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THE PARTICLES הַּ AND הֶּ IN SEVERAL BIBLE  
TRANSLATIONS

## I.

The presentative Biblical Hebrew particles הִנֵּה and הִנֵּנָה share one basic presentative meaning, but show some variation in syntactic functions, as follows:

1. הִנֵּה and הִנֵּנָה appear in distinct syntactic patterns. While הִנֵּה mostly follows verbs of speech and introduces the contents of the speech, הִנֵּנָה generally follows verbs of sight, revelation, and similar contexts, and introduces content clauses conveying the objects of the sight or revelation. Examples of הִנֵּה in this role are (1) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ הִנֵּה אֶרְצִי לְפָנֶיךָ בְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ שֶׁב “And Abimelech said, ‘**Behold**, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you’” (Gen. 20:15); (2) וַיִּגְדּוּ לוֹ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה דָוִד בְּמִדְבַּר עֵין גֵּדִי “He was told, ‘**Behold**, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.’” (1 Sam. 24:2), which consist of verbs of speech. Examples of הִנֵּנָה in this role are (3) וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה בָּאָר בְּשָׂדֶה וְהִנֵּה-שָׁם “As he looked, he saw a well in the field, **and lo**, three flocks of sheep lying beside it” (Gen. 29:2), which contains a verb of sight, and (4) וַיִּשְׁכַּב וַיִּישֹׁן תַּחַת רֵתֶם אֶחָד וְהִנֵּה-זֶה מְלָאךְ נֹגֵעַ בוֹ “And he lay down and slept under a broom tree; **and behold**, an angel touched him” (1 Kgs. 19:5), which refers to a revelation in a dream.
2. הִנֵּה and הִנֵּנָה should regularly be considered as introducing particles whose syntactic roles are external to their following clause, yet in certain specific cases הִנֵּה may serve as a predicate. Examples of הִנֵּה and הִנֵּנָה as introducing

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a paper presented at the *SBL* Annual meeting held at New Orleans, Louisiana, on November 21-24, 2009.

external particles are (5) **וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה-נָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אֵין אֱלֹהִים בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ כִּי אִם-בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל** “And he said, ‘**Behold**, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel” (2 Kgs. 5:15), where the subject and predicate of the following clause are implicit in the verb יָדַעְתִּי, and (6) **וַיִּהְיֶה בְּהִיּוֹת וְהוֹשָׁע בִּירִיחוֹ וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו** “When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, **and behold**, a man stood before him with his drawn sword in his hand” (Josh. 5:13), in which אִישׁ is the subject and עָמַד the predicate. Examples of הנה as a predicate are (7) **וַיַּעַן דָּוִד וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הַחֲנִית הַחֲנִית** (7) **הִנֵּה הַחֲנִית הַחֲנִית** “And David made answer, ‘**Here is** the spear, O king!” (1 Sam. 26:22), in which the definite noun הַחֲנִית or הַמֶּלֶךְ, should be interpreted as the subject and הנה as the predicate, and (8) **וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-גִּיחֲזִי נַעֲרוֹ הִנֵּה הַשּׁוֹנַמִּית הַלֵּז** (8) **וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-גִּיחֲזִי נַעֲרוֹ הִנֵּה הַשּׁוֹנַמִּית הַלֵּז** “He said to Gehazi his servant, ‘**Look, yonder is** the Shunammite” (2 Kgs. 4:25), in which the definite phrase הַשּׁוֹנַמִּית הַלֵּז is the subject and הנה the predicate.

3. הנה might serve as a reply to a call, e.g., (9) **וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר (9) אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי בְנִי** “And Isaac said to his father Abraham, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘**Here am I**, my son.” (Gen. 22:7).

These particles also reveal some variation in meaning. While הנה, following a verb of speech, might have a locative meaning, especially when serving as a predicate in a clause, והנה, following a verb of sight, introduces an unexpected event.<sup>2</sup>

## II.

Bible translations may differ in their rendering of these different syntactic functions and the consequent nuances of the basic meaning. In general, they vary

<sup>2</sup> On the function and meaning of הנה and והנה, see, e.g., Andersen 2003, Kogut 1986, McCarthy 1980, Van der Merwe 2007, Zewi 1996, and more references in Van der Merwe 2007:101-102, note 3.

from using one fossilized literal translation for all appearances of these presentatives to employing various translation options for the diverse syntactic patterns and contexts.

