

Belshazzar and Daniel (Dan 5)

After four stories featuring Nebuchadnezzar, we now move on to the story of Belshazzar, whom Daniel presents as the last king of Babylon. Here, too, OG and MT differ radically.

1 Comparative Reconstruction

The Qumran manuscripts preserve more material corresponding to Dan 5 than is the case for the preceding two chapters, but no readings which are clearly superior to MT. In v. 17, ancient versions that are generally close to MT such as Th have phrases meaning ‘the gifts of your house’ for גבוי ביתך. Comparing this form to גבוי ביתך without *yod* in Dan 2:6 suggests that MT Dan 5:17 reflects a rather late haplography of גבוי ביתך. Otherwise, the relevant textual evidence once again comes from OG.

The OG text starts with a short and separate account known as the Preface or OG 5:0. Unlike the main body of the OG text, it seems clear that this is largely an independent retelling of the story and not a different edition going back to the same archetype (although the Preface is literarily dependent on the full story).¹ While some of the Preface’s elements can help to support a text-critical reconstruction, it is not suitable for phrase-by-phrase comparison.

1 Segal, “Daniel 5”; not so Wills, *Jew in the Court*, 121–27 (who notes the similarity between the OG Preface and the independent reconstruction of Dan 5 by Haag, *Errettung Daniels*, 56); Justin L. Pannkuk, “The Preface to Old Greek Daniel 5: A Formal Approach,” *VT* 67.2 (2017): 213–26. Dalia Amara, “The Third Version of the Story of Belshazzar’s Banquet (Daniel 5) [Hebrew],” *Textus* 23.1 (2007): מא-יא argues that the Preface is a translation of an Aramaic text, not a Greek composition. Some of her arguments are more compelling than others: the suggestion that the Preface’s δάκτυλοι ὡσεὶ ἀνθρώπου ‘fingers as though of a human’ reflects a Vorlage אונש די אצבען with metathesis of original יד ‘hand’ presupposes an ungrammatical original text, אונש די אצבען ‘fingers, a human hand’ (not ‘fingers of a human hand’, which would be אונש יד אצבעת** with ‘fingers’ in the construct state). The terse list of the words written on the wall followed by their meaning is also hard to retrovert to Aramaic; in her reconstructed Vorlage, Amara employs Hebrew for the interpretation (e.g. מנא—נספר ‘MN?—it has been counted’). On this question see also Munnich, “Masoretic Rewriting.”

Such a phrase-by-phrase comparison of the main body of the OG text and MT has recently been conducted in a separate article by Segal.² I will largely rely on his judicious conclusions in the rest of this section.

One disagreement between OG and MT that recurs a few times is the number and status of the guests present at the feast. Segal argues that OG's reading, which mentions the king's 'friends' but does not number them and excludes the concubines mentioned in MT, is more original.³ MT then reflects expansion in vv. 1–3,23.

V. 6 differs between OG and MT. Segal argues that the OG corresponds to what we find as v. 9 in MT, which was moved to this position in OG to solve an apparent redundancy.⁴ MT's שְׁנוּהוּ 'his years' in this verse is transparently a scribal error for שָׁנוּ 'they changed' assimilated to the preceding and following words ending in **-ôhî* (spelled defectively in רְעִינְהוּ 'his thoughts').

MT's terms תְּלִיתִי and תְּלִיתָא in vv. 7,16,29 are generally taken to reflect titles, perhaps (originally) meaning 'third in rank'. OG instead has the king's reward including authority over one third of the kingdom. This may be seen as harmonization with Dan 6 on the one hand, where Daniel is one of three overseers placed over the satraps (and hence logically responsible for one third of the kingdom) and with Esther on the other, where Ahasuerus repeatedly offers Esther any request she makes 'up to half of the kingdom' (also cf. the same offer in Mark 6:23). Elsewhere, I have suggested that תְּלִיתִי might indeed originally have meant 'one third', while תְּלִיתָא more probably means 'as the third, in third place'.⁵ The difference between these words may reflect the secondary status of the passage containing תְּלִיתִי, as argued below.

MT vv. 10–13 appear in a different form in OG, where this passage is markedly shorter. The elements that they share also occur in a different order. Given OG's tendency to abbreviation noted by Segal,⁶ the translator may have produced these verses as a rearranged summary. Daniel's appointment to chief of the magicians (etc.) in MT v. 11b looks like a harmonization with Dan 4:4, which contains the same list of mantic experts, but as we have seen, that verse is secondary; Dan 4:4 is more likely to be a harmonization with Dan 5:11b than vice versa.

