

CONDITIONALITY IN DANIEL 3:17-18: A TEXTUAL CRITICAL APPROACH BASED ON THE SYNTACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE VARIATIONS

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1. Introduction

Daniel 3:17-18 presents a persuasive statement of faith from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego addressed to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. This audacious declaration is right in line with the characterization of the personages adumbrated in the previous chapters. Indeed, both the introductory ch. 1 and the narration of ch. 2 present a blatant will of idealization of the protagonists. Their high standards contrast the moral depravity of the Israelites which led them into exile. They are flat characters. Their faith seems to be their only trait of personality. They are presented as programmed for confidence (Dan 1:8). This portrait is problematic in the declaration of Dan 3:17-18.

The conditionality read in Dan 3:17-18 in the MT appears to imply a doubt from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. This uncertainty seems to concern the existence of God, his will, or his ability to save. We read: "וְהוּא לֹא ... וְאִם אֵינֶנּוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ" (literally, "if existence our God ... and if not," vv. 17-18). The statement is ambiguous. This understanding does not fit the idealistic depiction of the unfailing faith of the characters found in the co-text. This incoherence invites scholars to question their comprehension of the verses and the accuracy of the received text.

Interesting research studies have been done on the issue of the conditionality in Dan 3:17-18, most of them on linguistic perspectives. The majority of specialized articles and commentaries introduce their work with a note on textual criticism. However, the references to early witnesses are only used as a launching pad to linguistic analyses. Surprisingly, no specific

study on the textual criticism of this passage has been conducted. The present article purposes to discuss this neglected step in Dan 3:17–18.

The linguistic (conditionality) issue, the focal point of the conjectural emendation, is the conditional elements. The objective is to grasp the relation between the different witnesses of Dan 3:17–18, their connections, divergences, and usefulness to establish the most accurate reading regarding the conditional particle found in the MT. As Immanuel Tov states, "The text preserved in the various representatives (manuscripts, editions) of what is commonly called the Masoretic Text, does not reflect the 'original text' of the biblical books in many details."¹ It is dangerous to presuppose the superiority of the MT over other readings and to base the exegesis on what seems to be a fallacious logic.

The witnesses' confrontations are based on the syntactical contributions of the conditional particle's rendering to their own texts. The comparison includes not only Aramaic texts but ancient translations as well. These witnesses are adaptations of their sources in another language. A critical evaluation involving ancient translations definitely cannot be based on differences between morphemes. The confrontations should be held at a deeper level. By analyzing the syntactical contributions of the particles rendered by each translation, one may confront those translations even though they are dynamic. The syntactical contribution of the particles to their text helps us understand how the translator understood the verses he or she was translating. Therefore, the confrontation is not between words or letters but between translators' understandings of their sources.

2. Collection and Analysis of Textual Witnesses

The analysis focuses on five main biblical sources: the MT, the LXX, the Theodotion-Daniel (Th-D), the Vulg., and the Peshitta. Interestingly, Tov states that since the seventeenth century, "equal attention has been given to all texts. Scholars regarded the ancient translations, especially the Greek and Latin versions, with esteem, because their manuscripts preceded those of MT by many centuries."² It should also be noted that, interestingly, these ancient versions carry the main interpretative lines found in our modern translations.

¹ Immanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 11.

² *Ibid.*, 15.

2.1. Masoretic Text

The main texts of the Masoretic tradition commonly used are the *BHK* and the *BHS*. Their readings of Dan 3:17–18 are proposed in Table 1. Both read the conditional particle הן in v. 17 and the combination והן in v. 18. The similarities between the two resources are of little importance, considering that the *BHS* is simply a revision of the *BHK*.³ They may be considered as one and unique resource instead of two. Nevertheless, two important points should be noted. First, the MT reads the particle הן in vv. 17 and 18. Second, the editing process of the critical edition has chosen to retain the particles which seem to be legitimate. In addition, the presence of הן is not questioned in the critical apparatus of the *BHS*: neither in v. 17 nor in v. 18.⁴

Table 1

Masoretic Texts

<i>BHK</i>	<i>BHS</i>
<p>הן איתי אלהנא דיי־אנחנא פלחין יכל לשיזבותנא מִן־אתון נורא יקדתא ומן־ידך מלכא ישיזב:</p>	<p>הן איתי אלהנא דיי־אנחנא פלחין יכל לשיזבותנא מִן־אתון נורא יקדתא ומן־ידך מלכא ישיזב:</p>
<p>והן לא ידיע להוא־לך מלכא די לאלהיכ לא־ איתנא פלחין ולצלם דהבא די הקימת לא נסגד: ס</p>	<p>והן לא ידיע להוא־לך מלכא די לאלהיך לא־ (איתנא) [איתנא] פלחין ולצלם דהבא די הקימת לא נסגד: ס</p>

There are four main witnesses for the Tanakh. Three are codices and the fourth is the group of Qumran scrolls. Among the codices, two are complete and one is incomplete. The first complete text is the famous Leningrad Codex (M^L).⁵ The second complete manuscript is less known because it is less

³ Ibid., 7.

⁴ The *BHS* apparatus reads, “cj c sq neglecto rebia: || sicL, mlt Mss Edd קהָא” for Dan 3:17 and “a cf 12 || b K ת־, C ut Q איתנהּ || c cf 3,5e.” for Dan 3.18. R. Weber and R. Gryson, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Apparatus Criticus* (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2003), 1388.

⁵ Dougald McLaurin says about the manuscript that it “follows the Ben Asher tradition. It is used as the basis for Biblia Hebraica series. It dates back to 1009 C.E.”

used. It is the Madrid Codex (M^M).⁶ The partial text is the Aleppo Codex (M^A).

The Qumran scrolls and the incomplete M^A are unhelpful for this study. Indeed, although Dan 3 is well represented in the Qumran collection,⁷ Dan 3:17-18 is not found there. Likewise, the incompleteness of the M^A affects Daniel. The Aramaic text of Dan 3:17-18 is therefore only read in the M^L and the M^M.