Saadya Gaon's Arabic translation to the Bible, the Tafsīr, which reflects Middle Arabic in its early Post-Classical stage, is a good example of a flexible translation, which takes into account the assorted options of translation for the presentatives discussed. The following examples demonstrate this point.<sup>3</sup>

1. The typical translation of הנה following a verb of speech in the Tafsīr is by הוּא.

Although it frequently appears only in Ms. St. Petersburg and not in printed editions like Derenbourg and Ḥasīd, this is most likely an original form later replaced by the fossilized form הוּדִיָּה, which is often used in these editions for many occurrences of both הנה and הנהוּ. הוּא is found, for example, in (10) the translation of וְלִסְרָה אָמַר הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי אֵלַיךְ כֶּסֶף לְאַחֶיךָ “To Sarah he said, ‘Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver’” (Gen. 20:16). In Ms. St. Petersburg the translation is וְקָאָל לְסָאָרָה הוּא קָד אַעֲטִית (Gen. 20:16). In Ms. St. Petersburg the translation is וְנִינֵד לְיַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בִנְךָ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלַיִךְ (11); אַכְאֵד אֵלַי דְּרָחַם “And it was told to Jacob, ‘Your son Joseph has come to you’” (Gen. 48:2). In Ms. St. Petersburg the translation is פֶּאֶכְבֵּר יַעֲקֹב וְקִיל לֵה הוּא אַבְנֵךְ יוֹסֵף דְּאִכְל אֵלַיךְ. By contrast, the typical translation of הנהוּ following a verb of sight or a similar context in the Tafsīr is by אַדִּיָּה אֶל-פְּגִיאַיִיָּה. This rendering is common in Ms. St. Petersburg and in the Derenbourg and Ḥasīd printed editions. Such is the rendering, for example, in (12) וַיֵּרָא וַהֲבִיחַ הָרְבִּיב פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה “[He] looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry” (Gen. 8:13). In Ms. St. Petersburg: וַיֵּרְאוּ (13); פְּנִטִיר פֶּאֶדָּא קָד גַּף וְגַה אֶל-אַרְצָה: “They saw the land of Jazer and

<sup>3</sup> More examples see in Zewi 2001.

the land of Gilead, **and behold**, the place was a place for cattle” (Num.32:1). In

Ms. St. Petersburg: פראו בלד יעזר ובלד גלעד **פאדא** בה מוציע מאשיה.

2. The particle הנה playing the role of a predicate, is translated in Ms. St. Petersburg by הא or by a demonstrative pronoun. The presentative הא is found in: (14) וַתֹּאמֶר (14) **הנה** אֶמְתִּי בִלְהָה “Then she said, ‘**Here is** my maid Bilhah’” (Gen. 30:3), translated in Ms. St. Petersburg as קאלת **הא** אמתי בלחה. An example with demonstrative pronouns is (15) וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן לְיַעֲקֹב הֲנֶה הֵגֵל הִזָּה וְהֵנָּה הַמִּצְבָּה אֲשֶׁר גָּרַתִּי בֵּינִי וּבֵינָךְ (15) “Then Laban said to Jacob, ‘**See** this heap and the pillar, which I have set between you and me’” (Gen. 31:51), translated in Ms. St. Petersburg as פקאל לבן ליעקוב **הזא** אלרגם ואלנצבה אלדי נצבת ביני ובינך. This verse contains two occurrences of הנה. The second is probably a second הנה coordinated by waw unrelated to the typical uses of הנה in contexts of sights and dreams. Such renderings are rare in the Derenbourg and Ḥasīd editions, although demonstrative pronouns appear in the translation of Gen. 31:51 in the Derenbourg edition twice: וקאל לבן ליעקוב **הזא** אלרגים ו**הזא** אלנצבה אלתי סדות בהא ביני ובינך, and in the Ḥasīd edition once alongside the fossilized הדיא אלרגם ו**הזא** אלנצבה אלדי זדותהא ביני ובינך: הדיא אלרגים ו**הזא** אלנצבה אלתי סדות בהא ביני ובינך. Such a translation well reflects the status of הנה in these examples as bearing meaningful content, which is part of the clause itself.
3. In reply to a call the particle הנה is generally translated in the Tafsīr by לביך, a special particle for this role in Arabic. This translation appears in Ms. St. Petersburg and in the Derenbourg and Ḥasīd printed editions. An example of this rendering is (16) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה נִיְאָמֶר הֲנִי (16) “[God] called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘**Here am I**’” (Exod. 3:4). The Arabic translation of Saadya according to the three sources is וקאל יא מוסי יא מוסי קאל **לביך**.