Segal is unsure whether Belshazzar's opening address to Daniel in MT vv. 13b–16a, missing from OG, reflects abbreviation in OG or expansion in MT.⁷

2 Segal, "Daniel 5."

3 Segal, 257–60.

4 Segal, 267–69.

5 Suchard, "Historical (In)accuracy."

6 Segal, "Daniel 5," 260–62.

7 Segal, 256–57.

He tentatively prefers the latter. These verses are awkward in their repetition of 'I have heard about you' (vv. 14,16) and 'and now' (v. 15, repeated in 16b). As the mention of the exiles of Judah (v. 13b) occurs in OG (although it occurs in v. 10 there), I suggest that only vv. 15–16a are expansive, explaining the repetitive phrases. This also explains why Belshazzar sticks closer to queen's words in v. 14 than in the interpolated v. 16a.

Two other more or less extended passages are missing from OG and identified by Segal as secondary in MT.⁸ V. 17aβ is not only absent from OG but also contradicts Daniel's acceptance of the reward later on (Segal also sees v. 17b as part of this interpolation, but it seems to be paraphrased in OG). And the recapitulation of Dan 4 given in vv. 18–22 is clearly a harmonization with that chapter. I would identify the start of this interpolation after the words אנתה מלכא 'You, O king' (v. 18). In their current context, these words form an anacoluthon with the following sentence.

What remains of Daniel's speech is in a different order in MT compared to OG. In OG, the mysterious words are read at the outset, before Daniel gives the background of the king's sin. The recapitulation of Belshazzar's feast then separates the announcement that 'this is their interpretation:' from the interpretation itself. It is hard to see why an archetype that was closer to MT would have been changed to the text as attested in OG. If OG preserves the more original order, MT reflects reordering to avoid the awkward interruption of the interpretation and to keep the reading and interpretation together, although this has resulted in the repetitive רשים ודנה כתבא די רשים 'this writing was recorded. And this is the writing that was recorded:'. Hence, we should restore the verse relating the words' reading to its place in OG, together with a doublet announcing their interpretation.

On the mysterious writing itself, most of the non-Masoretic versions and ancient references agree that it consisted of three words with three letters each: מנא, תקל, פרס.⁹ This is also how they appear in the interpretation in MT. It is unlikely that the various sources independently harmonized the reading with the catchwords in the interpretation. Hence, MT's מנא מנא ופרסין תקל in v. 25 is probably corrupt. מנא מנא can reflect dittography or mistaken harmonization with the following מנא מנא 'MN?: he has counted'. And perhaps פרסין was changed to a dual because of the double play on words (פריסת 'it has been divided' and פרס 'Persia').¹⁰

8 Segal, 255–56.

9 Collins, *Daniel*, 240; Newsom, *Daniel*, 161.

10 Cf. Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 185 for the first and last of these suggestions; Ulrich, *Developmental Composition*, 246 for the first two.

Finally, v. 30 in OG reads ‘And the meaning came upon Baltasar the king, and the rule was taken away from the Chaldaeans and was given to the Medes and to the Persians’. The gist is the same as that of MT and the presence of the phrases ‘Belshazzar the king’ and ‘the Chaldaean(s)’ in both versions suggests that they are related. OG’s reading is reminiscent of the statements that ‘all this came over King Nebuchadnezzar’ and ‘the matter was fulfilled over Nebuchadnezzar’ in Dan 4:25,30. Compared to MT, it more explicitly reflects the larger Danielic theme of the succession of world empires, and shows some redundancy with the following ‘and Xerxes, who was king of the Medes, received the kingdom’ (OG 5:31) corresponding to MT 6:1 ‘and Darius the Mede received the kingdom’. This points to reworking of OG. MT thus preserves the more original ending here, leaving us with the following reconstructed archetype.

