

BEL AND THE DRAGON TO THE READER

EDITION OF THE GREEK TEXT

The NETS translation of both versions has been based on the critical editions of Joseph Ziegler and Oliver Munnich (*Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum XVI.2: Susanna Daniel Bel et Draco* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999]). Munnich has revised Ziegler's critical edition of the Old Greek (OG) version (1954), because Ziegler did not have access to several important portions of papyrus 967. Accordingly, the NETS translation of the OG has been based on Munnich, while Theodotion (TH) has been translated from Ziegler. Items of dubious originality have been retained in square brackets.

THE TWO GREEK VERSIONS

Bel and the Dragon, like Sousanna and Daniel, is extant in two versions: the Old Greek (OG) and Theodotion (TH).

Although in length the two are approximately equal, certain details in fact and narration suggest that, at the level of the Greek, their relationship was minimal. Minor differences in detail include v. 3 where "forty" (TH) contrasts with "four" (OG) sheep, and "wine" is read by the one (TH) but "oil" by the other (OG). Although the plot is very similar throughout, there are differences. So, for example, v. 9 of TH has the king placing the onus on the priests to show that Bel is eating the offering, while in OG it is Daniel who assumes the burden of proof (for similar instances see vv. 19, 21). Similarly, the narrative perspective differs when the dragon is destroyed and the reaction thereto is narrated. To be noted is the end of v. 27 to the beginning of v. 28 for the difference in wording and the relative roles played by the people and the king vis-à-vis Daniel. This difference gives rise to others: according to v. 30 of OG the king takes the initiative to give Daniel over to destruction, whereas in TH (v. 29) the Babylonians take the lead.

Consequently, there is evidence to suggest that the two Greek versions of Bel and the Dragon are independent versions. As further evidence it may be noted that in vv. 7, 9, 11 OG reads respectively "I swear to you by the Lord God of the gods," "But they said, 'It is Bel himself who eats them,'" and "Now the word pleased the king," all three of which are lacking in TH. Though in v. 14 OG notes that only Daniel knew about the ashes that had been sprinkled—a note which anticipates Daniel's instructions to both the priest and the king in vv. 15–17—according to TH the priests are not even on the scene. (For similar "additions" see vv. 24, 31–32, 39.)

TH, on the other hand, has a "plus" in v. 5 when it includes that God "has dominion over all flesh." Another "plus" occurs in v. 25 when Daniel affirms that he worships the Lord, because he is the living God. (For smaller "pluses" see vv. 28, 32, 36.)

The comparative independence of the two Greek versions is further suggested by the few cases in which they share similar wording for large portions of a verse. An example is the first story about Bel, which ends at v. 22. Eleven times OG and TH have identical wording for part of a verse (4, 10, 23, 26, 28, 34, 35, 36, 38, 41, 42), but in most of these cases changes in word order and/or significant pluses or alternative readings are also present. Only three short passages (23, 26, 35) are nearly identical. Occasional agreements in vocabulary are not incompatible with the notion that we have two independent translations of a similar source text.

On a few occasions there is a close textual relationship between the two versions, but these agreements may be due to textual corruption. The verb "strew" (κατασῆθω) occurs in v. 14, although OG and TH employ different forms and the manuscripts for TH have several variant readings. V. 27 has "cake" (μᾶζα) in both versions, a word unique in the Septuagint. There may also be a relationship in v. 36: "take hold of the hair of his head" (ἐπελάβετο ἐπιλαβόμενος τῆς κόμης τῆς κεφαλῆς). Finally, the identical phrase "those responsible for his ruin" (τοὺς δὲ αἰτίους τῆς ἀπωλείας αὐτοῦ) in v. 42 seems to reflect a direct relationship between the two versions, particularly in the choice of αἰτίους.

Based on the differences between the two versions it is possible that the source text of the OG was later edited, and the newer version is reflected in TH. For example, the identification of Daniel as a "priest, the

son of Habal" in OG v. 2 is not reflected elsewhere in the Daniel stories. In addition, the heading of OG identifies the story as a "prophecy of Hambakoum the son of Iesous of the tribe of Leui." In TH, however, the story is dated to the time of Cyrus the Persian successor of Astyages (v. 1).

Given the paucity of distinctive agreements, the many differences in detail, and the way that the stories are told, they are best understood as distinct translations of a common story.

TRANSLATION PROFILE OF THE GREEK

The significant differences between the two versions raise the question of their possible source. Do the differences stem from widely differing Semitic source texts or from the translators? The answer is hampered by the fact that there is no extant Hebrew or Aramaic version of Bel and the Dragon. Moreover, the story is brief: forty-two verses in TH and thirty-eight in the OG. The differences between them, however, are probably a combination of diverging source and modes of translation.

