

SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE COMMENTARY ON SEPTUAGINT OF DANIEL: THE OLD GREEK AND THEODOTION*

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Rezumat: Acest studiu își propune să introducă pe scurt Comentariul Societății de Literatură Biblică asupra Septuagintei, cartea Daniel (care reprezintă proiectul în desfășurare al autorului). Comentariul este conceput pentru a elucida semnificația versiunilor „Greacă veche” și Teodotion, utilizând metodologia cunoscută sub numele de *text-as-produced*. Aplicarea acestei metodologii la Septuaginta, cartea Daniel oferă perspective unice, în care atât provocările, cât și oportunitățile sunt deopotrivă prezente. Studiul evidențiază trei direcții de investigație care subliniază complexitatea unui astfel de demers: caracterul de revizie al versiunii *Teodotion*; natura specială a capitolelor 4-6 din versiunea *Greacă Veche*, care presupun o ediție semitică diferită de Textul Masoretic, și adăugirile la cartea Daniel, ale căror texte-sursă au fost pierdute.

Cuvinte-cheie: Daniel, Teodotion, versiunea „Greacă veche”, *Comentariul Societății de Literatură Biblică asupra Septuagintei*, SBLSCS.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to briefly introduce and present some theoretical aspects related to the Society of Biblical Literature Commentary on the Septuagint Daniel (SBLCS[-Dan]) which constitutes my assigned work in progress. The SBLCS is new among the series and unique in its scope and methodology¹. Its beginnings can be linked to two events: (1) the prospectus for a commentary on the Old Greek (or Septuagint) produced by a committee of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies in 1995/ 1996. The prospectus was published by

* *Comentariul Societății de Literatură Biblică asupra Septuagintei, cartea Daniel: Versiunile „Greacă Veche” și Teodotion.*

¹ Beside SBLCS, there are several concurrent commentaries on Daniel in progress which have as their point of departure either the Hebrew/ Aramaic original or the Greek versions. The most notable mentions are those in the series *Anchor Bible* (Michael Segal), *Biblische Kommentar Altes Testament* (Martin Rösel), *Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Ian Young), Brill Septuagint Commentary Series (Cynthia Westfall). The methodologies of these commentaries (including SBLCS) were the focus of the SBL panel “Current Commentary Projects on the Book of Daniel” within the framework of the Book of Daniel Section, SBL Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, 2019.

Pietersma in the “Bulletin of International Organization of Septuagint and Cognate Studies” in 1998 and formally sponsored by the same organization in 1999; and (2) the project of the *New English Translation of Septuagint* (NETS). In this regard, Pietersma notes: “One might here speak of a continuum from NETS to SBLCS, or as two stages of a single interpretative effort” (Pietersma 2017, 2)².

2. Methodology

The SBLCS is unique in scope and methodology. It aims “to elucidate the meaning of *the text-as-produced* in distinction from *the text-as-received*” (see PREAMBLE, 257). The *Preamble* to the Guidelines for the Contributors presents four fundamental principles which form the methodological framework of the series (*ibid.*, 257-259):

I.1. The commentary is *genetic*, in the sense that it seeks to trace the translation *process* that results in the *product*, *i.e.*, the so-called original text of the Old Greek.

I.1.1. The text-as-produced is conceptualized as a *dependent* entity, derived from its source text. That is to say, it is perceived to be *compositionally* dependent on its source, though not *semantically* dependent.

I.1.2. The aim is to uncover the strategies and norms by means of which the text came into being. Therefore, the commentator will analyze the relationship between the target text and the source text, attempting to account for the *process* underlying the derivation of the Greek version from its Semitic parent. It is from this analysis that the commentator will formulate his or her principles of interpretation and procedural methodology.

I.2. The primary focus of the commentary is the *verbal make-up* of the translation, understood in terms of *conventional* linguistic usage (*i.e.*, the grammar and lexicon of the target language) rather than in terms of what may be encountered in translation Greek.

I.2.1. The text-as-produced can be said to have semantic autonomy because it means what it means in terms of the grammar and lexicon of the Greek language at the time of the Septuagint’s production.

I.2.2. The “reader” of the text-as-produced is conceptualized as the *prospective* or *implied* reader, a construct based on the text itself, in distinction from any reader, actual or hypothetical, exterior to the text. The prospective reader is to be inferred from those features of the text’s make-up that are indicative of a specific linguistic, literary, or cultural aim (*e.g.*, transcriptions and Hebraisms).

² See further Pietersma (2004, 1008).

I.3. The text-as-produced represents *a historical event* and should be described with reference to the relevant features of its historical context.

