כל אנשי המלך לפי ספר דניאל

אבנר רמו

Arbinas the satrap of Lycia, in a Persian dress receiving emissaries. "Monument of the Nereids" Xanthus, Anatolia. 4th century BC. (British Museum)

The Book of Esther begins with:

ויהי בימי אחשורוש: הוא אחשורוש המלך מהדו ועד-כוש--שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה.

"**Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus--this is Ahasuerus who reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces**" (Est 1:1).

Efficient rule over such a vast empire, composed of many nations who spoke their unique languages, required the employment of a well-defined hierarchical satrap system and the support of an efficient administration. This system was designed to implement throughout the empire, the orders of the king, who reigned from one of his three capital cities, and for collecting the taxes from the periphery and then to deliver them to the center. Some aspects of this regime are described as follows:

ויקראו ספרי המלך בחדש הראשון, בשלושה עשר יום בו, ויכתב ככל-אשר-צוה המן אל אחשדרפני-המלך ואל-הפחות אשר על-מדינה ומדינה ואל-שרי עם ועם, מדינה ומדינה ככתבה ועם ועם כלשונו: בשם המלך אחשורש נכתב, ונחתם בטבעת המלך. ונשלוח ספרים ביד הרצים, אל-כל-מדינות המלך

"**Then were the king's scribes called in the first month, on the thirteenth day thereof, and there was written, according to all that Haman commanded, to the king's satraps, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the princes of every people; to every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and it was sealed with the king's ring. And letters were sent by posts to all the king's provinces**" (Est 3:12-13).

ויקראו ספרי-המלך בעת-ההיא בחדש השלישי הוא-חדש סיון, בשלושה ועשרים בו, ויכתב ככל-אשר-צוה מרדכי אל-היהודים ואל האחשדרפנים-והפחות ושרי המדינות אשר מהדו ועד-כוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה, מדינה ומדינה ככתבה ועם ועם כלשנו;

"Then were the king's scribes called at that time, in the third month, which is the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded concerning the Jews, even to the satraps, and the governors and princes of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, a hundred twenty and seven provinces, to every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language" (Est 8:9).

The Hebrew word **אחשדרפן** (*akhashdarpan*) is a loanword from the Old Persian *xšaçapāvan* (*khashathrapavan*) - "protector of the province". In Greek, this word was rendered as σατράπης, (*satrápēs*) - "satraps."

The Hebrew word **פחות** (*pakhoth*) had originated from the Akkadian *pakhatu* - "province" and means "provincial governors."

A similar description of the Persian government appears in the Book of Ezra:

ובשנת אחת לכורש מלך פרס, לכלות דבר-יהוה מפי ירמיה: העיר יהוה את-רוח כרש מלך-פרס, ויעבר-קול בכל-מלכותו, וגם-במכתב לאמר.

כה אמר, כרש מלך פרס-כל ממלכות הארץ נתן לי יהוה אלהי השמים;

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of YHWH by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, YHWH stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying: Thus said Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth had YHWH, the God of heaven, given me" (Ezr 1:1; see also: 2 Ch 36:22-23).

ויתנו את-דתי המלך לאחשדרפני המלך, ופחוות עבר הנהר;

"And they delivered the king's commissions to the king's satraps, and to the governors beyond the river" (Ezr 8:36).

ויד השרים והסגנים, היתה במעל הזה-ראשונה.

"**And the hand of the princes and rulers hath been first in this faithlessness" (Ezr 9:2).**

It is not clear whether **השרים והסגנים** - *"***princes and rulers**" are additional levels of the Satrap system or just Hebrew names for some of the satrap levels mention previously who's names are of Persian or Akkadian in origin.

We also find in the Bible other combinations such as: **פחות וסגנים** - *"***governors and rulers**" (Eze 23:6, 12, 23; see also: Jer 51:23, 28), and:

והשכרתי שריה וחכמיה פחותיה וסגניה וגבוריה

*"**And I will make drunk her princes and her wise men, her governors and her deputies, and her mighty men And I will make drunk her princes and her wise men, her governors and her deputies, and her mighty men" (Jer 51:57).**

The Hebrew word **סגן** (*segan*) apparently originated from the Akkadian *sakanu* - "prefect." The word transfer process could sometimes be associated with change in sound, and it appears that in this case we have a **ג** (g) - **כ** (k) velar exchange. However, we also find in the Book of Isaiah:

לך-בא אל-הַסַכַן הזה, על-שבנא אשר על-הבית.

