 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 *‘āšer*. 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 (*na‘āśāh*). This is an unusual choice for the translator, and may either indicate that the vowel pointing was interpreted differently (for instance, *na‘āśeh*) 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:

mah-ššehāyāh kəbār niqrā’ šəmō...(6:10)
eí ti egéneto, édē 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'awwəṭū* in 12:3 is translated by the Greek *diastrophōsin*, 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 Hithpael in the imperfective aspect.)

One example exists of a Piip 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:

*wə***suggərū** *dəlāṭayim baššūq...*(12:4)

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

kai **kleísousin** *thúras en agorâi...*(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.

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.

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

ouk **éstai** autoîs mnēmē... (1:11)

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

kī 'ādām 'ēn ṣaddīq bā'āreṣ 'āšer **ya'āseh**-tōb wəlo' **yehetā**' (7:20)

hóti ánthrōpos ouk éstin díkaïos en têi gêi, hōs **poiései** agathòn kai oukh **hamartésetai** (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:

wəṛā'tī kī 'ēn tōb mē'āšer **yismaḥ** hā'ādām bəma'āsāyw... (3:22)

kai eídon hóti ouk éstin agathòn ei mē hò **euphranthésetai** ho ánthrōpos en poiémasin 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 68 Greek subjunctives specifically translating a Hebrew verb in Ecclesiastes, 55 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 *'āšer* or one of its de facto compounds (*'ad 'āšer*, *ka'āšer*, etc.), but the clause can also be headed by *'im*. The Greek uses such particles as *hína*, (*e*)*án*, *hēōs*, *hópōs*, and *hótan* to translate these, each of which calls forth the subjunctive. An example:

gam ləkol-haddəbārīm 'āšer yəḏabbērū 'al-tittēn libbekā 'āšer lo'-**tišma**' 'et-'abdəkā məqaləlekā (7:21)

kai ge eis pántas toûs lógous, hoûs lalésousin, mē thêis kardían sou, hópōs mē **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 *mē thêis* 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:

šəmor raglakā ka’āšer tēlēk ’el-bēt hā’ēlohīm... (4:17)

phúlaxon póda sou, en hōi eàn poreúēi eis oīkon tou theou... (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’āšer*, 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. 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. Nonetheless, 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. In most cases, this reflects the ‘waw consecutive’ construction whereby an imperfective verb is transformed by the addition of a *wa-* prefix into a verb with perfective aspect. Seven more 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.

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:

ṭōb ’āšer lo’-tiddor miššettiddōr wəlo’ təšallēm (5:4)

agathōn tò mē eúxasthaí se è tò eúxasthaí se kai mē 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 ’āšer*; 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.)

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

bəkol-’ēt yihyū bəgādeykā ləbānīm wəšemen ‘al-ro’šākā ‘al yeḥsār (9:8)
en pantī kairōi éstōsan himātiá sou leuká, kai élaion epì kephalén sou mē 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 tēhī* is translated twice by *mē 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 which contains both:

yēš ‘eḥād wə’ēn šēnī... (4:8)
éstin heīs, kai 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 *ēi*; 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. 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 (5:4), 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:

ūbəkēn rā’itī rəšā’im qəburīm wābā’ū umimməqōm qādōš yəhallēkū wəyištakkəḥū bā’ir ‘āšer kēn-’āsū... (8:10)
kai tōte eídon asebeís eis táphous eisakhthéntas, kai ek tóπου hagiou eporeúthēsan kai epēinéthēsan en tēi pólei, hōti hoútōs epoíēsan... (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 *šābaḥ* ‘praise’ rather than *šākaḥ* ‘forget’, changing the meaning of the verse entirely. 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:

kī 'im-yippolū hā'eḥād yāqīm 'et-ḥabērō...(4:10)
*hóti eān pēsōsin, ho heīs **egereī** tōn métokhon autoū...(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 indicative (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:

wəyōsīp da'at yōsīp mak'ōb (1:18)
 “And (he/it) **will add** knowledge, (he/it) will add pain”
*kai ho **prostithēs** gnōsin prosthēsei algēma (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:

kol-ʾamal hāʾādām ləpīhū wəgam-hannepeš loʾ timmālēʾ (6:7)

pās mókthos toû anthrôpou eis stôma autoû, kai ge hē psukhê ou plērōthēsetai (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 (10:9), namely with a form of the Greek lexeme *kinduneūō* which has active morphology but occasionally passive semantics.

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 above, where *wəyištakkəhū* is translated by *epēinēthesan*); 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 (6:2) which can be explained (much like *kinduneūō* above) by the qualities of the particular lexemes in question.

The Hithpolel imperfect occurs once (7:16) in the verb *tīššōmēm*, which is rendered by the Greek aorist passive subjunctive *ekplagēis*. As the Hithpolel is simply the Hithpael for geminates, it is not surprising that the stem fits under the general translational rubric given above.

