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The Linguistic Connection between Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the »Abomination of Desolation« in the Greek Translations of the Book of Daniel

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It is generally agreed that parts of Daniel 7–12 were written sometime during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and that in chapter 11:40 the apocalyptic narrative changes from a symbolic retelling of Antiochus' reign to an incorrect prediction about the manner of his death. Antiochus died around 164 BCE, so this date provides a *terminus ante quem* for the latest additions to the second half of Daniel. In Daniel, the »little horn« symbolizes Antiochus. It may have been necessary to hide the identity of the »little horn«, if the Antiochene persecution was ongoing. The author(s) could comment upon the theological role of Antiochus by safely placing the narrative in the context of the Babylonian exile and discussing political events within dream sequences. I suggest that the Greek translations preserved some of this coding by indirectly alluding Antiochus' title instead of naming him outright. Other ancient sources parodied Antiochus' title more directly. Antiochus was mocked after his death by Polybius, who recorded that Antiochus was known as Ἐπιμανῆς; »*epimanes* (the mad one) instead of Epiphanes«. ¹ The epitomist of Second Maccabees also played with the epiphanic title, reserving the adjective ὑπερηφάν (and nounal form, the »arrogant one«) solely

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1 Polybius, *Hist.* 26.1.1. The derogatory term *epimanes* was preserved in Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 2.45c; 5.193d; 10.439a. Diodorus Siculus also reproduced Polybius' account. Diodorus accounted Antiochus' behaviour as »artlessly simple, foolish or mad in the eyes of his citizens«. See Diodorus Siculus, *Hist.* 29.32; 31.16 (these fragments are only preserved in Constantine VII's *Excerpta Historica*, a 10th century work). The oldest Greco-Roman first-hand preserved text is from Livy, *Hist.* 41.20 where he says that people considered Antiochus to be often playing »childish tricks« or »unquestionable insane«.

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for Antiochus. While Nicanor, who is the other major villain of Second Maccabees, shares various negative terms with Antiochus, ὑπερηφάν is employed against Antiochus alone.² In a similar way, the Greek versions of Daniel connect his »hidden« title with the »abomination of desolation«.

The phrase »abomination of desolation« occurs in Daniel 9:27 (שְׁקוּצִים מְשֻׁמִּים), 11:31 (הַשְׁקוּץ מְשֻׁמִּים) and 12:11 (שְׁקוּץ שִׁמְם). It also is referred to Daniel 8:13 as the »transgression that makes desolate« (הַפְּשָׁע שִׁמְם). It probably refers to a pagan altar built over the top of the original sacrificial altar, which presumably received the approval of Antiochus.³ Carol Newson suggests that the term »abomination« (שִׁמְם/שְׁקוּץ) is a pun on the name Baal Shamaim, the deity to

² See 2Macc 1:28; 5:21; 7:36; 9:4,7,11. This term has always applied to Antiochus, except for the first reference where Jonathan's prayer to God asks for punishment for those who »are insolent with pride«. This is later fulfilled in ch. 9 at Antiochus' death. Antiochus is twice described as ὑπερηφάνια in First Maccabees (arrogant, prideful, 1:21,24). The other two occurrences refer to the enemies of Mattathias (2:47,49). This clearly reworks Antiochus' epithet although in a less developed way than Second Maccabees. The lack of divine epiphanies in First Maccabees could be a reason why the book does not make full use of Antiochus' own claim to be *epiphanēs*. As such, *hyperphanēs* is not applied just to Antiochus and he has no derivative adjective in First Maccabees, sharing negative traits with others. The appellation ὑπερηφάνια may have been picked up by Jason of Cyrene or the epitomist of Second Maccabees from First Maccabees.

³ See Josephus, *Ant.* 12.253 cf. 1Macc 1:54,59; 2Macc 6:5. For discussion see, George H. van Kooten, »The Desecration of »The Most Holy Temple of All the World« in the »Holy Land«: Early Jewish and Early Christian Recollections of Antiochus' »Abomination of Desolation«, in *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology: Studies in Honour of Ed Noort*, ed. Jacques van Ruiten and J. Cornelis de Vos, VTSup 124 (Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2009): 291–316, 295, who details the references to the »abomination of desolation« in Daniel and compellingly concludes that all instances refer »to the desecration of the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus IV«. John J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 358, argues the conclusion »that the abomination was a pagan altar, fits best with the earliest testimonies and encounters no serious objection.« Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 41 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 144–148, in this regard is creative and argues that the abomination was »a structure of meteorites«. He manages this by examining the use of the terms »abominations«, »stones«, »host«, and Antiochus' claim in Daniel »to have in his control fallen stars (Dan 8:10b), i. e. meteorites«, which then represent three gods to whom the temple is dedicated. This argument is accepted by Harold L. Ginsberg, »The Book of Daniel,« in *The Hellenistic Age*, vol. 2 of *CHJ*, ed. William D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 504–523, 514. In this case I think that the simplest explanation is the best; the abomination was simply an altar built upon the previous, which was used in a manner unfitting to the authors of Daniel and First and Second Maccabees. See Goldingay, *Daniel*, 212 for a lengthier discussion of the altar.