Two main arguments may be used in support of Bel and the Dragon being a translation from a Semitic source: the presence of Semitisms and the relationship between the two versions. Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of evidence to consider. Semitic influence on the vocabulary and syntactic structure of the Greek texts is evident in the frequent appearance of καί "and" as a gloss for conjunctive ἠ. The Hebrew phrase καὶ ἐγένετο (וַיְהִי) also occurs three times in TH (vv. 14, 18, 28) and twice in OG (vv. 15, 33). TH further has ἰδού twice (vv. 11, 40), though this need not be un-Greek. The odd expression ἐν τῷ ῥοιζῷ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ "in a rush of his spirit" in v. 36 of TH is best explained as a corruption from Hebrew or Aramaic. Suggestions have been made for other examples of Semitic influence in the story, but they are less viable as independent evidence.

In addition there is the relationship between the two versions. They follow the same basic plot and have some common vocabulary, which could be due to them being translations of a similar source. Though it is difficult to identify aspects of the stories due to translation, TH reads like a translation based on formal equivalence of a Semitic text. OG does so at times, but it reads more like a dynamic translation or even a Greek composition. Thus, TH fits within the interlinear paradigm, while the OG is not so easily defined.

THE NETS TRANSLATION OF BEL AND THE DRAGON

General Approach

Assuming that both versions are translations from Semitic source texts requires that our NETS translation reflect the linguistic relationship between them as closely as possible. Thus, compared to the NRSV the translation will at times be somewhat stilted and the grammar awkward, because we are attempting to reflect the relationship of the Greek to the Hebrew or Aramaic parent text. Although this is more true of the TH version, the parataxis of the Greek is present in both versions; therefore, it is retained in NETS. The translation of vocabulary also assumes an emphasis on the particular word rather than the context due to the subservience of the Greek to its source text. At the same time, NETS distinguishes those places where either of the translations exhibits variety in how they translated what most probably was the same phrase or word. For example, in v. 3 OG has "were squandering" ἀνηλίσκετο, where TH employs "would spend" ἔδανοντο, and OG refers to "false doors" ψευδοθύρια in v. 21, while TH has "hidden doors" κρυπτὰς θύρας.

Comparing the OG and TH Translations

One of the most challenging aspects of the NETS translation for Daniel and the additional stories has been to compose a translation that both reflects the subservience of each version to its presumed source text while, at the same time, capturing the nature of the relationship of the two Greek versions to one another. This task has been the least difficult for Bel and the Dragon. Even when the stories overlap they often depart in other aspects. For example, in v. 18 when Daniel and the king (along with the king's entourage in OG) enter the temple and find the food gone, the king addresses Bel in the second person ("you") in TH, while Bel is referred to in the third person in the OG (see also v. 38). Throughout the two versions any connections between the vocabulary are maintained even when they appear in different verses or when there are other grammatical changes.

EDITORIAL DETAIL

The TH version of Bel and the Dragon is the basis for the NRSV translation; thus, the versification of NRSV and NETS TH correspond. The verse numbers are equivalent to those followed in both Rahlfs and Ziegler's edition. For the OG I have followed Ziegler/Munnich, which differs only in two places (v. 13 and v. 25) from Rahlfs.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

In addition to the standard reference tools I was most appreciative of the translation and commentary on *Bel and the Dragon* by Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: the Additions* (AB 44; Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), as well as by John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

R. TIMOTHY MCLAY

OLD GREEK

From a prophecy of Hambakoum the son of Iesous of the tribe of Leui.

2 There was a certain person, a priest, whose name was Daniel son of Habal, a companion of the king of Babylon.

3 And there was an idol, Bel, which the Babylonians would revere. Now, every day they were squandering on it twelve bushels of choice flour and four sheep and six measures of oil. ⁴And the king would revere him, and the king would go every day and would do obeisance to him. But Daniel would pray to the Lord.

And the king said to Daniel, "Why do you not do obeisance to Bel?" ⁵And Daniel said to the king, "I revere no one except the Lord God, who created heaven and earth."

6 So the king said to him, "Is this one, then, not a god? Do you not see how much is spent for him every day?" ⁷And Daniel said to him, "Not at all! Do not let anyone mislead you, for this one is only of clay inside and bronze outside. Moreover, I swear to you by the Lord God of the gods that this one has never eaten anything."

8 And angered, the king called the leaders of the temple and said to them, "Produce the one who eats the things prepared for Bel. But if not, you shall die, ⁹or Daniel, who says they are not being eaten by him." But they said, "It is Bel himself who eats them." Then Daniel said to the king, "Let it be so. Unless I prove that Bel is not eating them, I shall die, and all those with me."