The Poel imperfect occurs once (7:7) in the verb *yəhōlēl*, and is translated by the present active indicative *periphērei*. 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:

ūbaḥošek šəmō yəkusseh (6:4)

kai en skôtei ónoma autoû kaluphthēsetai (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 (*ḥābar* ‘unite’ in place of *bāḥar* ‘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 *yəḥubbar* ‘will be (is) joined together’. This, then, is another example of Greek using a different lexeme to render a change of stem in Hebrew.

Other Hebrew Verbal Forms

Hebrew Participles

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:

- dōr holēk wədōr bā'...* (1:4)
geneà poreúetai kai geneà érkhetai... (1:4)
 “A generation **goes** and a generation **comes**...”
- hakkol holēk 'el-māqōm 'eḥād...* (3:20)
tà pānta poreúetai eis tópon hēna... (3:20)
 “All things **are going** to one place...”
- wəlahōṭe' nātan 'inyān le'ēsōp...* (2:26)
kai tōi hamartánonti édōken perispasmōn toū prostheînai... (2:26)
 “And to **the sinning one** he gave a task to gather up...”
- yeš šaddiq 'obēd bəšidqō...* (7:15)
éstin díkaïos 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 the first two instances, it is nearly always translated as a finite verb into Greek. When, however, it acts as a substantive (as in the third instance) or as an attributive (as in the fourth instance), 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.

Hebrew Infinitives

The translation of infinitives in Ecclesiastes is fairly straightforward. Except in rare cases, Hebrew infinitives are rendered via Greek infinitives. Most of the time, the Greek infinitive used is the aorist: 73 out of 85 Qal infinitives occurring in Ecclesiastes are translated in this way. Occasionally, a Greek present infinitive is used in order to convey an idea of continuing action, although it is not always clear that this is the reasoning behind such a translation. In three instances (two Qal and one Piel), a Hebrew infinitive absolute is rendered not with a Greek infinitive but with a Greek aorist active indicative; this accurately conveys the sense of the Hebrew infinitive absolute. Finally, the ten Piel, eight Hiphil, and two Niphal infinitives occurring in Ecclesiastes are all translated according to the general rubric outlined above.

Hebrew Imperatives

Much as was the case with infinitives, the translation of Hebrew imperatives in Ecclesiastes is straightforward. Of the 21 Qal imperatives occurring in the book, 16 are translated by an aorist imperative and 5 by a present imperative. Although an attempt at aspectual distinction can be assumed on the part of the translator, the choice between aorist and present is not always predictable. Of the three Piel infinitives in the book, two are translated as aorist imperatives while one is translated as a present imperative. Meanwhile, the two Hiphil imperatives and one Niphal imperative in Ecclesiastes are all rendered by means of aorist imperatives.

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. All of this seems to fit well with the theoretical models of the Hebrew and the Greek verb mentioned in the introduction. On the other hand, the translator's use of the Greek perfect to render the Hebrew perfect is most often conditioned by the presence of the adverb *kābār* outside the Niphal.

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 due to a *wā-* prefix). 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 in such cases 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 *wā-* 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.⁷ 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 addition, 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. This fact was not predicted by the theoretical models mentioned in the introduction, and it should quite likely be taken to reveal a fundamental rigidity on the part of the translator rather than any real aspectual equivalence between the Hebrew imperfective and the Greek aorist.

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 Piel 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

⁷ 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, *Language*, 118 concludes on this and other grounds that there is no linguistic reason to assign Ecclesiastes a very late date of composition. Nonetheless, this remains a minority view, as outlined by Hurvitz, *Language* and discussed more fully in Cook, *Qohelet*.

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.

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.

A number of other scholars have carried out studies of verbal translation on other corpora within the Septuagint.⁸ While the Pentateuch is well-represented in these studies, other books (especially historical or narrative books) are also frequently chosen. The general results of these other studies show that the Septuagint translators are not always consistent in their translation technique, and in fact they seem to show that the translator of Ecclesiastes is more internally consistent than are the translators of many other books. This consistency is not always for the best, however; while other translators are quite willing to use Greek imperfects to render appropriate verbs in the Hebrew or Greek presents to render Hebrew imperfectives when appropriate, the translator of Ecclesiastes (as noted) shows much less flexibility in these areas. Thus, when compared to other books of the Septuagint, Ecclesiastes provides a more predictable translation schema at the expense of strict accuracy. Further studies on the Septuagint would be welcome in order to glean still more data.

⁸ See Endo, *Joseph Story*; Evans, *Greek Pentateuch*; Good, *Chronicles*; Sailhamer, *Psalms 3-41*; and Voitila, "Histoire du Joseph".

Table 1. Occurrence of Verbal Categories in the Septuagint Translation of Ecclesiastes[illegible]

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