whom the altar was dedicated. The term »desolation« (שְׁקוּי/שְׁקוּצִים) is suggested as a replacement of the word »heaven« (שָׁמַיִם) as in Baal Shamaim.⁴ According to Newson, the act of »naming the object of this destruction as ›the desolator‹, a clear reference to Antiochus, has the further effect of parodying his godlike pretensions, as it also echoes the previous pun on the name Baal Sham-em.«⁵ Harold Ginsberg provides a few glosses for the phrase, usually literally rendered as »abomination of desolation«, but also »horrifying abomination« or »horrifying offense«. The term is described as »a deliberate cacophemism« of the official name given to the altar.⁶

In Daniel 8:13; 9:27; 11:31 and 12:11 the root שָׁמַם/שְׁמָם is deliberately connected with the altar erected by Antiochus.⁷ John Goldingay commenting on Daniel 8:13 writes that »שָׁמַם can suggest ›be demented‹; this meaning could suggest a splendid allusion to the derision of Antiochus Epiphanes, ›[God] Manifest‹, as Epimanes, ›Madman‹.«⁸ This hypothesis relies upon the author of Daniel being aware of the Polybius' pun of »Antiochus the madman« or that Antiochus was generally known as mad during his reign. Regardless of the plausibility of this case, examination of the Greek translations of the verses in Daniel 7:26; 8:13; 9:27; 11:31 and 12:11 suggests that in some cases, at some point the translator(s) made a decision to linguistically connect Antiochus' epiphanic title with the »Abomination of Desolation«.

Below are listed all the occurrences of ἀφανίζω and alternatives used in the Greek Daniel translations. The three occurrences, where it could be expected but does not appear (8:13; 9:17; 12:11), are also included:

⁴ Newson, *Daniel*, 308. This argument was made by James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1959), 388.

⁵ Newson, *Daniel*, 309. See further Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, AB 23 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 253, who make the same point; the »mispronunciation« of »šāmēm« as »šômēm«.

⁶ Harold L. Ginsberg, »Abomination of Desolation,« *EncJud* 1:270.

⁷ Newson, *Daniel*, 267.

⁸ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC 30 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 198, drawn from work done by H. H. Rowley. André Lacocque also attributes this linguistic connection to Rowley, see Harold H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (London: Lutterworth, 1963), as cited in André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, trans. David Pellauer (London: SPCK, 1979), 164.

Table 1: References to »destruction« in the MT, OG and Th texts of Daniel

Verse	Masoretic Text	Old Greek	Theodotion	Context
2:44	תִּדָּק (to be shattered/crushed)	ἀφανίσει (to destroy/desolate)	λικμήσει (to winnow/scatter)	The kingdom set up by God removes the previous kingdoms
7:26	לְהַשְׁמָדָה וּלְהוֹבִידָה (to destroy, to be destroyed)	μιᾶναι ... ἀπολέσαι (to taint/defile ... to perish/destroy)	ἀφανίσαι ... ἀπολέσαι (to destroy ... to perish/destroy)	Referring to the complete destruction of Antiochus
8:13	שָׁמָּה ... מְרַמֵּס (to be desolate, trampling place)	ἐρημώσεως ... ἐρημωθήσεται (desolation ... to desolate)	ἐρημώσεως ... συμπατηθήσεται (desolation ... to trample under foot)	Concerning the altar and abuse of the sanctuary
8:25	יִשְׁחֵית (to ruin)	ἀφανιεῖ (to destroy/desolate)	διαφθερεῖ (to ruin)	Mentioning to the destruction brought about by king Antiochus
8:27	מְשֻׁמָּה (to be desolate)	ἐξελεύσῃ (to let loose, set free)	ἐθαύμαζον (to be astonished)	Daniel's response to receiving the vision
9:17	הַשָּׁמָה (desolate)	ἐρημον (desolate)	ἐρημον (desolate)	The desolate sanctuary
9:18	מְשֻׁמָּה (our desolations)	ἐρήμωσιν (desolation)	ἀφανισμόν (desolation)	Calling attention to the desolation of the city
9:27	שָׁמָּה (9:26), to be desolate שָׁמָּה ... מְשֻׁמָּה (to be desolate)	ἐρήμωσις ... ἐρημώσεων ... ἐρήμωσιν (desolation)	ἀφανισμοῖς (9:26, desolation) ... ἐρημώσεων ... ἐρήμωσιν (desolation... desolation)	The destruction of Antiochus and the »Abomination of Desolation«
11:31	מְשֻׁמָּה (to be desolate)	ἐρημώσεως (desolation)	ἡφανισμένον (to destroy/desolate)	The »Abomination of Desolation«
11:44	לְהַשְׁמָדָה (to exterminate/destroy)	ἀφανίσει (to destroy/desolate)	ἀφανίσει (to destroy/desolate)	Referring to the destruction brought by the king of the north (Antiochus)
12:11	שָׁמָּה (to be desolate)	ἐρημώσεως (desolation)	ἐρημώσεως (desolation)	The »Abomination of Desolation«