I.3.1. The translation is to be viewed as a fact of the culture that produced it in as much as it is a specimen of discourse within that culture.

I.3.2. The verbal make-up of the translation should be understood in relation to the cultural system in which it was produced, that is to say, the sort of text it is as a Greek document.

I.3.3. Since unintelligibility is one of the inherent characteristics of the text-as-produced, it should not always be assumed to make sense.

I.4. The text-as-produced is *the act of a historical agent* – the translator – and should be described with reference to the translator’s intentions, to the extent that these are evident.

I.4.1. The meaning of the text is best understood as encompassing both *what* the translator did and *why*.

I.4.2. The commentator’s task thus includes the following: (a) to search out the intention of the translator insofar as this may be inferred from the transformation of the source text and the verbal make-up of the target text; (b) to describe the possibilities *deliberately* marked out by the language of the text.

I.4.3. It should not be presupposed in any given instance that the translator’s primary intention was to produce an intelligible text.

3. SBL Commentary on Septuagint Daniel

Though challenging to the commentator, we contend that the application of the *text-as-produced* methodology to Septuagint Daniel affords unique opportunities. In the following, I will present three directions of investigation that underscore the complexity of our task, in which both the challenges and the opportunities are simultaneously present.

3.1. Text-as-Produced as a Revision

The SBL Commentary on Septuagint Daniel affords the rare opportunity to investigate two parallel versions for the entire book, namely, the Old Greek (OG-Dan) and Theodotion (Th-Dan). The transmission of the Greek text of Daniel in two versions gives rise to the question of their relationship. The fundamental and intricate question within the framework of a text-as-produced theory is one of which model better describes their relationship: do the two versions demonstrably indicate a

translation-revision relationship, or are they more properly described as two separate translations?

The latest scholarship on the topic arrived at two opposing views regarding the relationship between OG-Dan and Th-Dan: (a) they both reflect independent translations; or (b) Th-Dan reflects a systematic recension of OG-Dan. The first systematic studies on the issue concluded that Th-Dan has the traits of a *de novo* translation (McLay 1994; 1996a; 1996b; 1998a; 1998b; 2004; 2005; 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Obiajunwa 1999; and partly Amara 2006). In response, Olariu's recent investigations³ called this verdict into question. Not only he singled out a high number of shared significant equivalents between OG-Dan and Th-Dan (Olariu 2015; 2019a) but also, he determined the presence of revising patterns in Th-Dan (Olariu 2019b; 2021). Taken together, these results convincingly indicate that OG-Dan and Th-Dan stand in a translation-revision relationship.

Consequently, the application of the text-as-produced methodology to Septuagint Daniel is tantamount to approach OG-Dan as an independent translation and Th-Dan as a revision. The special character of Th-Dan within the corpus of Septuagint affords the rare opportunity to comment on a revised text, a task which demands tracing of the recessional processes that resulted in the product of Th-Dan as a revision⁴.

Approaching Th-Dan as a revision within a text-as-produced methodological framework requires to supplement the PREAMBLE to the Guidelines for the Contributors to the SBLCS with principles that can be applied while commenting on a text-as-produced as a revision. The PREAMBLE was shaped for a text-as-produced as a translation and, expectedly, it lacks guiding principles on how to approach LXX translation units which are in the nature of revisions. In this regard, I suggest that principles I.2, I.3, and I.4 are workable for a revised text as well. Regarding the most important principle I, I suggest reworking it as follows:

I.1. The commentary on Th-Dan is *genetic*, in the sense that it seeks to trace the recessional *process* that results in the *product*, *i.e.*, the so-called original text of Th-Dan.

I.1.1. The text-as-revised is conceptualized as a *dependent* entity, derived from its both source text and base text. That is to say, it is perceived to be *compositionally* dependent on both its source text, though not *semantically* dependent, and the base text, though possibly semantically dependent.

I.1.2. The aim is to uncover the strategies and norms by means of which the recension came into being. Therefore, the commentator will analyze the relationship

³ These studies reflect the MA and PhD research projects carried out at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, under the supervision of Prof. Emanuel Tov and Prof. Michael Segal.

⁴ For an application of the methodology of the text-as-produced on OG-Dan and Th-Dan, see Olariu (2020).

between the target text, the base text, and the source text, attempting to account for the *revisional process* underlying the derivation of the Greek version from its both Semitic parent and base text. It is from this analysis that the commentator will formulate his or her principles of interpretation and procedural methodology.