Reconstructed Archetype of Dan 5

בלשאצר מלכא עבד לחם רב 5 ¹ King Belshazzar prepared a great feast for
 לרברבנוהי אלף ולקבל אלפא his *one thousand* nobles and *before the one-*
 חמרא שתה: בלשאצר אמר *thousand he* was drinking wine. ² Belshazzar
 בטעם חמרא להיתיה למאני ordered under the influence of the wine to bring
 דהבא וכספא די הנפק the golden and silver vessels which his father
 נבוכדנצר אבוהי מן היכלא די Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the palace that
 בירושלם וישתון בהון מלכא was in Jerusalem so that the king and his nobles;
 ורברבנוהי שגלתה ולהנתה: *his concubines, and his consorts* could drink from
 באדין היתיו מאני דהבא די them. ³ Then they brought the golden vessels
 הנפקו מן היכלא די בית that they had taken from the palace of the house
 אלהא די בירושלם ואשתיו of God that was in Jerusalem and the king and
 בהון מלכא ורברבנוהי שגלתה *his concubines, and his consorts* drank
 ולהנתה: אשתיו חמרא ושבו from them. ⁴ They drank wine and praised the
 לאלהי דהבא וכספא נחשא gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and
 פרזלא אעא ואבנא: בה stone. ⁵ At that moment, fingers of a human
 שעתה נפקו אצבען די יד אנש hand came out and they started writing in front
 וכתבן לקבל נברשתא על גירא of the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of
 די כתל היכלא די מלכא the king’s palace, and the king saw the hand as
 ומלכא חזה פס ידה די כתבה: it wrote. ⁶ Then the king’s appearance **changed**
 אדין מלכא זיוהי שנוהי ורעיניה and his thoughts terrified him and the joints in
 יבהלונה וקטרי חרצה משתרין his loins were loosened and his knees were
 וארכבתה דא לדא נקשן: knocking together. ⁷ The king cried out with
 קרא מלכא בחיל להעלה force to bring in the sorcerers, Chaldaeans, and
 לאשפיא כשדיא וגוריא ענה dream interpreters. The king spoke, saying to
 מלכא ואמר לחכימי בבל די the wise men of Babylon that “anyone who can

כל אנש די יקרה כתבה דנה
 ופשרה יחונגי ארגונא ילבש
 והמונכא די דהבא על צוארה
 ותלתי במלכותא ישלט: אדין
 עללין כל חכימי מלכא ולא
 כהלין כתבא למקרא ופשרא
 להודעה למלכא: אדין מלכא
 בלשאצר שגיא מתבהל וזיוהי
 שנין עלוהי ורברבנוהי
 משתבשין: מלכתא לקבל מלי
 מלכא ורברבנוהי לבית משתאי
 עללת ענת מלכתא ואמרת
 מלכא לעלמין חיי אל ביהלודך
 רעיונדך וזיויך אל ישתנו: איתי
 גבר במלכותך די רוח אלהין
 קדישין בה וביומי אבוך נהירו
 ושכלתנו וחכמה כחכמת אלהין
 השתכחת בה ומלכא נבכדנצר
 אבוך רב חרטמין אשפין
 כשדאין גזרין הקימה אבוך
 מלכא: כל קבל די רוח יתירה
 ומנדע ושכלתנו מפשר חלמין
 ואחוית אחידן ומשרא קטרין
 השתכחת בה בדניאל די מלכא
 שם שמה בלשאצר כען
 דניאל יתקרי ופשרה יהחווה:
 באדין דניאל העל קדם
 מלכא ענה מלכא ואמר לדניאל
 אנתה הוא דניאל די מן בני
 גלותא די יהוד די היתי מלכא
 אבי מן יהוד: ושמעתי עליך די
 רוח אלהין בך ונהירו ושכלתנו
 וחכמה יתירה השתכחת בך:
 וכען העלו קדמי חכימיא
 אשפיא די כתבה דנה יקרוך
 ופשרה להודעתני ולא כהלין
 פשר מלתא להחוויה: ואנה
 שמעתי עליך די תוכל פשרין
 למפשר וקטרין למשרא כען
 הן תוכל כתבא למקרא ופשרה

read this writing and can relate its meaning to
 me will wear purple and a golden necklace will
 be on his neck and he will have authority as the
 third in the kingdom.”⁸ Then, all the king’s wise
 men each came in, but none of them could read
 the writing and make the interpretation known
 to the king.⁹ Then, King Belshazzar was greatly
 terrified and his appearance was changing over
 him and his nobles were dismayed.¹⁰ On account
 of the words of the king and his nobles, the
 queen came in to the banquet hall. The queen
 spoke, saying: “O king, live forever! Don’t let your
 thoughts terrify you, don’t let your appearance
 be changed!”¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom
 in whom is a spirit of holy gods, and in the days
 of your father, illumination and understanding
 and wisdom like wisdom of the gods was found
 in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father,
 your father the king made him chief of the
 magicians, sorcerors, Chaldeans, dream inter-
 preters,¹² since an exceptional spirit and knowl-
 edge and understanding, interpreting dreams
 and solving riddles and untying knots was found
 in this Daniel, whose name the king changed to
 Belteshazzar. Now, let Daniel be called and he
 will relate the meaning.”