10 Now there were seventy priests of Bel, not counting wives and children. So he brought the king into the idol's temple. ¹¹And the food was set out in the presence of the king and Daniel, and the mixed wine was brought in and set out before Bel. And Daniel said, "You yourself, see, O king, that these things are set down. You, then, seal the bolts of the shrine when it is closed." Now the word pleased the king. ¹⁴Now Daniel commanded those with him, after everyone departed from the temple, to strew the whole shrine with ashes, though no one else except him knew. And then, as he sealed the shrine, he commanded that it be sealed with the king's signet and with the signets of certain illustrious priests. And so it happened.

15-17 And it happened on the next day that they went to the place. (But the priests of Bel, after entering through false doors, had eaten everything

THEODOTION

1 And King Astyages was added to his ancestors, and Cyrus the Persian received his kingdom. ²And Daniel was a companion of the king and was honored beyond all his friends.

3 And the Babylonians had an idol, whose name was Bel, and each day they would spend on him twelve bushels of choice flour and forty sheep and six measures of wine. ⁴And the king would revere him and would go every day to do obeisance to him. But Daniel kept doing obeisance to his God.

And the king said to him, "Why do you not do obeisance to Bel?" ⁵So he answered, "Because I do not revere idols made with hands, but the living God, who created heaven and earth and has dominion over all flesh."

6 And the king said to him, "Do you not think that Bel is a living god? Or do you not see how much he eats and drinks every day?" ⁷And laughing, Daniel said, "Do not be deceived, O king, for this one is only clay inside and bronze outside, and he has never eaten nor drunk anything."

8 And angered, the king called his priests and said to them, "If you do not tell me who is eating this provision, you shall die. ⁹But if you show that Bel is eating them, Daniel shall die, because he has spoken blasphemy against Bel." And Daniel said to the king, "Let it be done according to your word."

10 And there were seventy priests of Bel, apart from wives and children. And the king went with Daniel into the house of Bel. ¹¹And the priests of Bel said, "Lo, we are now going outside; so you, O king, set out the food, and place the wine when you have mixed it, and shut the door, and seal it with your signet. ¹²And when you return in the morning, if you do not find everything eaten by Bel, we will die, or Daniel, who is telling lies against us." ¹³Now they were contemptuous, for beneath the table they had made a hidden entrance, and they used to go through it regularly and consume them^a. ¹⁴And it happened as they had gone out, the king also set out the food for Bel. And Daniel ordered his servants, and they brought ashes, and they strewed the whole shrine

^ai.e. the provisions

OLD GREEK

laid out for Bel and had drunk the wine.) And Daniel said, "Men, priests, examine your seals whether they remain. And you also, O king, observe carefully, lest anything be out of order to you." And they found the seal as it was, and they broke the seal. ¹⁸And when they opened the doors, they saw everything that had been set out consumed and the tables empty. And the king was thrilled and said to Daniel, "Bel is great, and there is no deceit in him!"

19 And Daniel laughed exceedingly and said to the king, "Come, see the deceit of the priests." And Daniel said, "O king, these footprints, whose are they?" ²⁰And the king said, "Of men and women and children."

21 And he went to the house where the priests were staying, and they found Bel's food and the wine. And Daniel showed the king the false doors through which the priests would enter and consume what was set out for Bel. ²²And the king brought them out of Bel's temple and handed them over to Daniel. And he gave the provision that was for him^a to Daniel, but he destroyed Bel.

23 And there was a dragon in that same place, and the Babylonians would revere it. ²⁴And the king said to Daniel, "Surely you shall not also say about^b this one, that he is bronze! Look, he lives and eats and drinks! Do obeisance to him." ²⁶And Daniel said, "O king, give me permission, and I will slay the dragon without iron or club." And the king agreed with him and said, "I have given it^b to you."

27 And taking thirty minas^c of pitch and fat and hair, Daniel boiled them together, and having made a cake, he threw it^b into the mouth of the dragon. And after eating, it burst open. And he showed it to the king, saying, "Aren't these the things you revere, O king?"

28 And all those from the country assembled against Daniel and said, "The king has just now become a Judean. He has destroyed Bel and killed the dragon." ³⁰And when the king saw that the crowd from the country had united against him, he called his companions and said, "I am giving Daniel over for destruction."

31-32 Now, there was a pit in which seven lions would be fed, to which the conspirators of the king would be delivered. And every day two bodies condemned to death would be provided for them. And the crowd threw Daniel into that pit so that he might be devoured and not even have the good fortune of a burial. And Daniel was in the pit six days.