The large majority of texts represented by the Masoretic tradition (including *BHK* and *BHS*) are based on the M^L. The codex dates from 1008 CE.⁸ The manuscript faithfully reads the particles הן and והן as rendered in the *BHS*. The M^M also reads הן in v. 18 and והן in v. 17. The portions of the M^L and the M^M containing the studied texts are presented in Figure 1. The fact that both the M^L and the M^M render the conditional particles is the reason why the Modern Hebrew Bibles read it.

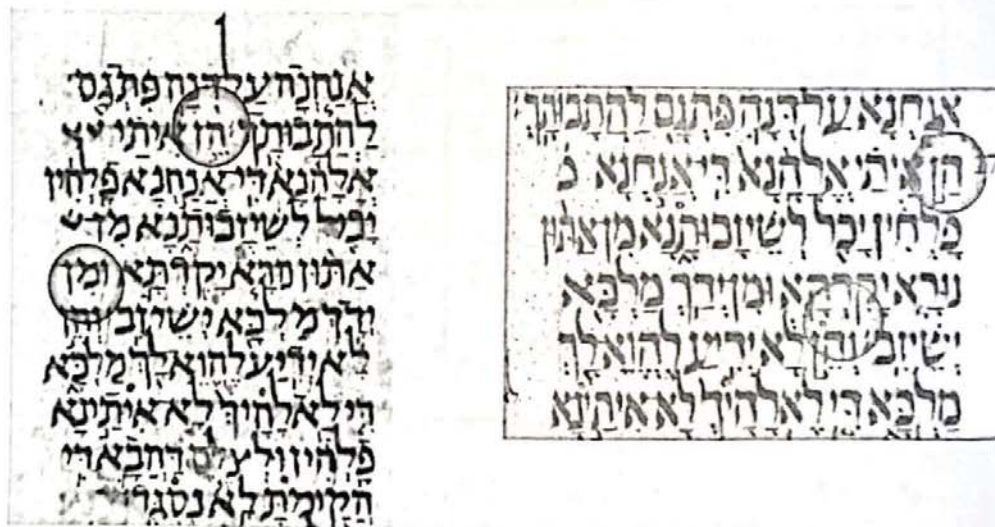


Figure 1. Readings of the conditionality in Dan 3:17-18 in the M^L and the M^M.

Dougald McLaurin, "Biblical Manuscripts; Tanakh," *The Library at SouthernEastern*, <https://library.sebts.edu/c.php?g=457318&p=5844281>.

- ⁶ The Madrid Codex is "a manuscript of the entire Hebrew Bible from around 1280 A.D. bought by brothers in Toledo (Spain)." *Ibid*.
- ⁷ Daniel 3:1-2 is found in 4Q112, Dan 3:8-10 in 4Q115, and Dan 3:22-30 in 1Q72. Carol A. Newsom and Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 3; Eugene Ulrich, "Daniel Manuscripts from Qumran. Part I: A Preliminary Edition of 4 QDana," *BASOR* 268 (November 1987): 17-37.
- ⁸ Newsom and Breed, *Daniel*, 3.

Four points can be drawn from a close look at the function of the particles in this Aramaic section of the MT. First, η carries a notion of conditionality. A rapid overview of the usage of the term in Biblical Aramaic confirms this semantics.⁹ The conditionality is therefore present in v. 17 and in v. 18.

Second, v. 17 and v. 18 are closely related. The presence of the very same particle η at the beginning of each verse links them together. It is indeed obvious that the two elements are to be seen jointly: “if” in v. 17 and “if not” in v. 18. Moreover, the conjunction η attached to the particle in v. 18 indicates close continuity.

Third, η has a cataphoric function in v. 17. It creates a paired expectation. The conditional particle constrains the sentence to be divided into a protasis and an apodosis. The reader, therefore, expects to find the object of the condition in the protasis and its conditional consequence in the apodosis. Moreover, because of the immediate context, a threatening counterpart is awaited: “if you comply ... but if you do not” (v. 15, emphasis mine). This counterpart $\eta\eta$ is found in v. 18. The first particle η in v. 17 demands the second η and creates a strong expectation. The device unconsciously invites the reader to focus more on the second part (v. 18) which is where the expectation is fulfilled.

Finally, the expression in v. 18 is not only $\eta\eta$ but also $\eta\eta$ לא. As stated above, $\eta\eta$ is a marker of close continuity and a counterpart of η . The negative particle לא in this counterpart expression adds to the continuity and brings a contrastive constrain. Hence, the continuity is contrastive. The conjunction η could be rendered as “but” instead of “and.”

2.2. Septuagint and Theodotion-Daniel

The LXX and the Th-D are the two Greek translations of Daniel available. The LXX is translated from the Hebrew text. It dates back to the third century BCE. The Theodotion version is named after its translator, Theodotion of Ephesus.¹⁰ Scholars are hesitant concerning its nature. On the one hand, it may be a “literal translation of a Semitic text that was very similar to that now known as the MT.”¹¹ On the other hand, it may also be more of a

⁹ See Ezra 4:13, 16; 5:17; Dan 2:5, 6; 4:24; 5:16; 9:3:15.

¹⁰ Tim McLay, “Theodotion,” *EDB*, 1297. Theodotion of Ephesus, according to early testimonies, is the mid second-century scholar responsible for the sixth column of Origen’s *Hexapla*. Ibid. “According to the generally accepted explanation of the testimony of the Epistle of Aristeeas, the translation of the Torah was carried out in Egypt in the third century BCE.” Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 136.

¹¹ McLay, *EDB*, 1297.

variants of its text in which a conditional meaning is read.¹⁵ All the variants render γὰρ and καὶ τότε.