"Go, get to to this <u>steward</u>, even to Shebna, who is over the house" (Is 22:15).

In the Book of Ezra we also find the name of another type of administrator:

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ויוציאם, כורש מלך פרס, על-יד מתרדת הגזבר;
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"Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer" (Ezr 1:8).

The Hebrew **גזבר** (*gizbar*) is also a loanword from the Old Persian, where it appears as *ganzabara* - "treasure-bearer." It appears that this loan process was associated with the deletion of a **נ** (n) letter.

In the Book of Esther there is no detailed information about the Persian judicial system. There are also no words from the Hebrew root **שפט** (sh,ph,t) - "to judge" in this book. Furthermore, we should notice that only one word of this root appear in all the biblical Aramaic texts (Ezr 7:25).

However we find in the Book of Esther the expression:

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כי-כן דבר המלך, לפני כל-ידעי דת ודין
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"for so was the king's manner toward all that knew <u>law and judgment</u>" (Est 1:13).

Similar expression appears in the Book of Psalms:

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כי-עשית משפטי ודיני; ישבת לכסא שופט צדק.
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"For You has maintained <u>my judgment and my justice</u>; You sat upon the throne as the righteous Judge" (Ps 9:5; see also Job 36:17).

This expression even has a biblical Aramaic counterpart:

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בידך מני שפטין ודינין די-להון דאנין (דינין) לכל-עמא די בעבר נהרה
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"In your hand, appoint <u>magistrates and judges</u>, who may <u>judge</u> all the people that are beyond the river" (Ezr 7:25).

Unlike the English translator who assumed that **שפטין ודינין** (*shaphtin vedayanin*) means **"magistrates and judges"** the Greek translator wrote here erroneously: "scribes and judges."

These verses indicate that in these books **דין** (*din*) and **דין** (*dayan*) appear to mean "judgment" and "judge" respectively, while the words **משפט** (*mishpat*) and **דת** (*dath*) mean "law."

The word **דת** (*dath*) appears also in the Aramaic (but not in the Hebrew) portion of the Book of Daniel: **כדת-מדי ופרס** - **"according to the law of the Medes and Persians"** (Dan 6:9, 13; see also: Dan 6:16). We also find in this book the Aramaic word **דינא** (*dina*) - **"judgement"** (Dan 7:10, 22, 26), but it refers only to Godly and not human judgment.

In her review of the Achaemenid Judicial system, Dr Magdalene indicated that the language used for the Achaemenid judicial and legal matters was Aramaic. Not unlike verse Ezr 8:36 the "royal edicts" were called: "*datu sa sarri*" and similarly to verse Ezr 7:25 "judges" were referred to as "*dayyanu*" (F. Rachel Magdalene. Acheamenid judicial and legal systems. Encycl Iranica 15:174-177, 2009).

Some details in the Book of Daniel indicate that at least in part it was composed near 165 BC. Therefor it is likely that the book was written by a scribe who had only a vestigial knowledge about the Babylonian empire. The writer of the Book of Daniel tells us that when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem in the third year to the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah (Dan 1:1; 605 BC; or the historical date of 597 BC) he took Daniel (among several other young men) to his court in Babylon, where he stayed at least until the death of King Nebuchadnezzar (562 BC). However, the close relationship between Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel as described in this book make the fact that there is no mention here of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its God's temple by this king (587 BC) incongruous. This scribe did not even know that the last Babylonian king was Nabonidus (and not Belshazzar), and that immediately after that Babylon became part of the realm of Cyrus the Great (and not of that of the non-historical figure: "Darius the Mede"). It is not even certain to what extent this scribe who lived in the Seleucid period was proficient in Hebrew or even in Aramaic.

In the Aramaic portion of the Book of Daniel we read:
נבוכדנצר מלכא, עבד צלם די-דהב, רומה אמין שתין, פתיה אמין שת; אקימה בבקעת דורא, במדינת בבל.

