

Grammatical Analysis of Exodus 9:16

Exodus 9:16
וְאוֹלָם בְּעִבּוֹר זֹאת הָעֲמִדְתִּיךָ בְּעִבּוֹר הָרֶאֱתִיךָ אֶת־כֹּחִי וְלִמְעַן סַפֵּר שְׁמִי בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:
NRSV But this is why I have let you live: to show you my power, and to make my name resound through all the earth.
NAS But, indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.
KJV And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.
NIV But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

Observation #1:

The NIV translates this verse “But I have raised you up,” yet there does not seem to be the notion of exaltation in the Hebrew. Rather, it is a passive action on God’s part, simply allowing the Egyptians to remain alive, and implicitly allowing them to raise themselves up in terms of economics – albeit on the backs of the chosen people.

Observation #2:

The tone set here implies that at any moment, God could have wiped Pharaoh’s population from the face of the planet, but he allowed Pharaoh to live. Pharaoh has abused the position of privilege to which he has risen. The adage of “waking the sleeping giant” comes to mind. He is essentially saying “Pharaoh, you are about to face a reckoning, which will be spoken of around the world. You will learn to fear my name.” This precedes the plague of flaming hail, utterly decimating the landscape of Egypt.

וְאֵלֶּם ו **Particle:** Conjunction
אֵלֶּם **Particle:** Conjunction

Three out of the four English translations I consulted translated the first particle conjunction ו as “but,” which in the context of the preceding verse, leads me to believe it is being used in an adversative manner. God is explaining the reason why he has not cut off the Egyptians from the earth – so that he may demonstrate his power.

The second particle conjunction אֵלֶּם can be translated “indeed,” adding weight to the adversative conjunction. This enhances the nuance, as if to say – “but indeed,” leaving no doubt as to the reason that the Pharaoh’s people have not been utterly wiped out.

בְּעִבּוֹר – **Particle:** Preposition

This particle preposition, “for this purpose” is being used in an advantage manner, showing relationship of interest between the preceding particle conjunction(s) and what is about to follow, roughly meaning “but indeed, for this purpose...”

זֹאת – **Adjective:** Feminine, Singular, Absolute

This adjective is being used in the demonstrative, translated in all English versions as “this,” referring to “this reason/cause” or “this is why...”

הָעֹמֵד לְתִיד – **Verb:** Hiphil/Perfect/1st Common, Singular

This verb, literally “to take one’s stand” is being used here by God to say that he is taking a stand. Being in the perfect tense, it is ongoing, and as of that moment is yet incomplete. It has a foreboding sense to it. The God of the oppressed is rising to fight for his people.

בְּעִבּוֹר – **Particle:** Preposition

This particle preposition, meaning “for this purpose” or “on account of” makes another appearance in this sentence. Here, it refers to the purpose for which God is taking a stand, the reason for which is answered immediately following.

הִרְאָתָהּ – **Verb:** Hiphil/Infinitive Construct

This verb, literally “to see” is being used in the infinitive construct, denoting the fulfillment of the clause started by the preceding particle preposition. The phrase refers to the 2nd person, in this case the singular “you” meaning the Pharaoh, and could be taken to mean “For this purpose, so that you may see...”

אֶת־כֹּחֲךָ

אֶת **Particle:** Direct object marker

כֹּחַ **Noun:** Common, Masculine, Singular, Construct

The direct object marker particle here points to the noun which means “power” the reason for the Pharaoh having been allowed to live (and rising to power) is so that God may stand against the Pharaoh, demonstrating [God’s] divine power. It is interesting, that according to Bibleworks, this word for power is the same used to describe Samson. The Pharaoh is about to witness, in a very real and tangible way, how “buff” God is.

וְלִמְעַן

ו **Particle:** Conjunction

לִמְעַן **Particle:** Preposition

This particle preposition again makes an appearance, coupled with the particle conjunction. Literally, it could be read as”... and on account of ...”

סַפֵּר – **Verb:** Piel/Infinitive Construct

The Piel infinitive usage here shows that causation and purpose are to be understood. The verb literally means “to recount, to relate” and is in construct relationship to the noun which immediately follows it.

שְׁמִי – **Noun:** Common, Masculine, Singular, Construct

This noun, literally “name” is in construct relationship with the preceding verb. God is saying to Pharaoh “My name will be known/recounted/retold/remembered...”

בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:

ב **Particle:** Preposition

כָּל **Noun:** Common, Masculine, Singular, Construct

ה **Particle:** Article

אָרֶץ **Noun:** Common, Feminine, Singular, Absolute

This particle preposition can simply be thought of as meaning “in.” The noun, common and singular, is in construct relationship with the particle article and the following noun. Literally, the whole phrase means “in all of the earth.”