Th-D is identical to the LXX in v. 17 but varies in v. 18. Verse 17 reads the conjunction γὰρ but, interestingly, v. 18 reads καὶ ἐὰν. The καὶ is found in the LXX but the particle ἐὰν is unique to the Th-D. It brings a notion of conditionality to v. 18.

The LXX translation uses the particle γὰρ in v. 17. The conjunction γὰρ provides much important syntactical information. First, the particle is causative by nature.¹⁶ It introduces an explanation about the reason for being of the previous clause. It displays the cause for what is said in the previous clause. Second, it is a marker of continuity.¹⁷ It links what is said in the verse it introduced to the previous clause. According to Steve E. Runge, γὰρ carries a supportive constrain.¹⁸ The clause introduced by γὰρ supports the previous argument of the author. It points backward in an anaphorical way. Reading v. 17 starting with γὰρ invites one to read v. 16 to find the main argument supported in v. 17.

Verse 18 reads καὶ τότε. The coordinator καὶ is a marker of continuity¹⁹ and therefore links v. 18 to v. 17. Τότε is a marker of new development.²⁰ The argument is linked to the previous one but it is a new point. According to Runge, τότε constrains the clause it introduces temporally. Therefore, v. 18 is a new development in continuity with v. 17, in temporal succession.

Th-D reads the same particle in v. 17 as the LXX. The conjunction γὰρ has the same characteristics as in the LXX in the same context. A variation appears in v. 18. Καὶ ἐὰν (lit. “and if”²¹) replaces the LXX καὶ τότε (lit. “and then”²²). By doing so, it departs from the LXX rendering and gets closer to the MT. The subordinate conjunction ἐὰν is a “marker of condition, with

¹⁵ The LXX apparatus reads, “πυρος] + ✕ της καιομενης 88 Sy” for v. 17 and “οτι] pr. ✕ βασιλευ 88 Sy προσκυνουμεν] pr. ου 88” for v. 18. R. Weber and R. Gryson, *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem: Apparatus Criticus*, rev. 5th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2009), 3:17–18.

¹⁶ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 674; Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 16.

¹⁷ Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

²¹ Translation mine.

²² Translation mine.

probability of activity expressed in the verb left open and thereby suited especially for generalized statements.”²³ Therefore, in v. 18, the Th-D removes the idea of new development and temporal succession from the LXX and adds to it the notion of conditionality.

2.3. Vulgate

The Vulg. is the Latin translation of the OT and the NT by Jérôme. According to Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, Jérôme “worked on Daniel between 389 and 392, translating directly from the Hebrew and Aramaic but occasionally with an eye on Theodotion-Daniel.”²⁴ The Latin translation of the studied verses are put in relation to the default LXX in Table 3.

Table 3

Vulgate Variations of Dan 3:17–18

LXX	Vulgate
<p>ἔστι γὰρ θεὸς ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἷς κύριος ἡμῶν ὃν φοβούμεθα ὃς ἐστι δυνατὸς ἐξελεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς καμίνου τοῦ πυρός καὶ ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν σου βασιλεῦ ἐξελεῖται ἡμᾶς</p> <p>καὶ τότε φανερόν σοι ἔσται ὅτι οὔτε τῷ εἰδώλῳ σου λατρεύομεν οὔτε τῇ εἰκόνι σου τῇ χρυσῇ ἣν ἔστησας προσκυνούμεν</p>	<p>Ecce enim Deus noster, quem colimus, potest eripere nos de camino ignis ardentis, et de manibus tuis, o rex, liberare.</p> <p>Q Quod si noluerit, notum sit tibi, rex, quia deos tuos non colimus, et statuam auream, quam erexisti, non adoramus.</p>

The Vulg. starts in v. 17 with “ecce enim.” “Ecce” is the Latin for “behold” and “enim” means “because.”²⁵ The Vulg. renders “the particle ἵ, ‘if,’

²³ BDAG, s.v. “ἐάν.”

²⁴ Louis F. Hartman, and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary on Chapters 1–9*, AB 23 (London: Yale University Press, 2008), 75. See also Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 153.

²⁵ John A. Cook, “Grammar and Theology in Daniel 3: 16–18,” *BBR* 28.3 (2018): 368.

as ‘behold’ (אה; Hebrew, הנה)²⁶ and adds the conjunction “because.” It is important to notice that the Aramaic particle הן is found in Hebrew in the very same form as in the Aramaic but with the primary meaning “behold.”²⁷ The Hebrew equivalent of the Aramaic הן is אה,²⁸ not הן. It seems that Jérôme has chosen to translate the Aramaic conditional particle in one of its Hebrew senses.²⁹ In addition, the Vulg. reads “enim” as the equivalent to the Greek conjunction γὰρ. In v. 18 the Vulg. does not read any connector. It prefers to see the verse in close continuity with v. 17 using an asyndeton.³⁰ The critical apparatus of the Vulg. does not propose any variations for the studied elements.³¹ The variants do not concern neither the expression “ecce enim” in v. 17 nor the asyndeton in v. 18.

The translation of Jérôme is unique. It introduces “behold” in v. 17 with the conjunction “because.” It does not use any connectors between v. 17 and v. 18. “Behold” is vocative. It is a marker of address. It is a forward-pointing device. It catches the attention of the reader, informing him or her that what follows is important. The conjunction “enim” as the Greek γὰρ points backward to the previous clause. It is causative and marks a continuity. The asyndeton between the verses does not mark any specific continuity but does not mark the opposite either.

2.4. Peshitta

The Peshitta is a Syriac translation. It was translated in Edessa during the third or fourth century CE, probably before 205 CE.³² It is generally admitted that the Peshitta has been “translated directly from the Hebrew and Aramaic.”³³ However, as seen in Table 4, the translation of Dan 3:17–18 appears to be closer to the LXX than to the MT.

²⁶ John J. Collins and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 187. For clarification, אה and הנה are both interjections meaning “behold.” The former is an Aramaic particle and the latter is a Hebrew particle. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, s.v. “אה,” “הנה.”