"**Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits; he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon**" (Dan 3:1).

An early Greek translator (but not Theodotion) wrote here: "In the eighteen year of Nabuchodonosor, when he was managing cities and regions and all who lived from India to Ethiopia, he also made a golden image. Its height was sixty cubits and its width was twelve cubits, and he set it up on the plain of the enclosure of the region of Babylonia."

It is not certain why this Greek version of this verse of the Book of Daniel is so different from the Massoretic Aramaic text. Furthermore, it is a fact that the Babylonian Empire never achieved such dimensions. However, we should notice that the Greek translator describes the Babylonian king in a setting that is similar to the one reserved in the Books of Esther and Ezra for the Persian kings. We could therefore expect that the description here of the government and administration of this Babylonian king would also bear similarity to that of the Persians.

Now we continue to read in the Book of Daniel:
ונבוכדנצר מלכא שלח למכנש לאחשדרפניא סגניא ופחותא אדרגזריא גדבריא דתבריא, תפתיא, וכל שלטני מדינתא-למתא לחנכת צלמא, די הקים נבוכדנצר מלכא.

"**Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up**" (Dan 3:2; see also: Dan 3:3).

Of the seven types of the king's officials mentioned here we can recognize without difficulties the initial triad: **אחשדרפניא** (*akhashdarpnaia*) - "**satraps**" **סגניא** (*signaia*) - "**prefects**" and **פחותא** (*pakhvatha*) - "**governors.**"

As there are frequent exchanges between the Hebrew letter ז (z) and the Aramaic letter ד (d), it is quite likely that **גְדָבְריא** (*gedavraia*) of verse Dan 3:2 is the same as the Hebrew **גִזְבְרים** (*gizbarim*) - **"treasurers"** (see Ezr 1:8).

However, to maintain the comparison to the Persian administration the Babylonian king would also need administrators that could fulfill the functions of:
ויעבר-קול בכל-מלכותו, וגם-במכתב לאמר - "**he made a proclamation throughout his entire kingdom, and put it also in writing**" (Ezr 1:1; see also: 2 Ch 36:22).

In the Aramaic portion of the Book of Daniel we find a description of an event related to the mantic Daniel that bears very close similarity to that described in regard to the mantic Joseph in verses 41:40-43 of the Book of Genesis:
באדין אמר בלשאצר, והלבשו לדניאל ארגונא, והמנוכא (והמניכא) די-דהבא על-צוארה;
והכרזו עלוהי, די-להוא שליט תלתא במלכותא.
"**Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with purple, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made proclamation concerning him, that he should rule as one of three in the kingdom**" (Dan 5:29).

The two "Aramaic" words: **הכרזו** (*hachrizu*) and **כרוזא** (*karoza*) (in Dan 3:4) do not appear anywhere else in the biblical Aramaic texts, nor do they have a counterpart in the Hebrew texts of the Bible. On the other hand they sound like the Greek word for "proclaim" - "*διακηρύσσουν*" (diak_irýssoun).

It is not unreasonable to assume that when the writer of the Book of Daniel aspired to achieve a more "authentic" description of the Babylonian kingdom he converted to the Aramaic language. R.T. McLay wrote in the introduction to his English translation of the Greek version of the Book of Daniel that the Greek translators "exhibit a flair for using similar sounds either in the Greek or to echo a source text." It is possible that when the writer of the Book of Daniel described the administrators of the Babylonian government, he assumed that his readers, who were more familiar with the Aramaic titles of the administrators of the Persian era, would find Greek-like titles as inauthentic. Therefore, the writer of the Book of Daniel had to look elsewhere for a title for a "proclaimer."

In verses Dan 3:2-3 we find a type of administrator named **דתבריא** (*dethveraia*) and its translation to the English as "**counsellors,**" appears as a pure speculation. However, if **דתבריא** (*dethveraia*) is a metathesis of **תדבריא** (*thedovraia*) - "proclaimers" (e.g. Ex 4:2; 2 Ki 18:26-27), then we identified one of the "missing" officials.

In the Hebrew portion of the book of Daniel we read: **אבל אגיד לך את-הרשום בכתב אמת** - "**Howbeit I will declare to you that which is <u>inscribed</u> in the writing of truth**" (Dan 10:21).