¹³ Then Daniel was brought before the king.
 The king spoke, saying to Daniel: “You must be
 Daniel, who is of the exiles of Judah, whom my
 father the king brought from Judah.”¹⁴ And I
 have heard about you that there is a spirit of
 the gods in you, and illumination and under-
 standing and exceptional wisdom has been
 found in you.¹⁵ *Now, the wise men, the sorcerors
 were brought before me in order to read this
 writing and to make known to me its interpreta-
 tion, but none of them could relate the interpreta-
 tion of the matter.*¹⁶ *And I have heard about
 you that you can make interpretations and untie
 knots:* Now, if you can read the writing and

להודעתני ארגונא תלכב
והמונכא די דהבא על צואר
ותלתא במלכותא תשלט:

באדין ענה דניאל ואמר
קדם מלכא מתנתך לך להויך
ונבזבזת בִּיתְךָ לאחרן הב
ברם כתבא אקרא למלכא
ופשרא אהודענה: **דנה כתבא**
די רשים מנא מנא תקל
ופרסיך: ודנה פשר מלתא
אנתה מלכא אלהא עליא
מלכותא ורבותא ויקרא
זהדרה יהב לנבכדנצר אבוך:
ומן רבותא די יהב לה כל
עממיא אמיא ולשניא הוּוּ
זאעיך ודחליך מן קדמוהי די
הוּוּ צבא הוא קטל ודי הוּוּ
צבא הוּוּ מחא ודי הוּוּ צבא
הוּוּ מרים ודי הוּוּ צבא הוּוּ
משפיל: וכדי רם לבבה ורוחה
תקפת להזדה הנחת מן כרסא
מלכותה ויקרה העדין מנה:
ומן בני אנשא טריד ולבבה עם
חיותא שוי ועם ערדיא מדורה
עשבא כתורין יטעמונה ומטל
שמיא גשמה יצטבע עד די
ידע די שליט אלהא עליא
במלכות אנשא ולמן די יצבה
יהקים עליה: ואנתה ברה
בלשאצר לא השפלת לבבך
כל קבל די כל דנה ידעת: ועל
מרא שמיא התרוממת
ולמאניא די ביתה היתיו קדמך
ואנתה ורברבניך שגלתך
ולחנתך חמרא שתין בהון
ולאלהי כספא ודהבא נחשא
פרזלא אעא ואבנא די לא חזין
ולא שמעיין ולא ידעיין שבתא

make its interpretation known to me, you will wear purple and a golden necklace on your neck and you will have authority as the third in the kingdom.”

¹⁷ Then, Daniel spoke, saying to the king: “Keep your gifts and give ¹the ¹presents of your ¹house ¹to another. But I will read the writing to the king and I will make the interpretation known to him. ²⁵ This is the writing that was recorded: MN? TQL and PRS. And this is the interpretation of the matter: ¹⁸ you, O king, *the Highest God gave the kingship and greatness and honour and glory to your father Nebuchadnezzar.* ¹⁹ And because of the greatness which he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled before him and feared him. He would kill whomever he wanted and keep whomever he wanted alive, and he would elevate whomever he wanted and he would humble whomever he wanted. ²⁰ But when his mind grew haughty and his his spirit grew strong in arrogance, he was taken down from his royal throne and his honour was removed from him. ²¹ And he was driven away from the human beings and his mind became like the animals and his dwelling was with the wild asses. They fed him grass like cattle and his body was washed by the dew of heaven until he came to know that the Highest God is authorized over the kingship of mankind and he sets whomever he wants over it. ²² But you, his son Belshazzar, did not humble your mind, although you knew all this. ²³ And you exalted yourself against the Lord of Heaven, and they brought the vessels of his house before you, and you and your nobles, *your concubines, and your consorts* were drinking wine from them, and you praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, who do not see and do not hear and do not know, but the god who has power over your breath and to

ולאלהא די נשמתך בידה וכל
 ארחתך לה לא הדרת: באדין
 מן קדמוהי שליח פסא די ידא
 וכתבא דנה רשים: **ודנה כתבא**
די רשים מנא מנא תקל
ופרסיין: דנה פשר מלתא מנא
 מנה אלהא מלכותך והשלמה:
 תקל תקילתה במאזניא
 והשתכחת חסיר: פרס פריסת
 מלכותך ויהיבת למדי ופרס:
 באדין אמר בלשאצר והלבישו
 לדניאל ארגונא והמונכא די
 דהבא על צוארה והכרוזו עלוהי
 די להוא שליט תלתא
 במלכותא: בה בליליא קטיל
 בלאשצר מלכא כשדיא:

whom belong all your ways you did not glorify.
²⁴ Then, a hand was sent from before him and
 this writing was recorded. ²⁵ **And this is the**
writing that was recorded: MN? MN? TQL and
PRSYW. ²⁶ This is the interpretation of the
 matter: MN?: God has counted your reign and
 completed it. ²⁷ TQL: you have been weighed
 in the balance and found wanting. ²⁸ PRS: your
 kingdom has been divided and given to Media
 and Persia.” ²⁹ Then, Belshazzar gave the com-
 mand, and they clothed Daniel in purple, and a
 golden necklace was on his neck, and they pro-
 claimed about him that he would be authorized
 as the third in the kingdom. ³⁰ That night, King
 Belshazzar the Chaldaean was killed.