²⁷ *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, s.v. “הן.”

²⁸ *HALOT*, s.v. “הן.”

²⁹ *TWOT*, s.v. “הן.”

³⁰ Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 13. The Douay-Reims Bible based on the Vulg. also translate “behold.”

³¹ Weber and Gryson, *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam*, 3.17–18.

³² Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 75.

³³ *Ibid.*

Table 4

Peshitta Variations of Dan 3:17–18

LXX	Peshitta	English Peshitta ³⁴
<p>ἔστι γὰρ θεὸς ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἷς κύριος ἡμῶν ὃν φοβούμεθα ὃς ἐστι δυνατὸς ἐξελεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς καμίνου τοῦ πυρός καὶ ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν σου βασιλεῦ ἐξελεῖται ἡμᾶς</p>	<p>ܟܠܟܝܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܢܗܘܢ ܕܢܗܘܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܢܗܘܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܢܗܘܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ</p>	<p><u>For</u> there is our God whom we serve, he is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.</p>
<p>καὶ τότε φανερόν σοι ἔσται ὅτι οὔτε τῷ εἰδώλῳ σου λατρεύομεν οὔτε τῇ εἰκόνι σου τῇ χρυστῇ ἣν ἔστησας προσκυνούμεν</p>	<p>ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܢܗܘܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ ܕܥܡܢܝܢ</p>	<p><u>Then</u> the king shall know that we will not serve your god nor worship the golden image which you have set up."</p>

The Peshitta seems to follow the LXX translation. Γὰρ is rendered by the equivalent of "for" and καὶ τότε by "then." It "also rids the verses of the conditional construction and simply states the reason for the peremptory response of the three Confessors in verse 16."³⁵ Peter W. Coxon translates the verses from the Peshitta as follows: "Because (*mtl d*) our God whom we serve is the one who is able to deliver us and from your hands he will save us. Therefore know, O king (*thw* dyn yd^c m lk**), that we will not worship your god."³⁶ He renders the particle of v. 17 as "because" and not "for." The causative rendering strengthens the link with the LXX γὰρ. He translates the connective of v. 18 as "therefore" whereas Georges M. Lamsa proposes "then."³⁷ The first has an inferential meaning and the second marks a temporal succession.

³⁴ George M. Lamsa, *Old Testament Light: A Scriptural Commentary Based on the Aramaic of the Ancient Peshitta Text* (Philadelphia: Englewood Cliffs, 1964), 654–55.

³⁵ Coxon, "Daniel III 17," 402.

³⁶ Ibid. Emphases added.

³⁷ Lamsa, *Old Testament Light*, 654–55.

The Peshitta proposes “for” or “because” in v. 17. In both cases, the particle is causative and supportive. Both renderings are anaphoric. It is interesting to note the connection between *for* and *because* with the conjunction γὰρ. They are in line with the LXX and the Th-D understanding. There is no sign of conditionality.

In v. 18, Lamsa proposes “then.” Again, it is in an almost perfect correlation with the LXX. Lamsa’s translation carries a meaning of new development and temporal succession. Coxon translates the studied particle as “therefore.” In doing so, he renders v. 18 as inferential and in continuity with v. 17. According to him, v. 18 is a deduction from v. 17.

3. Confrontation of the Variations

Tables 5 below provides a combination of the readings of the witnesses studied above. The overview is important at this point. The individual analyses combined allow a global vision of the nuances which serves as referent for the confrontation to come.

Table 5

Confrontation of the Variants of Dan 3:17–18

Condi- tion	Affirmation			
	Causative			Vocative
Condi- tional	LXX	Th-D	Peshitta (English)	Vulg.
<p>תַּי אִתִּי אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲנִיכֵינוּ כֹּל לְשׂוֹבְתֵינוּ מִן־אֵת יְדֵי־אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְדֵי־מַלְכֵנוּ יְשׁוּב:</p>	<p>ἔστι γὰρ θεὸς ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἰς κύριος ἡμῶν ὃν φοβούμεθα ὃς ἐστι δυνατὸς ἐξελεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς καμίνου τοῦ πυρός καὶ ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν σου βασιλεῦ ἐξελεῖται ἡμᾶς</p>	<p>ἔστιν γὰρ θεὸς ὃ ἡμεῖς λατρεύομεν δυνατὸς ἐξελεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς καμίνου τοῦ πυρός τῆς καιομένης καὶ ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν σου βασιλεῦ ῥύσεται ἡμᾶς</p>	<p><u>For</u> there is our God whom we serve, he is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.</p>	<p><i>Ecce enim Deus noster, quem colimus, potest eripere nos de camino ignis ardentis, et de manibus tuis, o rex, li- berare.</i></p>

וְהָן לֹא יֵדְעוּ לְהוֹרִיחַ מִלְכֵּךְ אֶל־אֱלֹהֶיךָ (אֲנִי־אֵל) [אֲנִי־אֵל] פִּלְזוּן וְלִצְלוּ דִּבְהַבָּא אֶל־הַקִּמָּה ס :גסג	<u>καὶ τότε</u> φανερόν σοι ἔσται ὅτι οὔτε τῷ εἰδώλῳ σου λατρεύομεν οὔτε τῇ εἰκόνι σου τῇ χρυσοῦ ἥν ἔστησας προσκυνούμεν	<u>καὶ ἂν</u> μή γνωστόν ἔστω σοι βασιλεῦ ὅτι τοῖς θεοῖς σου οὐ λατρεύομεν καὶ τῇ εἰκόνι τῇ χρυσοῦ ἣ ἔστησας οὐ προσκυνούμεν	<u>Then</u> the king shall know that we will not serve your god nor wor- ship the golden image which you have set up.	Θ Quod si noluerit, no- tum sit tibi, rex, quia deos tuos non coli- mus, et sta- tuam auream, quam erexisti, non adora- mus.
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According to what has been developed in the previous section, each variation of the studied elements brings a unique contribution to the flow and meaning of the verses. Table 6 below sums and confronts those im-