Usually in the Old Greek and Theodotion texts, the root שׁמ is translated as conjugate of ἐρήμωσις (eight of nine instances in the Old Greek – 8:13; 9:17,18,27; 11:31; 12:11; five instances in the Theodotion – 8:13; 9:17,27; 12:11), but as I have shown, ἀφανίζω (to destroy, desolate, make unseen) is used instead in three places in the

Theodotion translation, 7:26; 9:26 and 11:31.⁹ Outside of the Greek translations of Daniel, these two verbs (and their cognates) are by far the most common LXX Greek translations of the 96 instances of מַחֲשׁ; ἀφανίζω occurs 30 times, ἐρήμωσις also 30 times.¹⁰ In Daniel 7:26 and 11:31, derivations of ἀφανίζω are used instead of μιᾶναι and ἐρημώσεως. In 9:26 the nounal form ἀφανισμος takes the place of ἐρήμωσις (OG, 9:27).¹¹ In 7:26 the verb is used to refer to the divine destruction of Antiochus and in 11:44, to the destruction that Antiochus will bring. The Old Greek uses ἀφανίζω to refer to the destruction of other kingdoms by the divine kingdom (2:44) and twice to refer to the destruction brought by Antiochus (8:25; 11:31). The Theodotion's use of ἀφανίζω is atypical in texts that refer to Antiochus' altar. Instances where the phrase »Abomination of Desolation« is otherwise attested, mentions of Antiochus' altar or the general desolation of the sanctuary are as follows:

Table 2: References and allusions to the »Abomination of Desolation« or Antiochus IV's altar in ancient Greek literature

Reference	Text	Context
1Macc 1:54	βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως	Referring to the installation of the »Abomination of Desolation«
1Macc 4:38	ἡρημωμένον καὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον βεβηλωμένον	Judas and his brothers seeing the desolation of the sanctuary
1Macc 6:7	βδέλυγμα	The Jews removing the »abomination« erected by Antiochus

9 This is noted by Sharon Pace Jeansonne, who incorrectly suggests that the phrase, βδέλυγμα τῶν ἐρημώσεων »was retained in all three occurrences (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11)«. Jeansonne does not notice the allusion made in the Greek to Antiochus' title, being unaware of the particular phrase, see Sharon Pace Jeansonne, *The Old Greek Translation of Daniel 7–12, CBQMS* 19 (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1988), 18. This is commented upon by Montgomery, *Daniel*, 403, but he does not notice the association with Epiphanes.

10 Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Lamentations and the Minor Prophets most commonly use ἀφανίζω, while Ezekiel, Jeremiah (each to a lesser degree), Psalms, Isaiah, Leviticus, Second Chronicles and Exodus use ἐρήμωσις.

11 Tim McLay draws attention to the use of ἡφανισμένον in 11:31 (and its cognate noun used in 9:18,26, ἀφανισμὸν, ἀφανισμοῖς) but does not mention the suggested allusion to Antiochus' title. He suggests that the Theodotion text »employed a known phrase«, which was corrupted by later scribes who were aware of the more common form used in the Old Greek in Daniel, First Maccabees and the New Testament. See Tim McLay, *The OG and Th Versions of Daniel*, SCS 43 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996), 194. McLay's thesis is that the Theodotion Daniel is not simply a revision of the Old Greek but bears witness to an independent tradition based on close textual analysis of five passages in Daniel (242).