2 Internal Reconstruction

Our reconstructed text contains the following tensions and inconsistencies:

- a) ‘King’ follows ‘Belshazzar’ in vv. 1,30 but precedes it in v. 9.
- b) V. 2 mentions Nebuchadnezzar as having taken the vessels from the palace (or temple) in Jerusalem, while v. 3 omits Nebuchadnezzar but specifies that it is the palace of the house of God.
- c) The name Belshazzar is spelled **בלשאצר**, corresponding to its etymology, in most of the story, but as **בלאשצר** in v. 30.
- d) The name Nebuchadnezzar is spelled plene with *waw* in v. 2 but defectively in v. 11.
- e) Especially without the ‘consorts and concubines’ intervening, ‘they drank from them. They drank wine’ in vv. 3–4 is repetitive (cf. the lack of repetition in Daniel’s recapitulation, v. 23).
- f) Belshazzar seems to commit two separate sins: profaning the Temple vessels and praising all the idols but not the true God. The writing on the wall takes place immediately (‘at that moment’, v. 5), but only after the second sin.
- g) The promised rank is spelled as **תלתי** in v. 7 but as **תלתא** in 16,29.
- h) The expression ‘his appearance changed’ uses the *pe’al* verb **שנה** in vv. 6,9, but the *itpa’al* verb **אשתנה** in v. 10.

- i) The queen opens her speech to the king with the customary 'O king, live forever!' (v. 10), but Daniel does not (v. 17).
- j) V. 11b repeats the subject at the end, which is syntactically odd.
- k) In the queen's speech, v. 12 partially repeats v. 11. Moreover, v. 12 continues the listing of Daniel's qualities that had already been completed in v. 11, resulting in a back-and-forth structure of listing of qualities (11a), appointment by the king (11b), further listing of qualities (12a) and naming by the king (12b). In our reconstructed archetype, Belshazzar repeats the first list of qualities (v. 14), but not the second (prompting the harmonizing addition in MT which is absent from OG).
- l) The mention of the name Belteshazzar in v. 12 is isolated.
- m) The end of v. 13 reads as an afterthought.
- n) Daniel's recapitulation of the opening scene awkwardly follows the announcement of the interpretation in the reconstructed archetype of v. 17, which is repeated in v. 26.

Together with Dan 6:1 (corresponding to OG 5:31), v. 30 clearly forms a transition between Dan 5 and Dan 6. In the larger context, it marks the transfer of the empire from the Chaldeans to the Medes. The etymologically incorrect spelling of Belshazzar (Akkadian: *Bēl-šarra-ušur* 'Bel, protect the king!') as בלאשצר instead of the more usual בלשאצר (c) suggests that v. 30 was secondarily added to connect the originally independent tales.¹¹ V. 30 is also linguistically notable for its double use of the preposition in the expression בה בליליא 'in that night'. This construction is common in later Aramaic (e.g. Targum Ester 6:1) but contrasts with the more common construction in Biblical Aramaic, where the preposition is not repeated, as in בה שעתא 'at that moment' (not בה בשעתא**). The only other occurrence is בה בדניאל 'in this Daniel' in Dan 5:12, on which see below.

Based on OG, we have reconstructed a text where Daniel's summary of the events interrupts the reading of the words and their interpretation (n). This results in a clear example of resumptive repetition. It stands to reason that the intervening material was added. A theological motivation can be identified in the desire to explicitly blame Belshazzar for not worshipping the true God, an offense that was originally left implicit or not intended.