Table 6

Impact of the Confrontation of the Variations

	Aramaic	LXX	The- odotion	Peshitta		Latin
				Lamsa	Coxon	
v. 17	✓ Cataph ✓ <u>Cond.</u>	* Ana. * Caus. * Supp. * Cont.	* Ana. * Caus. * Supp. * Cont.	* Ana. * Caus. * Supp. * Cont.	* Ana. * Caus. * Supp. * Cont.	✓ Cataph. * <u>Vocative</u> * Anaph. * Caus. * Supp. * Cont.
v. 18	✓ Cont. ✓ Cond. ✓ <u>Contr.</u>	✓ Cont * <i>Devel.</i> ✓ <i>Temp.</i>	✓ Cont. ✓ Cond.	✓ Cont. * <i>Devel.</i> * <i>Temp.</i>	✓ Cont. ✓ <u>Infer.</u>	✓ No devel. marker

Note: Cataph.=Cataphoric, Cond.=Conditional, Supp.=Support, Ana=Anaphoric, Cont=Continuity, Infer.=Inference, Caus.=Causative, Contr.=Contrast, Devel.=Development

-pacts. The similarities and divergences of the witnesses are highlighted in bold, italics, and underline. The characteristics in bold are those in common

with the Hebrew text. The italicized ones are in common with the LXX and, finally, the underlined words are unique concepts.

Two elements are easily graspable from the table. First of all, the Hebrew text is unique. The conditional and contrastive aspects are not found elsewhere. The cataphoric aspect in v. 17 is shared only by the Vulg. In v. 18, the continuity is common among almost all the rendering but the conditionality of the Aramaic is shared only by the Th-D. Second, the LXX, the Th-D, and the Syriac versions are closely related. They all share exactly the same aspects in v. 17. In v. 18, the LXX and the Peshitta (of Lamsa) are identical. The variations occur between the Th-D and Coxon's translation of the Peshitta. Lamsa's translation sees a conditional element and Coxon an inferential relation between v. 17 and v. 18.

3.1. Septuagint and Theodotion

The LXX and the Th-D are similar in v. 17 and different in v. 18. "The fact that the LXX and the Th-D, or the Syriac Peshitta and Theodotion-Daniel, agree with each other may mean nothing at all. But when these pairs disagree, one should take note."³⁸ Indeed, as it was already mentioned, the Th-D seems to be highly influenced by the LXX.³⁹ Ellis R. Brotzman, explaining the Greek textual influence based on a local theory of development, affirms that the MT was the source of the LXX. Later, the LXX became a source for a Proto-Theodotion which later became itself the Theodotion *receptus*.⁴⁰

This developmental local theory presented by Brotzman is not always accurate. It sometimes oversimplifies the question. In the case of Dan 3:17–18, there is a clear contradiction between the general theory and the specific observation presented in Table 6. The two do not match. From this point, two possibilities emerge: (1) the local theory presented by Brotzman is not accurate or (2) there is a specific developmental theory of Daniel which does not fit in the general theory.

The LXX takes a different position from the MT. The syntactical contributions of the rendering are almost all differing. The confrontation between both is developed later. The interesting point is when we consider the Th-D. It renders v. 17 exactly as the LXX. Therefore, Di Lella and Brotzman seem to be right: the Th-D could be based on the LXX. However, the Th-D proposal in v. 18 does not correspond to the LXX. The particle used in Th-D is not a marker of development and does not carry a temporal constrain.

³⁸ Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 74.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴⁰ Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 29.

Thus, it is possible to say that the Th-D is based on the LXX because of the identical rendering of v. 17, but it chooses to edit v. 18 and give it another perspective.

The Th-D edits the LXX to get closer to the MT. The Th-D removes the temporal and developmental aspects from the LXX and adds a conditional element found only in the MT. The fact the MT and the Th-D are the only witnesses rendering the conditionality of v. 18 cannot be a coincidence. Carol A. Newsom and Brennan W. Breed confirm this argument saying that the Th-D revision is sometimes found to be more identical to the MT than the LXX.⁴¹ According to the confrontation of Dan 3:17-18, it seems that the Th-D edited the LXX with the Semitic text at hand.

The linking role of the Th-D is valuable. Harry M. Orlinsky, in his study on the use of the LXX in textual criticism, proposes an interesting diagram (see Figure 2). The schema exposes the relation between the MT, the LXX, and the Th-D in textual criticism. The Th-D has a very interesting position in the figure. Indeed, it is the only text which connects the MT with the LXX. When the MT and the LXX diverge, the Th-D becomes a useful reading. When the Th-D departs from the LXX, it favors the MT. This is precisely what we can observe in Dan 3:18 (see Table 6).

3.2. Septuagint and Peshitta (Lamsa)

The Peshitta has been "translated directly from the Hebrew and Aramaic."⁴² Its reading is also close to the old Greek. Orlinsky's figure agrees (see Figure 2). However, in the case of Dan 3:17-18, the Peshitta shares almost nothing with the Hebrew text: neither the conditionality nor the cataphoric aspect in v. 17. The Peshitta rendering of Dan 3:17-18 is identical to the LXX rendering. Hartman and Di Lella partly resolves this paradox. They state that "the Peshitta has value for the textual criticism of Daniel, but because as already noted it is colored by Theodotian-Daniel one may not assume that in every case it reflects the original state of its *Vorlage*."⁴³ Thus, it is possible to say that the author of the Peshitta had both a Semitic text and the Th-D in hand. He often chooses the rendering of the MT, but sometimes he prefers the reading of the Th-D.

To state that the Peshitta "is colored by the Theodotian-Daniel"⁴⁴ is to say that sometimes it departs from the Semitic text and follows the Th-D.

