The Verse Division at Dan 11:23-24

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Introduction

There is a question as to how to translate the end of Dan 11:23 and first part of vs. 24. The passage reads as follows:

"After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power. (24) When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did." (Dan 11:23-24)

The problem is that the second word in the Hebrew of vs. 24--as the text is now divided--has the particle *û-* ("and"), while the first word does not. The second word of a verse could take the particle in question, as for example in the last part of vs. 24 ("'. . . he will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers'" [lit. "plunder and loot and wealth"]), but this is not its function on the second word of vs. 24. Often the particle in question is used to start a new clause.

In the present paper I show that the particle *û-* ("and") in *ûbᵉmišmannê mᵉdînâ* (lit. "and in [the] rich[est part]s of a province") does indeed start a new clause, that it is not the second word of vs. 24 but the first, and that the whole problem consists of nothing more than a misplaced verse division. As currently divided the passage reads:

Hebrew

wᵉᶜāṣam bimᵉᶜaṭ-gôy (24) bᵉšalwâ ûbᵉmišmannê mᵉdînâ yābōᵓ

English

And he will grow strong with a few people. (24) In [times of] peace and into the rich[est part]s of a province he will come. . . . (literal rendering)

I suggest dividing it as follows:

Hebrew

wᵉᶜāṣam bimᵉᶜaṭ-gôy bᵉšalwâ (24) ûbᵉmišmannê mᵉdînâ yābōᵓ

English

And he will grow strong with a few people in [times of] peace. (24) And he will enter the rich[est part]s of a province. . . . (literal rendering)

Evidence from Other Versions

The fact that there is a problem in the Hebrew of Dan 11:23-24 can be seen from the variation among translations at this point. Commonly available versions both in English and in other familiar modern languages fall within four main classes.

Table
Summary Of Versions

Class	Verse Division Comes	*bᵉšalwâ* Modifies	*û-* Marks
1	Before *bᵉšalwâ*	"province" (vs. 24)	Conjunction
2	Before *bᵉšalwâ*	"invade" (vs. 24)	New thought
3	Before *bᵉšalwâ*	"invade" (vs. 24)	Emphasis
4	After *bᵉšalwâ*	"establish himself" (vs. 23)	New thought

Versions that illustrate category 1--where the division between vss. 23 and 24 comes before *bᵉšalwâ*, *bᵉšalwâ* is associated with "'province'" (*mᵉdînâ*, vs. 24), and the particle *û-* on the following word (*ûbᵉmišmannê*) functions as a simple conjunction--include: the Greek translation of Theodotian,[1] the Latin Vulgate,[2] Douay-Rhiems,[3] and a Spanish translation of 1977.[4] Here I quote only Douay-Rhiems.

> And after friendships, he will deal deceitfully with him: and he shall go up and shall overcome with a small people. (24) And he shall enter into rich [*bᵉšalwâ*] and plentiful [*ûbᵉmišmannê*] cities: and he shall do that which his fathers never did, nor his fathers' fathers: . . . (Douay-Rhiems)

Occupying middle ground between categories 1 and 2 is the Italian version of Diodati.[5] The word modified by *bᵉšalwâ* is "'invade'" (*yābōʾ*, lit. "enter," vs. 24), but the particle *û-* on the following word (*ûbᵉmišmannê*) is translated as a conjunction. The sense in this case is roughly:

> "He will enter in [a time of] repose, and in the [most] prosperous places of the province, and he will do things that . . ."

Versions that illustrate category 2--where a verse division is placed before *bᵉšalwâ*, *bᵉšalwâ* is associated with the word "'invade'" (*yābōʾ*, lit. "enter," vs. 24), and the particle *û-* on the following word (*ûbᵉmišmannê*) is not translated as a conjunction--include: the Croatian translation of Daničić and Karadžić,[6] a Danish translation of 1979,[7] a Dutch translation of 1979,[8] the French translation of Segond,[9] a German translation of 1942,[10] a Norwegian translation of 1978,[11] a Portugese translation of 1969,[12] the Jerusalem Bible,[13] the Modern Language Bible,[14] Moffat,[15] the New American Standard Bible,[16] the New International Version,[17] and the Revised Standard Version.[18] Typical of this group is the Jerusalem Bible, now quoted.