A number of inconsistencies cluster in the pericope centered on the queen (vv. 10–12). One of these concerns the spelling of Nebuchadnezzar (d). Given the awkward repetition of the subject in that clause (j), however, the phrase מלכא נבכדנצר אבוק 'King Nebuchadnezzar, your father' is probably a later

11 Thus also Haag, *Errettung Daniels*, 34; Haag, "Menschensohn," 138.

addition meant to connect the two kings (see below).¹² But the inconsistency in the form of the verb ‘to change’ (h) remains, as does the inconsistent use of the greeting formula (i) and the isolated use of the name Belshazzar (l). This passage also features a number of linguistic archaisms that are not paralleled elsewhere in Daniel: the use of two perfects in the expression *ענת ... ואמרה* ‘she spoke, saying’, the use of the bare infinitives *מפשר* ‘interpreting’, *אחויית* ‘relating’, and *משרא* ‘loosening’, and the formally distinct Jussive *יתקרי* ‘let him be called’.¹³ As this passage is not integral to the plot, the simplest solution is to identify vv. 10–12 as secondary. Within this interpolation, v. 12a seems to be later than vv. 10–11,12b, as shown by the repetition and muddled structure that now characterizes the queen’s combined speech (k).

Most of Belshazzar’s remaining words in vv. 13b–14, which are dependent on v. 11 and partially reflected in OG (unlike vv. 15–16a, which are totally absent from OG), seem to be from the same hand as vv. 10–11,12b. As in the discussion of Dan 2, I will mark this early secondary layer as black, roman strikethrough text in the overview below in order to distinguish it from the later additions given as lightface (Aramaic) or italics (English) strikethrough text. The awkward addition *די יהוד מן יהוד אבי מן* ‘whom my father the king brought from Judah’ (m) again stands out as an even later interpolation,¹⁴ which quite probably reflects the same association of Belshazzar with Nebuchadnezzar responsible for the double subject in v. 11b.

With the queen’s speech and Daniel’s recapitulation identified as secondary, vv. 2–3 now appear isolated, containing the only references to Nebuchadnezzar and the Temple vessels. The redundancy of Belshazzar’s double sin (f),¹⁵ for which he is only punished once—immediately after the second sin—together with the repetition of ‘they drank’ (e) suggests that these verses, too, are secondary. Leaving these verses out (including the last two words of v. 1, which form the set-up for Belshazzar’s fatal intoxication) once again results in a perfectly legible and coherent text. Given the slight inconsistency in how the vessels are described (b), v. 2aβ may have been rewritten or interpolated as an extra identification of Nebuchadnezzar as Belshazzar’s father, as in vv. 11,13.

Following the same reasoning, we may be suspicious of the scene where the mantic experts are summoned and fail to read the writing. Admittedly, excising vv. 7–9 makes the story less compelling, as it is no longer established that the writing is nigh-impossible to read. It also eliminates the format of the court

12 See also the more detailed argumentation in Suchard, “Historical (In)accuracy.”

13 Suchard.

14 Cf. Kratz, *Translatio imperii*, 86.

15 Cf. Wills, *Jew in the Court*, 122–23.

contest. But if these verses are from another hand than the remaining core of the story, that explains two linguistic inconsistencies: the term used in the reward that is offered (g) and the phrase 'King Belshazzar' (a).¹⁶ We are left with a coherent story which is similar in structure to the reconstructed form of the dream interpretation in Dan 4: the king receives an omen and someone is called in to explain it to him.

Reconstructed Text of Dan 5

בלשאצר מלכא עבד לחם רב
 לרברבנוהי וחמרא שתה:
 בלשאצר אמר בטעם חמרא
 להיתיה למאני דהבא וכספא
 די הנפק נבוכדנצר אבוהי מן
 היכלא די בירושלם וישתון
 בהון מלכא ורברבנוהי: באדין
 היתיו מאני דהבא די הנפקו
 מן היכלא די בית אלהא די
 בירושלם ואשתיו בהון מלכא
 ורברבנוהי: אשתיו חמרא
 ושבו לאלהי דהבא וכספא
 נחשא פרזלא אעא ואבנא:
 בה שעתה נפקו אצבען די יד
 אנש וכתבן לקבל נברשתא
 על גירא די כתל היכלא די
 מלכא ומלכא חזה פס ידה די
 כתבה: אדין מלכא זיוהי שנו
 ורעינהי יבהלונה וקטרי חרצה
 משתרין וארכבתה דא לדא
 נקשן: קרא מלכא בחיל
 להעלה לאשפיא כשדיא
 וגזריא ענה מלכא ואמר
 לחכימי בבל די כל אנש די
 יקרה כתבה דנה ופשרה
 יחונני ארגונא ילבש והמונכא
 די דהבא על צוארה ותלתני