⁴¹ Newsom and Breed, *Daniel*, 4.

⁴² Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 75.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

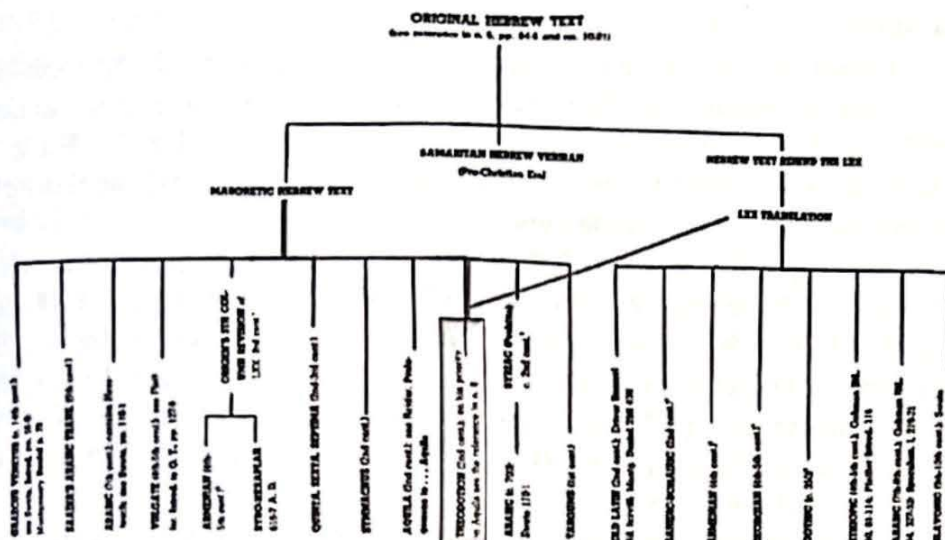


Fig. 6. A chart showing the relationship of the Hebrew and LXX texts and their daughter versions, with select bibliography. 1. For Origen's 5th ed. revision of the LXX, see Ramsay's edition of LXX (1935) 1, p. XXVIII. 2. For the Armenian, see Swete, *Intro.*, pp. 118-20. 3. For the Syriac, Pfeiffer, *Intro.*, pp. 120-2. 4. For the Sahidic, Bohacik, *Göttingen JBL* 46, pp. 279-310. 5. For the Armenian, Gohman, *Zeitschrift f. A.* 7, 7, pp. 82-99 and n. 24; Orinsky, *JQR* 34, pp. 296-7 n. 14. 7. For the Gothic, Swete, *Intro.*, pp. 117-8; Strauberg, *Der gotische Text und seine griech. Vorlage* (2nd ed. 1919).

Figure 2. Th-D in textual Criticism.⁴⁵

However, as stated above, when the Th-D distances or departs from the LXX it favors the MT; thus conversely, when it departs from the MT it prefers the LXX rendering (see Figure 2). Therefore, when the Peshitta departs from or distances itself from the Hebrew text to get closer to the Th-D, it is, in fact, getting closer to the LXX.⁴⁶

In Dan 3:18, it is clear that whereas the Theodotion chooses to stay close to the Semitic text, the Peshitta prefers to distance itself from both the MT and the Th-D to get closer to the LXX.⁴⁷ This is an evidence that the author of the Peshitta had in hand the Semitic text, the Th-D, and the LXX while translating. In Dan 3:17-18, the Peshitta chooses to distance itself from the Hebrew text and from the Th-D whose rendering is close to the Hebrew, to follow the LXX.

3.3. Hebrew/Old Greek and Latin

The textual criticism process involving the Vulg. is very similar to the one involving the Peshitta. Indeed, the Vulg. seems to be based on the Hebrew

⁴⁵ Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Septuagint: Its Use in Textual Criticism," *BA* 9.2 (1946): 30.

⁴⁶ This argument can be illustrated as follows: LXX < Th-D < Peshitta ——— MT.

⁴⁷ This argument can be illustrated as follows: LXX < Peshitta ——— Th-D-MT.

text⁴⁸ “but occasionally with an eye on Theodotion-Daniel,”⁴⁹ as the Peshitta. When the Vulg. departs from the Aramaic to get closer to the Th-D, it is coming closer to the LXX.

The Vulg. is close to the old Greek and the Syriac. Indeed, the conjunction “enim” contributes to the verse as does the conjunction’s introduction in v. 17 in the LXX, the Th-D, and the Peshitta. It seems that the Vulg. is closer to the Greek than to the Aramaic text. However, Jérôme surprisingly adds a vocative element to the verse.

By reading “behold” in v. 17, the Vulg. becomes different from the other witnesses. The analysis of the contribution of the words to the text displayed in Table 6 becomes useful. It allows one to see beyond the words’ variations. It is noteworthy that beyond this totally different word, the term *behold* brings the Vulg. closer to the Aramaic text. Indeed, *behold* carries a cataphoric aspect which is found only in the MT. Although the conditional meaning is not rendered, a cataphoric aspect is read. Therefore, it seems that Jérôme chooses to render v. 17 the way the LXX and the Th-D do but adds a cataphoric element lacking in the Greek translations but present in his Aramaic source. He edited the view of the Greek, adding in the Latin a notion he perceived in the Aramaic.

In v. 18, the Latin chooses an asyndeton. The neutrality of the asyndeton does not provide any explicit arguments to link the Vulg. either to the Aramaic or to the other versions. However, it is interesting to see that by willfully choosing an asyndeton, Jérôme rejected the option to translate a new development marker. He does not see a new development but a neutral continuity. Therefore, implicitly, he distances from the LXX and the Syriac to get closer to the Th-D and the Semitic text.

3.4. Result of Confrontations

The confrontations permitted us to grasp the complex interactions between the different witnesses of Dan 3:17–18. These interactions allow us to determine the most accurate representation of the text which should be the basis of any exegetical work. Figure 3 below maps these interactions.