Apparently the English translation of this Hapax legomenon relied on the understanding of the Greek Theodotion. However, an earlier Greek translator assumed that the meaning of this word is "chief thing." Words from the same root appear also in the Aramaic portion of the Book of Daniel (but nowhere else), but their translation to Greek and English is inconsistent. While on

several occasions the English translated the Aramaic **רשים** (*reshim*) as "inscribe" or "write" (Dan 5:24, 25; 6:9, 10), in other locations it was translated to "signed" (Dan 6:11, 13, 14). Theodotion interpreted these words as "inscribed" "written" "registered" "published" "posted" or "put up." Earlier Greek translators mostly ignored these words or wrote: "established" or "made." We may therefore conclude that the Greek translators of the Book of Daniel were not familiar with Hebrew or Aramaic words from the root **רשם** (r,sh,m) and "translated" them according to the general content of the texts where they appear. It is not even certain that when the scribe of the Book of Daniel used these words in Hebrew or Aramaic he assumed that they mean: "to write (or to scribe)." If words from the root **רשם** (r,sh,m) do not mean "to write" then we need to look in the Book of Daniel for another word that will have such a meaning.

Herodotus (c 484-425 BC) was a native of Halicarnassus in Caria, Anatolia. In his "Histories" (v. 58) he states that Ionians refer to books as "*diphtheria*" a word which relates to the non-biblical Aramaic words דפתר (*daphthar*) - "a book" and דף - "a leaf of a book." Now if **תפתיא** (*thiphthaya*) of verses Dan 3:2-3) is the result of interchange between the dentals **ד** (d) and **ת** (th) then **תֻפתיא** (*thiphthaya*) could be a misspelled **דֻפתיא** (*diphthaya*) - "scribes." If this suggestion is correct then we identified the last "missing" official of Daniel's Babylonian administration.

The list of the officials of the Babylonian king also includes **אדרגזריא** (*adargazaria*) and this word was translated to Greek as "governors" and to English as "**judges**." It is not known on what either of these understandings is based.

Although, as mentioned above, the Bible hardly refers to the Persian judicial system, we read in the Book of Esther about Vashthi:
אחר הדברים האלה, כשך חמת המלך אחשורוש-זכר את-ושתי ואת אשר-עשתה, ואת אֲשֶׁר-נִגְזַר עליה.
"**After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was assuaged, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against he**r" (Est 2:1).

The Greek translator wrote here: "and how he condemned" which suggest the translator believed that instead of **אשר-נגזר** (*asher-nigzar*) we should read **אשר-גזר** (*asher-gazar*). We may speculate that the Aramaic scribe of the Book of Daniel was not fully proficient in Hebrew and assumed that **אֲשֶׁר-גזר** (*asher-gazar*) of the Book of Esther means "judge" and he "transliterated" this phrase (with a spelling error) to the Aramaic **אֲדַרגזריא** (*adargazaria*) - "judges."

Such a reliance of the writer of the Book of Daniel on words, expressions, and themes that appear in other biblical texts is not unique and as was pointed by Knibb it is a repeated pattern throughout the Book of Daniel (M A Knibb. The Book of Daniel in its context. In: (Eds.) J.J. Collins, P W Flint, and C Vanepps. The Book of Daniel: composition and reception. Supp Vetus Testamentum. Vol 83. Brill, Leiden. 2001. Pp 16-35.).

Although, eight fragmentary manuscript of the Book of Daniel have been identified at Qumran, only fragment seven of scroll 4QDan[a] (4Q112) contains some words of verses Dan 3:1-2. No fragments of verse Dan 3:3 were found. The preserved parts of this fragment mostly confirm the Massoretic version of these verses (there are three variants from the Massoretic version: an

"M:N" exchange, a hanging letter for a missing "D" letter, and a metathesis of the letters "BR"). However, this fragment does not throw any new light on the types of administrators that are found in the Massoretic version of these verses (E. Ulrich. Daniel Manuscripts from Qumran. Part 1: Preliminary Edition of 4QDan[a]. Bull Am School Orient Res 268:17-37. 1987).