Thus all syntactic functions and contexts of these two presentatives, הִנֵּה and הִנֵּנִי, are nicely and consistently reflected in the Tafsīr.

### III.

Now what about other Bible translations? This question is still open for investigation. A good example of a comprehensive study on this matter, referring to Greek and two English translations is Andersen 2003. As for the examples presented so far, you might have noticed that the translation I used for the aforementioned examples, the *RSV*, frequently employs one rigid translation for all occasions, namely ‘behold’. Nonetheless, even the *RSV* shows some flexibility in its translation of the particles. Example (3) above, Gen. 29:2, has two occurrences of הִנֵּה, of which only one is rendered into English—and the word picked for the translation is ‘and lo’, not ‘behold’. More important, the *RSV* for Example (7), 1 Sam. 26:22, renders הִנֵּה by ‘here is’, and the *RSV* for Example (8), 2 Kgs. 4:25, renders הִנֵּה by ‘look’ and ‘yonder’ (= here is). The *RSV* seems to manage to reflect the special nature of הִנֵּה in these two verses as a predicate pointing at a specific location in the clause to which it belongs. The *RSV* also displays sensitivity to the special use of הִנֵּה as a reply to a call, translating it by ‘here am I’ in example (9), Gen. 22:7. Still the flexibility revealed in the *RSV* is clearly not as diverse and consistent as that in Saadya’s Arabic Tafsīr.

The *JPS* displays a variety of translations for הִנֵּה and הִנֵּנִי, which are clearly more diverse than those of the *RSV*. In example (1) above, Gen. 20:15, וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ, הִנֵּה אֶרְצִי לְפָנֶיךָ בְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ שֶׁב, the *JPS* employs ‘here’ after a verb of speech instead of ‘behold’ in *RSV*: “And Abimelech said, ‘**Here**, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you.’” In example (2), 1 Sam. 24:2, וַיִּגְדֹּל לוֹ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה דָוִד בְּמַדְבָּר עֵין גִּדִי, the *JPS* does not employ any translation after the verb of speech, in contrast to the *RSV* which

has 'behold'. The *JPS* translation is "He was told that David was in the wilderness of En-gedi". Example (3), Gen. 29:2, וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה בְּאֵר בְּשֹׂדֶה וְהִנֵּה-שָׁם שְׁלֹשָׁה עֶדְרֵי-צֹאן רֹבְצִים, exhibits once 'there' in the *JPS* translation: "**There** before his eyes was a well in the open. Three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it," while the *RSV* employs 'and lo'. In this case the *JPS* shows a tendency to create a relatively free version, which is typical in other *JPS* renderings as well. A genuine attempt to convey the real meaning of הנה is revealed in example (4) above, 1 Kgs. 19:5, וַיִּשְׁכַּב וַיִּשָּׁן תַּחַת רֶתֶם, אֶחָד וְהִנֵּה-זֶה מִלְּאָךְ נָגַע בּוֹ, whose *JPS* translation is "He lay down and fell asleep under a broom bush. **Suddenly**, an angel touched him." The adverb 'suddenly' is employed instead of the *RSV*'s rigid translation 'and behold', indicating an unexpected revelation.