The accuracy of the rendering of the MT can legitimately be questioned when contrasted against the early LXX. The earliest manuscript source of the BHS is the M^l from AD 1008. It is a tardive manuscript. The LXX was written about 1200 years ago. The Hebrew text that is commonly used is represented in red at the bottom of the figure.

The evaluation of the Vulg. provides the evidence for the reading of a cataphoric element in the Semitic text before 400 CE. The Vulg. is linked

⁴⁸ Orlinsky, “The Septuagint,” 30.

⁴⁹ Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 75.

with the Th-D. However, in Dan 3:17–18, the Vulg. adds a cataphoric nuance only read in the Semitic text (see Figure 3). The Vulg. dated around 400 CE was translated from a conjectural copy (in Hebrew/Aramaic) of several generations of the Urtext (X'').⁵⁰ This X'' logically should have existed before 400 CE.

In addition, the M^L reads a cataphoric element, and a cataphoric aspect is observed in the Vulg. This cataphoric element is not found in the Th-D and therefore should come from the X''. Thus, it is possible to deduct that there was a witness (X''), descending from the Urtext, reading a cataphoric element before 400 CE. Tov states, "Indeed, a first rule in our approach to the ancient translations is that when the content of an ancient translation is identical with MT, in all probability its Hebrew *Vorlage* was also identical with MT."⁵¹

The evaluation of the Th-D demonstrates that a Semitic text reading a conditional element existed before 150 CE. Indeed the Th-D, editing the LXX, chooses to render v. 17 like the LXX but corrects the LXX in v. 18, thus coming closer to its source (X', see fn 53 and figure 3). Theodotion proposes in v. 18 a conditional particle found in the M^L. The Th-D was written around 150 CE. The potential copy (X') that Theodotion used has, therefore, to be dated from before 150 CE. If, as it has been explained in the confrontations, the conditional element comes from the X', it means that a copy (X') descending (directly or indirectly) from the Urtext before 150 CE read a conditional element in Dan 3:18.

Regarding the problematic particles in Dan 3:17–18, the MT appears to be trustworthy. First, a cataphoric aspect was found in the Semitic text before 400 CE. It is found in M^L as well. Second, there was a conditional element appearing in a copy before 150 CE. The M^L copy of Dan3:17–18 also reads a conditionality.

⁵⁰ In the present analysis, X, X', and X'' are different generations of copies of the Urtext. The X represents the first-generation copies of the Urtext. The X' and X'' respectively represent the second-generation copies and the third-generation copies of the Urtext. Thus, X' represents the copies of X and X'' the copies of X'. The relation between these potential copies is: Urtext > X > X' > X''. Hence, the Urtext is the source of the copy X which is itself the source of X'. This latter is, logically, the source of the copy X''.

⁵¹ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 123.

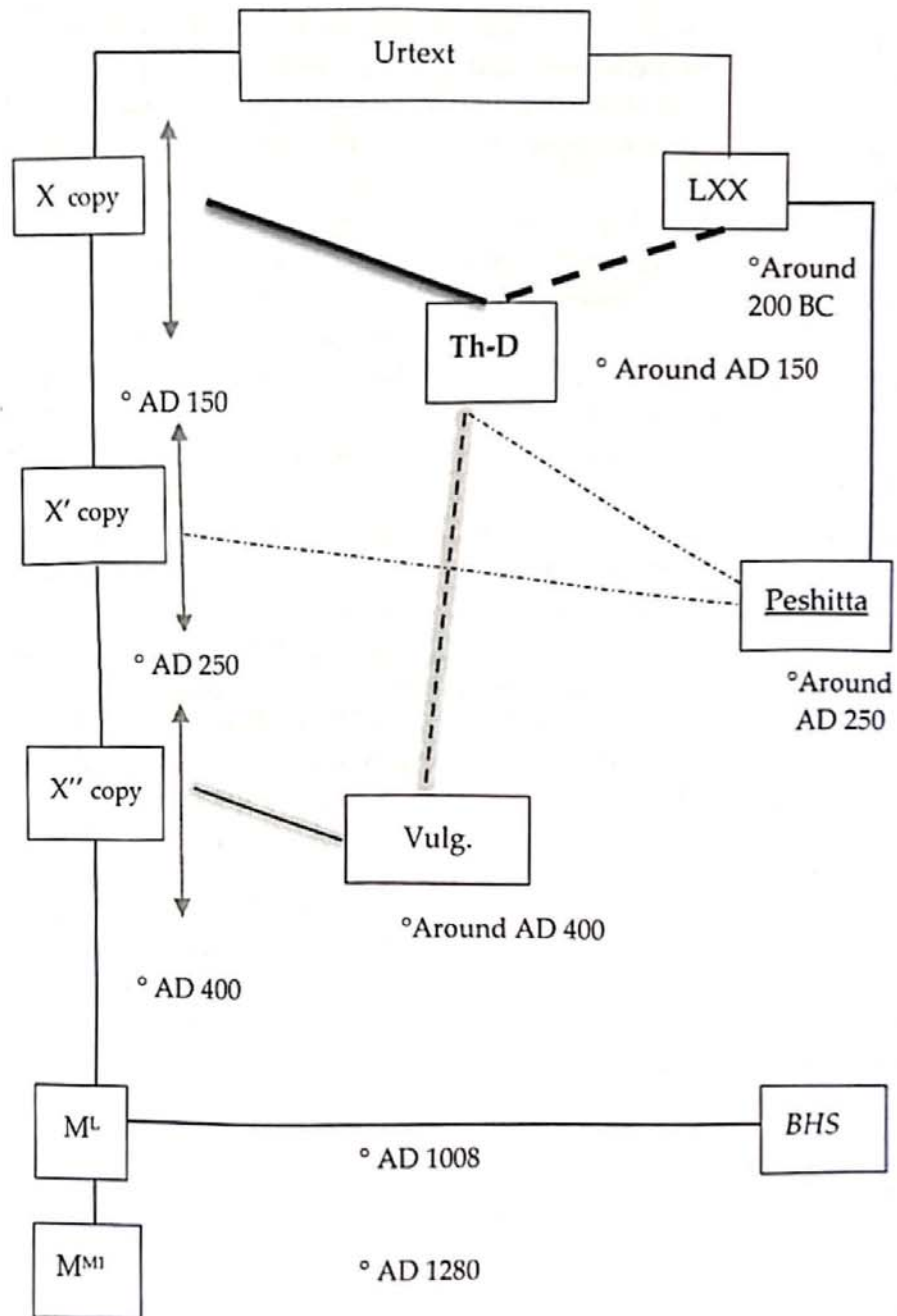


Figure 3. Interconnection between the early readings of Dan 3:17, 18.