> Still conspiring, he will go from treachery to treachery, ever growing stronger despite the smallness of his following. (24) In his own time [*bᵉšalwâ*] he will invade the richest [*ûbᵉmišmannê*] provinces, acting as his fathers or his fathers' fathers never acted, . . . (Jerusalem Bible)

Versions that illustrate category 3--where a verse division comes before *bᵉšalwâ*, *bᵉšalwâ* is associated with the word "'invade'" (*yābōʾ*, lit. "enter," vs. 24), and the particle *û-* on the

following word (*ûbᵉmišmannê*) is translated in a way that marks emphasis--include: the Jewish Publication Society translation of 1917,[19] the New King James Version,[20] and the American Standard Version of 1901.[21] To illustrate the characteristics of this group I quote the New King James Version.

> "And after the league [is made] with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small [number of] people. (24) "He shall enter peaceably [*bᵉšalwâ*], even into the richest places of [*ûbᵉmišmannê*] the province; and he shall do [what] his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers: . . . (New King James Version)

To my knowledge only the New English Bible illustrates category 4. In NEB the last sentence of vs. 23 includes *bᵉšalwâ*, making that the last word of vs. 23 instead of the first word in vs. 24, *bᵉšalwâ* is associated with "'establish himself'" (*ā̄ṣam*, lit. "be mighty," vs. 23), and the particle *û-* on the following word (*ûbᵉmišmannê*) indicates a break in the thought rather than being translated as a conjunction or marker of emphasis. I now quote Dan 11:23-24 from the New English Bible.[22]

> He will enter into fradulent alliances and, although the people behind him are but few, he will rise to power and establish himself in time of peace [*bᵉšalwâ*]. He will overrun the richest districts of [*ûbᵉmišmannê*] the province and succeed in doing what his fathers and forefathers failed to do, . . . (New English Bible)

Other solutions to the problem of how to translate the opening words of vs. 24 include those of the Greek Septuagint (as opposed to Theodotian) and the Syriac Peshitta. The Septuagint translates Hebrew *bᵉšalwâ* as Greek *exapina* "suddenly," which is quite free.[23] The Peshitta, on the other hand, does not translate the word in question at all.[24] Furthermore, it places the verse division earlier than most other versions--immediately after "the people behind him are but few" (NEB, above). The solution I prefer, and the one which best renders the Hebrew text (as opposed to the massoretic accents) is that of the New English Bible.

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia

The editors of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* acknowledge that a problem exists in the text of Dan 11:23-24, one result of which is the variety of renderings documented above. Their note in the textual apparatus to vs. 24 reads as follows: "24[a-a] *prb l* 'ב 'ובש; *al cj* ב 'ב *c* 23."

The first suggestion offered by this note ("*prb l* 'ב 'ובש") is that one should probably (prb) read (l) the Hebrew as *ûbᵉšalwâ bᵉmišmannê mᵉdînâ* (lit. "And in [times of] peace he will come into the rich[est part]s of the province . . .'). That is, one should take the particle *û-* "and" away from the second word in the verse (e.g., *bᵉšalwâ ûbᵉmišmannê mᵉdînâ*) and transfer it to the first word in the verse (e.g., *ûbᵉšalwâ bᵉmišmannê mᵉdînâ*). This would be one way to get the clause to make sense.

The second suggestion ("*al cj* ב 'ב *c 23*") is the one supported here and implemented in the New English Bible. The editors of the Hebrew text point out that others (al) join (cj) *bᵉšalwâ* with (c) vs. 23. If this alternative is accepted, it is not necessary to change the consonantal text of

the passage at all. What moves over is not a letter, as in the first case, but a massoretic punctuation mark used to show the traditional point at which each verse ends.[25]

A third alternative would be to allow the incompatibility to remain, i.e., to leave both the particle *û-* and the massoretic end-of-verse marker where they are. A majority of versions do this and attempt to translate around what they view as a minor problem. What we have been discussing is a minor problem, but allowing it to remain is not a solution. The New English Bible has taken the correct approach by overriding an unfortunate decision about where to divide verses made during the middle ages by otherwise highly competent Jewish scholars.

