

# Does *yitnaggah* 'immô in Dan 11:40a Describe Unilateral Action?

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In this note there are two things to deal with. One is the verb *yitnaggah* (lit., "he will gore"), the other is the preposition 'immô. (lit., "with him"). We begin with the preposition.

## The Preposition 'im Used as an Object Marker

19. introducing object, followed by noun, David 1 C 12:22 (unless עִם = with, i.e. §1a); with verb עָזַר help 1 C 12:22 (unless עִם = with, i.e. §1a, and עָזַר II join together).

Hebrew prepositions are notoriously flexible in meaning. Illustrating this fact is that the preposition 'im can be used an object marker. The *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler-Baumgartner) offer four meanings for 'im, while the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* offers twenty-three. The example they offer for entry 19 is 1 Chr 12:22 ("For from day to day men came to David to help him [*'im-dāwîd*], until there was a great army, like an army of God"). Unfortunately, the verb in this example is Qal, rather than Hitpael. However, our focus here is on the preposition. Hebrew 'im can be used as an object marker. There is that possibility.

## Hitpael Verbs Used to Describe Unilateral Actions

In what follows I make no effort to show what the meaning of the various Hitpael verbs cited might be. My point is not to show what they mean, but what they do not mean. They are not reciprocal.

וַיִּרְיִבוּ רֹעֵי גֵרָר עִם־רֹעֵי יִצְחָק לֵאמֹר לָנוּ הַמַּיִם וַיִּקְרָא שְׁם־הַבְּאֵר עֵשֶׂק כִּי Gen. 26:20  
הִתְעַשְׂקוּ עִמּוֹ:

**Gen. 26:20** the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him.

Gen 26:20 might seem to be a bad example to lead with. The situation it describes is that the herdsmen contended with each other. Jacob was not out contending alongside them. They were the ones doing the contending. But pragmatics is not syntax. Syntactically the reference is not to them; it is to him (*'immô*). This is corporate personality. Saying "him" is a reference to the herdsmen, not Jacob. Again, corporate personality is not syntax. Here we are talking only about the latter. Here we have a Hitpael verb followed by *'immô* and syntactically the reference is to Jacob (sg.). "They contended with him." ESV correctly avoids translating, "They contended with each other."

Psa. 89:39  
וְאַתָּה זָנַחְתָּ וְתַמְאַסְתָּ הִתְעַבְרָתָ עַם־מְשִׁיחֶךָ:

**Psa. 89:38** But now you have cast off and rejected; you are full of wrath against your anointed.

In Ps 89:38[39] Ethan the Ezrahite is lamenting the fact (as he perceives it) that God has rejected the line of Davidic kings. In his mind it is not that God is full of wrath against the house of David and the house of David is full of wrath against God, and they are all full of wrath against each other. "You are full of wrath against your anointed [*'im-m<sup>e</sup>šihēkā*]." Despite the fact that the verb is Hitpael, the action is not reciprocal. It might be analyzed as being reflexive in some way (Waltke & O'Connor give four levels of reflexive meaning for Hitpael verbs in their chap. 26), but that is neither here nor there. It is not reciprocal.

Dan. 10:21  
אָבֵל אֲגִיד לְךָ אֶת־הַרְשָׁוִים בְּכֹתֵב אֱמֶת וְאִין אֶחָד מִתְחַזֵּק עִמִּי עַל־אֱלֹהֵי כִי  
אִם־מִיכָאֵל שְׂרָכָם: פ

**Dan. 10:21** But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.

The syntax of Dan 10:21 exactly matches the syntax of Dan 11:40. In both cases we have a singular Hitpael verb with preposition *'im* and a pronominal suffix. In Dan 10:21 the meaning cannot be that Michael and His angels contend with each other in influencing the prince of Persia. Instead, the passage is saying that no one can equal Michael in His ability to contend successfully with the prince of Persia.

Dan. 11:40  
וּבַעֲתָ קֹץ יִתְנַגַּח עִמּוֹ מֶלֶךְ הַנְּגֹב וְיִשְׁתַּעַר עָלָיו מֶלֶךְ הַצָּפוֹן בְּרֹכֵב וּבִפְרָשִׁים  
וּבְאַנְיֹת רַבּוֹת וּבֵא בְאַרְצוֹת וְשָׁטַף וְעָבַר:

**Dan. 11:40** "At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.

This is the passage in question. If the question is whether a Hitpael verb with preposition *'im* can be used to describe unilateral action, evidently it can. Notice that ESV translates, "[He] shall attack him." ESV is not always right, but this is how the translators handle this particular passage.

**1Chr. 11:10** וְאֵלֶּה רֹאשֵׁי הַגְּבוּרִים אֲשֶׁר לְדָוִד הַמִּתְחַזְּקִים עִמּוֹ בְּמַלְכוּתוֹ עִם-כָּל-  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַמְלִיכֹו בְּדָבָר יְהוָה עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל: ס

**1Chr. 11:10** Now these are the chiefs of David's mighty men, who gave him strong support in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

This example and the next are largely equivalent. In 1 Chr 11:10 the predicate is a participle, while in 2 Chr 16:9 it is an infinitive. Also, in 1 Chr 11:10 the preposition is followed by a pronominal suffix, while in 2 Chr 16:9 it is followed by a noun. But in both cases what we are not dealing with is a situation where the chiefs of David's mighty men were supporting David and he was supporting them, such that they were all strongly supporting to each other. "[They] gave him strong support."

**2Chr. 16:9** כִּי יְהוָה עֵינָיו מְשַׁטְטוֹת בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ לְהִתְחַזֵּק עִם-לְבָבָם שְׁלָם אֱלֹו נִסְכְּלוֹת  
עַל-זֹאת כִּי מַעֲתָה יֵשׁ עִמָּךְ מִלְחָמוֹת:

**2Chr. 16:9** For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars."

There is more to learn about Hebrew Hitpael verbs, and about the preposition *'im*, but the above examples illustrate uses of the Hitpael accompanied by the preposition *'im*, followed by a prefix in all but one case, as in Dan 11:40, and not one of them conveys a reciprocal sense. Such usage is possible, and I believe that in Dan 11:40 context requires it.