

## *The Hebrew of Daniel*

W. J. Martin

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'The verdict of the language of Daniel is thus clear... the Hebrew *supports*... a date *after the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great (332 BC)*', thus S. R. Driver.<sup>1</sup>

In support of this verdict, Driver gives a list of some thirty expressions, said to occur never or very rarely in the earlier literature.

**1. *malkûṭ* and Similar Words.** The word that heads the list is *malkûṭ*. In the light of Hebrew usage it is difficult to see why this word was included. In Daniel it is not restricted to a particular formula (*biš'nat... l'malkûṭ*), in fact it is thus used only three times, where it occurs, in all, some fourteen times in the book. It was, moreover no neologism, for it is found already in Numbers 24:7, and in 1 Samuel 20:31, as well as three times in Jeremiah (10:7; 49:34; 52:31) and twice in Nehemiah (9:35; 12:22) and six times in Ezr (1:1; 4:5 and 6 (twice); 7:1; 8:1). It is not only well attested but it, is a pattern of noun widely used in all periods of Hebrew, and found in Akkadian as early as Hammurabi. Nouns of this formation are:

<i>k'sûṭ</i>	covering	(Gn. 20:16; Ex. 21:10)
<i>`ēduṭ</i>	decree	(Ex. <i>passim</i> )
<i>miskēnûṭ</i>	poverty	(Dt. 8:9)
<i>z'nuṭ</i>	fornication, and (metaphorically) idolatry	(Nu. 14:33 etc.)
<i>gēuṭ</i>	exaltation	(Is. 9:17; 26:10)
<i>`abduṭ</i>	bondage	(Ne. 9:17; Ezr. 9:8)
<i>gāluṭ</i>	deportation, exile	(Is. 20:4 etc.)

This last word occurs some thirteen times in the prophetic book, It must have been one of the most frequently used words in the spoken language from the time of Isaiah onwards. The form of word accepted to denote the subject of their chief concern would inevitably tend to give an impetus to this particular pattern.

**2. The Expression *'āmar l...*** Again it is stated that *'āmar l...* in

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the sense 'to command to' is used where 'older Hebrew would refer the *direct* narration'. If this is meant to imply that this is peculiar to Daniel and late Hebrew, then it would involve postulating a nuance in meaning which would be (virtually) indemonstrable, for the phrase is found in classical Hebrew and, moreover, it occurs in certain passages that must have been familiar to every pious and literate Jew. It is found, for example, in Deuteronomy 9:25 ('for the Lord said to destroy you') where the dividing line between 'said' and 'command' is

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<sup>1</sup> *LOT*<sup>9</sup> (1913), p. 508. Cf. J. A. Montgomery, *Daniel* (1927), p. 15.

W. J. Martin, "The Hebrew of Daniel," D. J. Wiseman, ed., *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*. London: The Tyndale Press, 1965. pp. 28-30

virtually non-existent. Similarly in Joshua 22:33 ('and they did not say to go up against them to war').

In 1 Samuel 30:6 ('for the people said to stone him') it stands where in English we could use some word in the sense of 'demand', but the notion expressed is little different from 'command'.

While the passage in 2 Samuel 1:18, taken as a whole, is difficult, the phrase ('and he said to teach the sons of Judah') presents no problem and, even in English, it makes little or no difference whether we translate 'He said to teach (it) to the sons of Judah' or 'He commanded to teach (it)'. In Exodus 2:14 the force of 'say' is doubtless only to express intent, but it shows that the syntactical pattern already existed. The pattern, though not perhaps of the semantic equivalent, occurs in 1 Kings 5:19 (5:5 in English). The construction is found, too, in Nehemiah 9:15 and 9:23, in a sense not distinguishable from that of the Daniel passages. In the nature of the case a verb with the vague semantic field of 'say' would inevitably be exposed to wide fluctuations of meaning in various contexts. Just as in English 'say' in the mouth of a person of authority would have the same force as 'command'. Doubtless, too, Daniel's primary language, Aramaic, often influenced his Hebrew.

**3. *hattāmîd*.** Included in the list is *hattāmîd*, 'the continual burnt offering'. There would seem to be even less justification for including this than some of the other terms. There is ample evidence to show that Hebrew, like many other languages, made wide use of elliptical expressions. In fact, one philologist (W. Havers) has even gone so far as to speak of ellipsis as 'a universal human tendency'. An ellipsis can be defined as 'a partial or total omission of a common member in corresponding groups'. The effect that it has on the meaning of the residual member is that the semantic content of the full phrase is now vested in a single member of the group. Ellipsis may take two forms:

(1) The omission of what may be called the specifying complement. For instance *ḥārās*, literally 'craftsman', 'artisan', used to describe a 'smith' may well be the result of the ellipsis of *barzel*,

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'iron'. Again *q'ṭōreṭ* originally meant simply 'smoke', but, later denoted 'incense', possibly through the omission of the word *sammîm*, 'spices'.

(2) The omission of the nucleus of a specifying group. Of the many examples of this, two may suffice: *qādîm*, 'east', through the suppression of *ru'ah*, 'wind', has the meaning of east wind. Again *šōpār*, 'horn' or 'trumpet', must have had a similar development. Both Sumerian and Akkadian know a breed of sheep called *šapparu*. They are often depicted on Babylonian cylinder seals, where they appear with enormous horns. *šōpār* was in all probability the *qeren*, 'horn', of such a sheep. In the case of *tāmîd* coming to mean 'continual burnt offering', the development would be a familiar one. As an illustration of this, we might take a town in which there was a Church of St. John and a Church of St. Paul. People would normally speak only of St. John's or St. Paul's. In the case of *hattāmîd* there were a number of familiar combinations, such as *ʾolat tāmîd* 'continual burnt offering'; *ʾolat habbōqer*,

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‘morning offering’; *ʿolat šabbāt*, ‘sabbath offering’; *ʿolat ḥōdeš*, ‘offering at the New Moon’. The nucleus here would be *ʿolâ*, ‘offering’, and through its omission, the specifying complement would take on the meaning of the whole phrase. There is abundant evidence to show that such a process was operative in Hebrew. It would indeed have been surprising if such a group as *ʿolat hattāmîd*, ‘continual burnt offering’, had remained unaffected.

The other words in Daniel’s list hardly require special treatment. Some of them have already been dealt with by R. D. Wilson.<sup>2</sup> One item, at least, is clearly the effect of Aramaic usage, *ʿšer lāmmâ* in the sense of ‘lest’.

To make out a plausible case for the lateness of Daniel on lexical grounds, one would have to show not only that the words or idioms did not occur earlier, but that there was *prima facie* evidence against the possibility of their appearing. There is no intrinsic probability that any of the terms listed could not have been used much earlier. In fact, one must proceed with the utmost caution in making pronouncements on the extent of a given vocabulary. It is well known that words that are not recorded in the literary language are to be found in the dialects. All that one is justified in saying is that a certain word occurs in the extant documents for the first time. There is nothing about the Hebrew of Daniel that could be considered extraordinary for a bilingual or, perhaps in this case, a trilingual speaker of the language in the sixth century BC.

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<sup>2</sup> *PTR*, XXV, 1927, pp. 353-388.