Implications of Starting Vs. 24
After the Word *bᵉšalwâ*

More is at issue than a decision as to where two verses should be separated. If, as I maintain, *bᵉšalwâ* is properly the last word of vs. 23 instead of the first word of vs. 24, then the symmetry between vss. 21 and 23 is emphasized by that fact and vs. 22--midway between two chiastically paired uses of *bᵉšalwâ*--is confirmed in its role as the middle verse of the prophecy's overall chiasm. Such an analysis of the chapter's structure rests on evidence drawn from all parts of Dan 10-12 and does not rise or fall with the changes proposed here.[26] But when the text is divided at vss. 23 and 24 in such a way as to make the best sense syntactically, the results of doing so do lend support to that chiastic analysis.

Note: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.

[1]Greek (Theodotian): *Septuaginta*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Deutche Bibelgesell-schaft, 1979): *kai apo tōn sunanameixeōn pros auton poiēsei dolon kai anabēsetai kai huperischusei autou en oligō ethnei. (24) kai en euthēnia kai en piosin chorais hēxei kai poiēsei ha ouk epoiēsan oi pateres autou kai oi pateres tōn paterōn autou: . . .*

[2]Latin (Vulgate): *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1969): *et post amicitias cum eo faciet dolum et ascendet et superabit in modico populo (24) abundantes et uberes urbes ingredietur et faciet quae non fecerunt patres eius et patres patrum eius . . .*

[3]English (Douay-Rheims): *The Holy Bible* (n.d.).

[4]Spanish (Reina-Valera, rev. 1977): *Santa Biblia* (Barcelona: CLIE, 1977): "Después de concertarse con él, obrará con engaño, se pondrá en marcha y saldrá vencedor con poca gente. (24) Estando la provincia en paz y en abundancia, entrará y hará lo que no hicieron sus padres, ni los padres de sus padres; . . ."

[5]Italian (Diodati): *La Sacra Bibbia* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, n.d.): "E dopo l' accordo fatto con quell' [altro], egli procederà con frode, e salirà, e si fortificherà con poca gente. (24) Egli entrerà nel riposo, e ne' luoghi grassi della provincia, e farà cose, che i suoi padri, nè i padri de' suoi padri non avranno mai fatte: . . ."

[6]Croatian: *Biblija/Sveto Pismo* (London: Biblijsko Društvo, 1973): "Jer udruživši se s njim učinće prijevaru, i došavši nadvladaće s malo naroda. (24) I doći će mirno u rodna mjesta u zemlji, i učinće što ni ocevi njegovi ni ocevi otaca njegovijeh ne učiniše, . . ."

[7]Danish: *Bibelen* (København: Danske Bibelselskab, 1979): "Så snart man har sluttet forbund med ham, øver han svig; han drager frem og bliver staerk ved en håndfuld folk. (24) Uventet falder han ind i de frugtbareste egne og gør, hvad hans faedre eller faedres faedre ikke gjorde; . . ."

[8]Dutch: *Bijbel* (Haarlem: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 1979): "En wanneer men met hem een verbond heeft aangegaan, zal hij bedrog plegen; zo zal hij omhoog komen en sterk worden, met weinig volk. (24) Onverhoeds zal hij in de vruchtbaarste streken van het landschap komen, en doen wat zijn vaderen noch zijn voorvaderen gedaan hebben: . . ."

[9]French (Segond): *La Sainte Bible*, rev. ed. (Paris, 1917): "Après qu'on se sera joint à lui, il usera de tromperie; il se mettra en marche, et il aura le dessus avec peu de monde. (24) Il entrera, au sein de la paix, dans les lieux les plus fertiles de la province; il fera ce que n'avaient pas fait ses pères, ni les pères de ses pères; . . ."