The employment of this methodology informs the nature of Th-Dan's commentary in two ways. First, the commentary is set out as a comparative analysis between three textual "sources". It is argued that the putative "Theodotion" reviser embarked on the reworking of OG-Dan (the "base text") to faithfully represent the MT-Dan-like *Vorlage* of his day (the "source text"). The outcome of his activity is the revision Th-Dan (the "generated text"). Consequently, the "generated text" reflects the reviser's attitudes towards his base text and his *Vorlage*.

Second, the commentary sets out to address both the commonalities and the dissimilarities between OG-Dan and Th-Dan as compared with MT-Dan. The evaluation of the former points to the OG's lexical choices retained by the reviser. The evaluation of the latter is tantamount to commenting on the reviser's strategies to correct the perceived deviations from the "source text" in his "base text".

3.2. Text-as-Produced Reflecting a Parallel Semitic Edition (OG-Daniel 4-6)

A further unique feature of Septuagint Daniel relates to the special nature of OG-Daniel 4-6, which clusters large-scale textual differences in these chapters. Not only is the Greek text substantially different from the Masoretic text, but where it does parallel the Hebrew, the relationship between the two is not always easy to determine. OG-Dan displays many minuses and pluses in these chapters, both short and long. It also features differences in the organization of the material (*e.g.*, chapter 4), double readings, and variation in key phrases.

The literature review shows that the textual disparities between MT and OG-Dan were differently assessed by scholars (Olariu 2017, 523-525). The differences were explained as reflecting (1) the paraphrastic translational approach adopted by the OG's translator; (2) the nature of the OG-Dan's *Vorlage*, viewing the source text as the cause of the differences; and (3) two parallel editions of Daniel, circulating side-by-side.

Our research on Septuagint Daniel supports the last view, indicating that OG-Daniel 4-6 features both original and secondary readings. Since the identification of such ambivalent readings most likely point to two parallel editions, we analyze the relationship between OG-Dan and MT in chapters 4-6 in a different way than in the remainder of the book (*i.e.*, chapters 1-3, 7-12). That is to say, in commenting on OG-Daniel 4-6, we postulate a source text which differs from MT. The complex textual relationship depicted above warrants an important caveat while working with the text-as-produced methodology: the OG differences from MT may occasionally indicate the use of a parallel Semitic edition by the translator.

3.3. Text-as-Produced Devoid of a Semitic Vorlage (Additions to Daniel)

The third direction of investigation which challenge the application of a text-as-produced methodology are the Additions to Daniel. Most likely, they reflect proper translations from underlying Semitic texts which were secondarily appended to the book by the Greek translators or by later copyists. These include the Prayer of Azariah and the Hymn of the Three Young Men, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon. Both the Prayer and the Hymn are inserted between MT-Dan 3:23-24 (OG/ Th-Dan 3:24-90). The placement of the other two stories varies considerably. In Th-Dan, Susanna is added before Daniel 1-12 while Bel and the Dragon at the end of the book. By contrast, OG-Dan has both stories appended after Daniel 1-12⁵.

These observations should light on the SBL Commentary on Septuagint Daniel in two aspects: (1) As in the case of Daniel 1-12, the relationship between OG-Dan and Th-Dan in the Additions is best described as that of a translation and its revision. Therefore, we explain the strategies and norms by means of which both texts came into being in a different manner: while in the case of the OG Additions we attempt to uncover the translational process, for those in Th-Dan we aim at recovering the recessional process; (2) the second aspect relates to the absence of any Semitic text for the Additions which, indeed, poses a challenge to a text-as-produced methodology. However, the existence of two complete, parallel editions that can be contrasted with each other affords more insights than working with a single text devoid of a Semitic *Vorlage*. This offers hope that the task to comment on the Additions of Daniel can be pursued (at least in part).

4. Conclusions

The purpose of this presentation was to briefly discuss some theoretical aspects related to the SBL Commentary in progress on Septuagint Daniel. The commentary uses a text-as-produced methodology aiming “to elucidate the meaning of *the text-as-produced* in distinction from *the text-as-received*”. The application of this methodology to Septuagint Daniel affords unique insights, in which both the challenges and the opportunities are simultaneously present. As such, this paper highlighted three directions of investigation that underscore the complexity of our task: the character to Th-Dan as a revision; the special nature of OG-Dan 4-6, which presupposes a parallel Semitic edition which differs from MT; and the Additions to Daniel of whose Semitic underlying texts are lost. In future studies, I

⁵ However, the stories differ in the way they were placed in OG manuscripts: whereas papyrus 967 has Bel and the Dragon followed by Susanna, MS 88 and Syh have Susanna followed by Bel and the Dragon.

will apply the text-as-produced theory on specific Danielic passages and exemplify the principles at work.

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