33 And it happened on the sixth day, and Hambakoum was having bread broken in a bowl of

^aI.e. Bel ^bLacking in Gk ^cone mina = 100 drachmas

THEODOTION

in the presence of the king alone. And as they went out they shut the door and sealed it with the king's signet and departed. ¹⁵Then the priests came during the night according to their custom, and their wives and children, and they ate and drank everything.

16 And the king readied early in the morning, and Daniel with him. ¹⁷And he said, "Are the seals unbroken, Daniel?" Then he said, "They are unbroken, O king." ¹⁸And it happened as soon as the doors opened, when the king looked at the table he shouted in a loud voice, "You are great, O Bel, and there is no deceit in you, not one!"

19 And Daniel laughed and restrained the king so that he could not enter inside and said, "Look now at the floor, and notice whose footprints these are." ²⁰And the king said, "I see the footprints of men and women and children."

21 And enraged, the king then arrested the priests and their wives and children. And they showed him the hidden doors through which they used to enter and consume what was on the table. ²²And the king killed them and gave Bel entirely over to Daniel. And he destroyed him and his temple.

23 And there was a great dragon, and the Babylonians used to revere it. ²⁴And the king said to Daniel, "You cannot say that this is not a living god; so do obeisance to it." ²⁵And Daniel said, "I will do obeisance to the Lord my God, because he is a living God. ²⁶But you, O king, give me permission, and I shall kill the dragon without iron or rod." And the king said, "I give it^a to you."

27 And Daniel took pitch and fat and hair and boiled them together and made cakes and gave them^a into the mouth of the dragon. And after eating the dragon burst open. And he said, "See your objects of reverence!"

28 And it happened when the Babylonians heard, they were very indignant and conspired against the king and said, "The king has become a Judean; he has destroyed Bel and killed the dragon and slaughtered the priests." ²⁹And when they came to the king, they said, "Hand Daniel over to us, and if not, we will kill you and your household." ³⁰And the king saw that they were pressing him hard, and having been compelled, he handed Daniel over to them.

31 So they threw him into the lions' pit, and he was there six days. ³²Now there were seven lions in the pit, and daily two bodies and two sheep were given to them, but then nothing was given to them so that they would devour Daniel.

33 And the prophet Hambakoum was in Judea, and he had boiled a stew and broken bread into a

^aLacking in Gk

BEL AND THE DRAGON

1027

OLD GREEK

boiled soup and a jar of mixed wine and was on his way to the plain to the reapers. ³⁴And an angel of the Lord spoke to Hambakoum, saying, "This is what God says to you: the food that you have, take it to Daniel, the one of Baltasar, in the lions' pit in Babylon." ³⁵And Hambakoum said, "Lord God, I have not seen Babylon, and I do not know where the pit is." ³⁶And when the angel of the Lord had taken Hambakoum by the hair of his head, he set him down above the pit that was in Babylon.

37 And Hambakoum said to Daniel, "Rise! Eat the food that God has sent you." ³⁸And Daniel said, "For the Lord God who does not forsake those who love him has remembered me." ³⁹And Daniel ate. Then the angel of the Lord put Hambakoum whence he took him on that same day. [Now the Lord God remembered Daniel.]

40 Now after these things the king came out mourning Daniel. And when he stooped down into the pit, he saw him seated! ⁴¹And when he had shouted out, the king said, "The Lord God is great, and there is no other besides him!" ⁴²And the king brought Daniel out from the pit and threw into the pit those responsible for his^a ruin before Daniel, and they were devoured.

^ai.e. Daniel's

THEODOTION

bowl, and was on his way to the plain to take it to the reapers. ³⁴And an angel of the Lord said to Hambakoum, "Take the food that you have to Babylon to Daniel, in the lions' den." ³⁵And Hambakoum said, "Lord, I have not seen Babylon, and I do not know about the pit." ³⁶And the angel of the Lord took hold of the crown of his head and, carrying him by the hair of his head, set him down in Babylon above the pit in a rush of his spirit.

37 And Hambakoum shouted, saying, "Daniel, Daniel! Take the food that God has sent you." ³⁸And Daniel said, "For you have remembered me, O God, and have not forsaken those who love you." ³⁹And having risen, Daniel ate. Then the angel of God immediately returned Hambakoum to his place.

40 Now on the seventh day the king came to mourn Daniel. And he came to the pit and looked in, and lo, Daniel was seated! ⁴¹And when he had shouted out with a loud voice, he said, "You are great, O Lord, the God of Daniel, and there is no other besides you!" ⁴²And he pulled him out but threw into the pit those responsible for attempting his^a ruin, and they were immediately devoured before him.

^ai.e. Daniel's

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