5 ¹ King Belshazzar prepared a great feast for his nobles *and was drinking wine.* ² *Belshazzar ordered under the influence of the wine to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the palace that was in Jerusalem so that the king and his nobles could drink from them.* ³ *Then they brought the golden vessels that they had taken from the palace of the house of God that was in Jerusalem and the king and his nobles drank from them.* ⁴ *They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.* ⁵ *At that moment, fingers of a human hand came out and they started writing in front of the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the hand as it wrote.* ⁶ *Then the king's appearance changed and his thoughts terrified him and the joints in his loins were loosened and his knees were knocking together.* ⁷ *The king cried out with force to bring in the sorcerers, Chaldeans, and dream interpreters.* ⁸ *The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon that "anyone who can read this writing and can relate its meaning to me will wear purple and a golden necklace will be on his neck and he will have authority as the third in the kingdom."*

16 The noun תלתי seems to contain the same *-ī suffix used to form ארעי 'bottom' and עלי 'upper chamber', both nouns indicating places. Hence, it could well mean 'third part (of the kingdom)' and already reflect the harmonizing interpretation based on Dan 6 also seen in OG's translation. On 'King Belshazzar', cf. Chapter 3, Note 10.

במלכותא ישראל: אדין עללין
 כל חכימי מלכא ולא כהלין
 כתבא למקרא ופשרא
 להודעה למלכא: אדין מלכא
 בלשאצר שגיא מתבהל
 וזיוהי שנין עלוהי ורברבנוהי
 משתבשין: מלכתא לקבל
 מלי מלכא ורברבנוהי לביית
 משתיא עללת ענת מלכתא
 ואמרת מלכא לעלמין חיי אל
 יבהלוך רעיונד וזיוך אל
 ישנתו: איתי גבר במלכותך
 די רוח אלהין קדישין בה
 וביומי אבוד נהירו ושכלתנו
 וחכמה כחכמת אלהין
 השתכחת בה ומלכא
 נבכדנצר אבוד רב חרטמין
 אשפין כשדאין גורין הקימה
 אבוד מלכא: כל קבל די
 רוח יתירה ומנדע ושכלתנו
 מפשר חלמין ואחזית אחידן
 ומשרא קטרין השתכחת בה
 בדניאל די מלכא שם שמה
 בלשאצר כען דניאל יתקרי
 ופשרה יחזה:

באדין דניאל העל קדם
 מלכא ענה מלכא ואמר
 לדניאל אנתה הוא דניאל
 די מן בני גלותא די יהוד די
 היתי מלכא אבי מן יהוד:
 ושמעת עליך די רוח אלהין
 בך ונהירו ושכלתנו וחכמה
 יתירה השתכחת בך: כען הן
 תוכל כתבא למקרא ופשרה
 להודעתני ארגונא תלבש
 והמונכא די דהבא על צוארך
 ותלתא במלכותא תשלט:
 באדין ענה דניאל ואמר
 קדם מלכא כתבא אקרא
 למלכא ופשרא אהודענה:

⁹ Then, all the king's wise men each came in, but none of them could read the writing and make the interpretation known to the king. Then, King Belshazzar was greatly terrified and his appearance was changing over him and his nobles were dismayed.¹⁰ On account of the words of the king and his nobles, the queen came in to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying: "O king, live forever! Don't let your thoughts terrify you, don't let your appearance be changed!"¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of holy gods, and in the days of your father, illumination and understanding and wisdom like wisdom of the gods was found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king made him chief of the magicians, sorcerers, Chaldeans, dream interpreters,¹² since an exceptional spirit and knowledge and understanding, interpreting dreams and solving riddles and untying knots was found in this Daniel, whose name the king changed to Belteshazzar. Now, let Daniel be called and he will relate the meaning."

¹³ Then Daniel was brought before the king. The king spoke, saying to Daniel: "You must be Daniel, who is of the exiles of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah."¹⁴ And I have heard about you that there is a spirit of the gods in you, and illumination and understanding and exceptional wisdom has been found in you.¹⁶ Now, If you can read the writing and make its interpretation known to me, you will wear purple and a golden necklace on your neck and you will have authority as the third in the kingdom."

¹⁷ Then, Daniel spoke, saying to the king: "I will read the writing to the king and I will make the interpretation known to him."²⁵ This