Reference	Text	Context
2Macc 6:5	ἀποδισταλμένοις	Something laid upon the altar which desecrates it
Matt 24:15	βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως	»Abomination of Desolation« from the word of Daniel
Mark 13:14	βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως	»Abomination of Desolation« from the word of Daniel
Luke 21:20	ἐρήμωσις	Desolation of Jerusalem
Josephus, A.J. X.276	ἐρημωθήσεται	Referring to the desolation of Antiochus which Daniel prophesied, and that this also was a prophesy concerning the Roman's destruction of the temple
A.J. XII.253	βωμὸν	The altar set up by Antiochus
A.J. XII.320–322	ἐρημωθέντα ... ἐρήμωσιν	Referring to Antiochus' desolation of the temple, and in accordance with Daniel's prophesy
B.J. I.39	βωμὸν	The altar set up by Antiochus
Eusebius, <i>Eccl. Hist.</i> III.V.4	βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως	Recalling the »Abomination of Desolation« being set up in the temple as a result of the Great Revolt
<i>Eccl. Hist.</i> X.IV.36	βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως	In the context of a panegyric concerning the building of churches and drawing on Daniel's prophesy.

From these instances one can see that the use of ἀφανίζω (or cognates) concerning the temple desolation is only attested in the Theodotion translation of Daniel. Otherwise in every instance the noted desolation (where it is present) follows the Old Greek's use of ἐρήμωσις in a nounal, adjectival or verbal form. The Theodotion translation's use of ἀφανίζω in 11:31 is therefore unusual. In the other two places, where the phrase »Abomination of Desolation« is used in the Theodotion translation (9:27; 12:11), the more common ἐρήμωσις is used. This single instance, and the other four uses of ἀφανίζω (7:26; 9:18,26; 11:44) are all connected to Antiochus IV. I suggest that in the Theodotion translation the verb ἀφανίζω and cognate noun was used to play upon Antiochus' title and draw a clear connection between the altar and the man who erected it, with some other allusions to his destructive nature or the destruction he will face.¹² In the Old Greek, this verb

¹² This connection is noted by Lacocque, who says that the altar is erected »in the image of its author, Antiochus ›the devastator‹«, but no mention is made on the Greek. See Lacocque, *Daniel*, 199.

could have been used to refer to the destruction caused by Antiochus and drew attention to the dichotomy between Antiochus' divine title and his destructive actions. Interestingly, this may have been noticed by Hippolytus. In an article on the use of the term »Abomination of Desolation« in ancient Jewish and Christian sources, George van Kooten notes that in Hippolytus' commentary on Daniel, Hippolytus draws a distinction between a desolation brought by Antiochus and a future destruction which is tied to the Antichrist. The desolation brought by Antiochus is distinguished as »ἀφανισμοῦ«, whereas the coming destruction is »ἐρημώσεως«.¹³ This might suggest that Hippolytus was aware of the tradition preserved in the Theodotion translation, or he simply noted the uses of ἀφανίζω in the Old Greek version of Daniel 8:25 and 11:44. From previous scholarship it is already clear that Antiochus was linguistically tied to the »Abomination of Desolation«. This paper adds to that thesis and suggests that the Greek translator(s) of the Theodotion text either received this tradition from earlier Greek translations (not the Old Greek), or was aware of this linguistic allusion and chose to parody Antiochus' Epiphanic title.

Abstract: This paper supports the case that Antiochus IV Epiphanes was linguistically alluded in the Greek translations of Book of Daniel, which connected him to the »Abomination of Desolation«.¹⁴ It is likely that Antiochus' title Ἐπιφανής was being referred in the use of ἀφανίζω (to destroy, make desolate) and its cognate nounal form, particularly in the Theodotion translation with some other possible references in the Old Greek.

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Artikel stützt die These, dass auf Antiochos IV. Epiphanes sprachlich in den griechischen Übersetzungen des Buches Daniel angespielt wird, so dass er mit der »Abscheulichkeit der Verwüstung« verbunden wird. Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass der Titel des Antiochos Ἐπιφανής bei der Verwendung von ἀφανίζω (vernichten, verwüsten) und seiner verwandten Nominalform im Hintergrund steht, insbesondere in der Theodotion-Übersetzung mit einigen anderen möglichen Referenzen im Altgriechischen.

Résumé : Cet article défend l'idée que la traduction grecque du livre de Daniel fait allusion linguistiquement à Antioche Epiphane IV en le connectant à l'« abomination de la désolation ». Il est probable que l'usage d'ἀφανίζω (détruire, rendre

¹³ See Kooten, »Most Holy Temple«: 398, citing Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan.* 4.44.

¹⁴ For example, Carol A. Newson, *Daniel*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 308 f.

désolé) fait référence au titre Ἐπιφανής d'Antioche et sa forme nominative, en particulier dans la traduction de Théodotien avec quelques autres références possibles dans la vieille version grecque.