[10]German (1942): *Die Heilige Schrift* (Zürich: Zwingli-Bibel, 1962): "Nach der Befreundung mit ihm handelt er tückisch; er zieht heran und wird mächtig mit wenig Volk. (24) Unversehens dringt er in die fruchtbarsten Gegenden einer Landschaft ein und tut, was weder seine Väter noch seine Vorväter getan."

[11]Norwegian: *Bibelen* (Leeuwarden: Norske Bibelselskap, 1978): "Etter at han har sluttet forbund, farer han med svik. Han drar ut, og med få folk vinner han herredømmet. (24) Uventet gjør han innfall i de mest fruktbare bygdene i landet og gjør slikt som verken fedrene hans eller deres fedre har gjort. . . ."

[12]Portugese: *A Bíblia Sagrada* (Brasília: Sociedade Bíblica do Brasil, 1969): "Apesar da aliança com ele, usará de engano; subirá e se tornará forte com pouca gente. (24) Virá também caladamente aos lugares mais férteis da província, e fará o que nunca fizeram seus pais, nem os pais de seus pais; . . ."

[13]English (JB): *The Jerusalem Bible: Reader's Edition* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968).

[14]English (MLB): The Modern Language Bible, former called the Berkeley Version (see *The Layman's Parallel Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973]): "When a treaty has been made with him, he will practice deceit; thus he will with few people rise to great power. (24) Stealthily he will invade the fertile spots in a province and shall do what neither his fathers nor their ancestors did . . ."

[15]English (Moffat): *A New Translation of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935): "As soon as anyone becomes his ally, he starts to outwit him, for he rises to power by aid only of a small party; (24) when men are off their guard, he attacks the leaders in each province. He shall do what neither his fathers nor his fathers' fathers ever did, . . ."

[16]English (NASB): *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: Foundation Press, 1960): "'And after an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small [force of] people. (24) In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest [parts] of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; . .'"

[17]English (NIV): "After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power. (24) When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did."

[18]English (RSV): *The Holy Bible* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1952): "And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully; and he shall become strong with a small people. (24) Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province; and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his fathers' fathers have done, . . ."

[19]English (JPS): *The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917): "And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully; and he shall come up and become strong, with a little nation. (24) In time of security shall he come even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers: . . ."

[20]English (NKJV): *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (Nashville: Nelson, 1979).

[21]English (ASV): *The Holy Bible* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1901): "And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully; for he shall come up, and shall become strong, with a small people. (24) In time of security shall he come even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; . . ."

[22]English (NEB): *The New English Bible, with the Apocrypha* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971). It should be noted that the New English Bible only numbers verses at the beginning of paragraphs. The beginning of the new clause is not marked.

[23]Greek (LXX): *Septuaginta*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Deutche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979): *kai meta tēs diathēkēs kai dēmou suntagentos met' autou poiēsei pseudos kai epi ethnos ischuron en oligostō ethnei. (24) exapina erēmōsei polin kai poiēsei hosa ouk epoiēsan hoi pateres autou oude hoi pateres tōn paterōn autou: . . .*

[24]Syriac (Peshitta): *The Old Testament in Syriac*, part III, fasc. 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980): *wmn ᵓylyn dmštwtpyn lh nᶜbdwn ᶜlwhy nklᵓ wnsq wntqp bᶜmᵓ zᶜwrᵓ (24) wbšmynᵓ dmdyntᵓ. wnᶜdb mdm dlᵓ ᶜbdw ᵓbhwhy wᵓbhᵓ dᵓbhwhy.*

[25]According to S. Frensdorff, *The Massorah Magna, Part One: Massoretic Dictionary or The Massorah in Alphabetical Order*, pp. 18-19 (among those pages numbered from the left), "פ"ס=פסוק פוס Schluss des Verzes:. Es bezeichnet aber auch den Accent סילוק, s. Gen. 37,32. 38,17, 39,1. - Gen. 1,1. 3,10. 23.13. 27,42. und oft." The massoretic punctuation called *sôp pasûq* is indicated by an accent called *sillûq* (:) and means "end of verse."

[26]See Hardy, "Notes on the Chiastic Structure of Dan 10-12," in this issue of *Historicism*.