4. Application of Basic Rules of Textual Criticism

One of the first criterion used in textual criticism is external. It is the matter of time. It is explained by Tov as follows: "Older witnesses are often preferable to more recent ones because the older one is likely to have been less

exposed to textual corruption than the younger ones."⁵² More time may imply more textual alterations. However, the previous part supported the accuracy of the which reads the same conditional elements in Dan 3:17–18 as copies before 150 CE. The huge time gap between the LXX and the MT has been reduced and the M^L reading of the conditional particle remains highly competitive. However, the question of which witness is more reliable remains. Is it better to choose to rely on the early LXX or on the M^L which seems to be trustworthy regarding the element presented above?

The question is answered based on three basic criteria. First, one should prefer the original language over a translation. Tov says that "every translation reflects linguistic exegesis which is essential to any translation."⁵³ It is an understandable argument. Although the probability of corruption involuntarily inserted by copyists exists in the Semitic text, this probability is far less important than the one of subjective interpretation during the translation. Therefore, the hypothetical Urtext copy X (in Figure 3) would be abstractly preferable over the LXX.

The second criterion is internal. It is the *Lectio Difficilior Praeferenda*. The textual critic should prefer the most difficult rendering.⁵⁴ Indeed, specialists were able to observe among copyists the tendency to simplify difficult texts. They are more inclined to simplify obscure texts than to complicate clear ones. It is, therefore, appropriate to suppose that the more original text is the more complex. In the case of Dan 3:17–18, it is obvious that the MT reading seems to be problematic. James A. Montgomery and Samuel R. Driver state, "The implied doubt as to the divine ability in the obvious 'if our God is able,' was an early stumbling-block."⁵⁵ In the same line of thought, Joyce G. Baldwin talks about the "dangerous implication of the literal rendering"⁵⁶ of the MT. Andrew Steinmann adds that most of the translations do not render the verse literally because "it seems to put God's existence in question."⁵⁷ The presence of the particle η is clearly a linguistic difficulty that the LXX tries to erase. The translations "appear to be troubled by the theological implications of MT and render the verse as an assertion."⁵⁸

⁵² Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 301.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁵⁵ James A. Montgomery and Samuel R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Samuel R. Driver, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 206.

⁵⁶ Joyce G. Baldwin, ed., *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 21 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 104.

⁵⁷ Andrew Steinmann, ed., *Daniel*, ConcC (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2008), 186.

⁵⁸ Newsom and Breed, *Daniel*, 99.

A third main criterion, which Tov sees as being a subcategory of the previous one, is the *interpretive modification*.⁵⁹ It is specific to translations. Indeed, translation implies interpretation. This interpretation can be discrete or more explicit. T. J. Meadowcroft, developing on the subjectivity of the LXX rendering of Daniel in his work *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel: A Literary Comparison*, states that "the LXX, for all its apparent freedom in parts, is the work of a translator rather than a redactor."⁶⁰ He even adds:

The Septuagint translator conveys something of his own understanding and interests within the constrain of his search for a literal equivalent. Sometimes this comes through in a conscious attempt to clarify the original text, sometimes it is evident in an unconscious choice of synonyms, and sometimes his choice reflects the translation tradition in which he stands.⁶¹

The dualistic (linguistic and theological) nature of the difficulty in Dan 3:17-18 seems to have pushed the LXX to, somehow, prefer a dynamic rendering based on the understanding of its redactor. This choice removes both the linguistic difficulty and the theological problem at the same time.

5. Conclusion

The collection and analysis of early translations and textual witnesses provide deep insights on the conflictual translations. The syntactical contribution of each reading was analyzed and confronted. The evaluation of the syntactical impacts of the readings, and not of the words only, allowed us to evaluate the differences at a deeper level.

The climactic Figure 3 displayed the relationship between the early renderings, based on the previous analysis. It allowed us to establish that X', a hypothetic copy descending from the Urtext before 400 CE, reads a cataphoric element in v. 17 and that X, an hypothetic later copy prior to 150 CE, reads a conditional element in v. 18. These two elements are still present in their descendant, the M^L, and therefore prove that the cataphoric conditional elements are not due to tardive corruption. The M^L reading of the particle is accurate.

The huge time gap between the LXX and the M^L readings of more than 1200 years has been reduced to less than a maximum of 250 years (see X in Figure 3). The LXX may probably still be older than X but this reduction of the time gap is a strong argument in favor of the reading of the MT.

⁵⁹ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 308.

⁶⁰ T. J. Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel: A Literary Comparison*, JSOTSup 198 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 26.

⁶¹ Ibid.

These central points led to a short application of some basic criteria for textual criticism. They determined that the MT rendering should be preferred. Indeed, it appears that ancient translations attempted to erase the linguistic and theological difficulties of the Aramaic text.

The MT is the most accurate. The arguments for the choice of the MT as the most valuable rendering were already solid, but the evidence of the presence of conditionality in Dan 3:17–18 before 150 CE in a Semitic text brings the textual criticism debates to an end. The MT is where every study on the conditionality of Dan 3:17–18 should be based.