In example (5), 2 Kgs. 5:15, וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה-נָא יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אֵין אֱלֹהִים בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ כִּי נָא, the *JPS* chooses 'now' instead of the *RSV*'s 'behold': "And [he] exclaimed, '**Now** I know that there is no God in the whole world except in Israel'." In using 'now' the *JPS* probably aims at both הנה and נָא, and imparts to them a temporal nuance.<sup>4</sup> In example (6), Josh. 5:13, וַיְהִי בַהֲלוֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בִּירִיחוֹ וַיֵּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה-אִישׁ עֹמֵד לְפָנָיו, "Once, when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him, drawn sword in hand," the *JPS* again avoids any translation, in contrast to the rigid 'and behold' of the *RSV*. The translation 'here is' recurs in example (7), 1 Sam. 26:22, וַיַּעַן דָּוִד וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הַחֲבִית הַזֹּאת הִמָּלֵךְ, "David replied, '**Here is** Your Majesty's spear'." This time it conforms to the *RSV*. Another example of a translation by 'there' in the *JPS* is example (8), 2 Kgs. 4:25, וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-גִּיהֲזִי נַעֲרֹ הִנֵּה הַשּׁוֹנַמִּית הַלָּז, "He said to his servant Gehazi, '**There is** that Shunammite woman'," in contrast to the *RSV* 'Look, yonder'. 'Yes' in reply to a call

<sup>4</sup> Such rendering is regular in Saadya Gaon's translation. On הנה-נָא see Fassberg 1994:36-40.

is found in example (9), Gen. 22:7, **וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִי** “Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, ‘Father!’ And he answered, ‘**Yes**, my son’,” in contrast to the RSV, ‘Here am I’. Example (10), Gen. 20:16, **וְלִשְׁרָה אָמַר הָנֵה** “And to Sarah he said, ‘I **herewith** give your brother a thousand pieces of silver’,” exhibits ‘herewith’ in contrast to the fixed ‘behold’ of the RSV.

The *JPS* as well as the *RSV* have no translation for **הֵנָּה** again in example (11), Gen. 48:2, **וַיִּגֹּד לְיַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הָנֵה בְנִךְ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלַיְךָ** “When Jacob was told, ‘Your son Joseph has come to see you’,” and in examples (12), Gen. 8:13, **וַיֵּרָא וְהָיָה חֲרֹבוֹ פָּנֵי** “He saw that the surface of the ground was drying,” and (13), Num.32:1, **וַיֵּרָא** “Noting that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were a region suitable for cattle,” where the *RSV* has ‘behold’/‘and behold’. ‘Here is’ is found both in the *JPS* and the *RSV* in example (14), Gen. 30:3, **וַתֹּאמֶר הָנֵה** “She said, ‘**Here is** my maid Bilhah’,” and in the *JPS* alone in example (15), Gen. 31:51, **וַיֹּאמֶר לָבוֹא לְיַעֲקֹב הָנֵה הַזֶּה וְהָנֵה הַמַּצֵּבָה אֲשֶׁר גָּדַעְתִּי בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ** “And Laban said to Jacob, ‘**Here is** this mound and **here is** the pillar which I have set up between you and me’,” in contrast to the *RSV*’s ‘see’. ‘Here am I’ in reply to a call appears both in the *JPS* and the *RSV* in example (16), Exodus 3:4, **וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מִשָּׁה מִשָּׁה** “God called to him out of the bush: ‘Moses, Moses!’ He answered, ‘**Here am I**’.”

All in all, the *JPS* seems to try to be more sensitive to the nuances of meaning and the syntactic roles of **הֵנָּה** and **וְהָנֵה** in their context. It often conveys a locative meaning by ‘here’ or ‘there’, avoiding a fixed translation by ‘behold’ and the like, and in many cases it omits any translation of these presentatives. An attempt to render the nuance of unexpected events is found in the *JPS* use of ‘suddenly’ for **וְהָיָה** in 1 Kgs. 19:5. An alternative rendering for a reply to a call by ‘here am I’ is the *JPS* translation

by 'yes' found in Gen. 22:7. In fact, the *JPS*'s possible renderings of these presentatives are a lot wider. A comprehensive list of them can be found in Andersen 2003:33-39. It includes temporal, locative, and manner adverbs, asseverative words, conjunctions, deictics, exclamations, and more. Yet all these *JPS* renderings, as sensitive to context as they are, lack some consistency, which is better established for this matter in Saadya's Arabic Tafsīr.

#### IV.

In conclusion, what we see in Bible translations should surely be considered only an interpretation of the Biblical texts and their language. Still, sometimes, as is the case in Saadya's Tafsīr, they well reflect the diversity of nuances in meaning and syntactic roles of certain function and content words, in our case, certain presentatives, while at that same time maintaining a large measure of consistency.

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