דנה כתבא די רשים מנא
 תקל ופרס: ודנה פשר מלתא
 אנתה מלכא על מרא שמיא
 התרוממת ולמאניא די
 ביתה היתיו קדמיך ואנתה
 ורברבניך חמרא שתין בהוך
 ולא להי כספא ודהבא נחשא
 פרזלא אעא ואבנא די לא
 חזין ולא שמעיין ולא ידעיין
 שבהת ולא להא די נשמתך
 בידה וכל ארחתך לה לא
 הדרת: באדין מן קדמוהי
 שליח פסא די ידא וכתבא
 דנה רשים: דנה פשר מלתא
 מנא מנה אלהא מלכותך
 והשלמה: תקל תקילתה
 במאזניא והשתכחת חסיר:
 פרס פריסת מלכותך ויהבת
 למדי ופרס: באדין אמר
 בלשאצר והלבישו לדניאל
 ארגונא והמונכא די דהבא על
 צוארה והכרוזו עלוהי די להוא
 שליט תלתא במלכותא: בה
 בליליא קטיל בלאשצר
 מלכא כשדיא:

is the writing that was recorded: MN? TQL and PRS. And this is the interpretation of the matter: ¹⁸ *you, O king,* ²³ *exalted yourself against the Lord of Heaven, and they brought the vessels of his house before you, and you and your nobles were drinking wine from them, and you praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, who do not see and do not hear and do not know, but the god who has power over your breath and to whom belong all your ways you did not glorify.* ²⁴ *Then, a hand was sent from before him and this writing was recorded.* ²⁶ *This is the interpretation of the matter:* MN?: God has counted your reign and completed it. ²⁷ TQL: you have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. ²⁸ PRS: your kingdom has been divided and given to Media and Persia.” ²⁹ Then, Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel in purple, and a golden necklace was on his neck, and they proclaimed about him that he would be authorized as the third in the kingdom. ³⁰ *That night, King Belshazzar the Chaldean was killed.*

3 Conclusion

Our methodology has produced a very pared-down base layer. Interestingly, it is quite different from the OG Preface, unlike the similarly brief reconstruction by Haag.¹⁷ This supports the view that the Preface is an abbreviation of a more developed version of the text, not an early form of it.

As in other chapters, we can identify different layers in the great deal of text that appears secondary. The queen’s speech and its summary by Belshazzar in vv. 10–14 start with the reassuring ‘Don’t let your thoughts terrify you, don’t let your appearance be changed!’ This refers back to “Then the king’s appearance

¹⁷ Haag, *Errettung Daniels*, 56.

changed and his thoughts terrified him' in v. 6, but the 'thoughts' are not present in v. 9. This difference suggests that the additional material in vv. 10–14 was added before the verses mentioning the wise men, vv. 7–9. In this way, the queen's words directly follow the king's reaction in v. 6. V. 10 mentions the king's nobles, who are present in v. 9 but not in v. 6, but this could be a later harmonization. On the other hand, the more physical aspects of the king's reaction in v. 6 are not mentioned by the queen and could be seen as a later elaboration. The queen may have been introduced to the story to provide a backstory for Daniel, who is now established as a renowned wise man and Judahite exile. The poor integration of the phrases מלכא נבכדנצר אבוך 'King Nebuchadnezzar, your father' and די היתי מלכא אבי מן יהוד 'whom my father the king brought from Judah' in this layer show that it did not originally name Belshazzar's father as Nebuchadnezzar (understandably so, as Belshazzar was historically the son of Nabonidus and not related to Nebuchadnezzar). It is thus also likely that these additions were made before that of vv. 2–3, which are thoroughly connected with the historical Nebuchadnezzar. Alternatively, the mention of Nebuchadnezzar as Belshazzar's father in v. 2 could be an interpolation within an interpolation. Daniel's recapitulation in vv. 23–24, in turn, incorporates the Temple vessels of vv. 2–3 and makes explicit that Belshazzar's sin ultimately comes down to arrogant neglect of the Lord of Heaven, who is now also named as the source of the writing hand. It cannot be established with certainty whether vv. 2–3 and 23–24 originated with the same writer or whether vv. 2–3 are older. The failure of the other experts to read the writing is not mentioned in the recapitulating vv. 23–24, suggesting that the scene in vv. 7–9 was only added afterwards. Finally, the closing line in v. 30 shows a different spelling of Belshazzar than the scene with the wise men (v. 9) and the profanation of the vessels scene (v. 2). The occurrence of this spelling of Belshazzar in the apocalypses of Dan 7(1) and 8(1) suggest that it was added quite late. Interestingly, the similarly late construction בַּהּ 'in that' is used in v. 12a as well as v. 30. V. 12a, which mentions dream interpretation and the name Belteshazzar, connects Dan 5 to Dan 4, as v. 30 connects Dan 5 to the following Dan 6. V. 12a also contains the expression רוּחַ יְתִירָה 'an exceptional spirit', which is otherwise only found in Dan 6:4 (spelled רוּחַ יְתִירָא there, possibly indicating that an adverb is meant, roughly translatable as 'he was exceptionally spirited'). Hence, both verses may well be attributed to the redactor who joined these chapters together.