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The descent of praise. A Literary Structure of the Song of the Three Jews (Dan 3:52–90)

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The Canticle of the Three Young Men in the Fiery Furnace (Greek Dan 3:52–90) is a marvellous hymn and a profound expression of biblical poetry and praise.

In its narrative context, the Canticle is prayed by Ananias, Azariah, and Mishael while they are inside the fiery furnace. They were cast into it for refusing to worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up (Dan 3:21). The furnace was burning so intensely that its flames rose as high as 49 cubits (approximately 25 metres) above it (Dan 3:47).

The hymn is an expression of thanksgiving following the angel's intervention to rescue them (Dan 3:49–50). First, it blesses the Lord for the deliverance received (Dan 3:52–56). Next, it commands all of creation – presented as a litany – to join the three rescued men in blessing and thanking God for the salvation they received (Dan 3:57–90).

The Canticle is well known because of its use in the liturgy. It is included in the ancient collection of biblical prayer texts known as the Odes (ΩΔΑΙ), which first appears in the *Codex Alexandrinus* (5th century AD), although Origen (AD 185–254) attested to its existence in the third century (Chirilă & Kreuzer, 2023, pp. 356–358; Engel & Lattke, 2012). The Canticle corresponds to Ode 8 in Alfred Rahlfs's critical edition of the Psalms and Odes (Rahlfs, 1979, p. 355). This liturgical use led to various textual adaptations intended for the new liturgical context – for instance, the addition of εὐλογοῦμεν πατέρα καὶ υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον πνεῦμα· ὑμνοῦμεν καὶ ὑπερυψοῦμεν αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας in the *Codex Veronensis* (6th century AD) (Rahlfs, 1979, p. 358) – and it is likely responsible for many

difficulties in its textual transmission, such as the highly variable order of verses 66–73. The various manuscripts of Theodotion's version have up to 14 different sequences. However, for the following analysis, this "order problem" is not relevant because vv. 66–73 all belong to a single structural section and do not span two different sections.

In the contemporary Catholic Liturgy of the Hours, the Canticle is prayed in two distinct sections. The first section (Dan 3:52–57) is recited during Morning Prayer on the second and fourth Sundays of the four-week Psalter. The second section (Dan 3:57–88. 56), called *Benedicite* in the Latin tradition, is used during Morning Prayer on the first and third Sundays, as well as on solemnities and feasts.

The text of the Canticle belongs to the so-called "deuterocanonical additions" in the Book of Daniel. These are Greek texts which are not found in the Hebrew-Aramaic Book of Daniel (Masoretic Text) but are included in the Greek versions of the book. Two different texts of the Canticle of the Three Young Men survive, corresponding to the two Greek versions (Old Greek and Theodotion) of the entire Book of Daniel (for a brief introduction to the editions of Daniel, see Davis Bledsoe, 2015, pp. 177–180). In his preface to the translation of Daniel (Jerome, 1845, col. 1291), Jerome demonstrates his knowledge of both Greek texts and states that the fourth-century churches did not read the prophet Daniel according to the Old Greek version (which he calls the *Septuaginta Interpretes*) but according to Theodotion's version. This shift shows how the Old Greek text was progressively replaced in ecclesiastical practice (and consequently in biblical codices) by Theodotion's text. This transition accounts for the current scarcity of textual witnesses for the Old Greek version of Daniel and supports the idea that the surviving manuscripts of this edition are texts heavily amended by scribes (Amara, 2017, p. 547).

Therefore, this article will focus on identifying the structure of the Canticle in Theodotion's version, as this version is commonly used by churches and is the most widely attested in ancient manuscripts. However, the following structural analysis also seems to be valid for the Old Greek text. Although the Old Greek text lacks vv. 53 and 85, it shares the main structural verses. Di Lella's proposed seven-stanza

structure is particularly interesting for the Old Greek version, as it reflects the seven days of creation. However, he considers vv. 88–90 an addition (Di Lella, 2008, pp. 52–57).

The analysis uses the critical edition of Greek Daniel (Ziegler, 1999, pp. 274–285).

The present study advances three specific claims not previously made in the scholarship: (1) a four-stanza chiastic macrostructure governing the whole of Dan 3:52–90; (2) the reclassification of v. 64 within the celestial section on lexical and narrative grounds; (3) a reading of vv. 89–90 as integral to the cosmic invocation rather than as a separate conclusion. These proposals differ from and extend the structural models of Di Lella (1995), Beentjes (2020) and Gloger (2024), whose divisions are discussed below.

Structure

The Canticle is clearly divided into two main sections (Dan 3:52–56; 57–90). This is evident both at the literary and thematic levels. The two sections have different refrains and distinct thematic orientations: the first section is an indicative Blessing, while the second section is an imperative exhortation to all creation.

All scholars agree on this basic subdivision (Beentjes, 2020, p. 91; Christie, 1928, p. 193; Collins, 1993, pp. 204–207; Delcor, 1971, pp. 103–105; Frizzell, 1981, pp. 42–45; Rinaldi, 1962, pp. 68–73; Settembrini, 2019, p. 153).

However, both sections are evidently linked by their poetic style. The initial anaphora and the litanic form – even though the refrain is different for each section – are poetic devices that unify the entire composition, creating a strong sense of rhythm and cohesion. In addition, the Canticle is framed by the word θεός (Dan 3:52. 90), the object of both blessing and exhortation (Gloger, 2024, p. 233).

Some scholars (Di Lella, 1995, p. 78; Gloger, 2024, p. 232) divide the whole song into three sections: Hymn (vv. 52–56); Cosmic invocation/Praise psalm (vv. 57–88b) and justification for the praise (88c–90). This

tripartition rests on the subordinate clauses of vv. 88c–90 as providing a distinct motivational unit. However, the presence of εὐλογεῖτε (εὐλογέω is the key anaphoric verb of the Canticle's Cosmic Exhortation section) in v. 90 and the unbroken anaphoric imperative pattern argue against a formal section break at verse 88c. The motivational clauses are embedded within the hymnic exhortation, not external to it. It is true that they contain subordinate clauses explaining the reasons for the cosmic praise, but the hymnic exhortation continues in these verses. The verb εὐλογεῖτε in v. 90 confirms this link. In any case, these final verses (vv. 89. 90) must be read together because of the imperative ἐξομολογεῖσθε ("acknowledge") that poetically frames the verses.

Most existing structural proposals focus on thematic content rather than on formal poetic criteria, and the compositional logic governing the divisions is not always made explicit.

Although Gloger's extensive recent study (2024) provides the most recent analysis of Greek Daniel 3, his discussion of these sections follows previous scholarship without proposing an alternative structure.

Therefore, by considering the work as a whole, this article proposes a new literary structure, identifying a chiastic macrostructure in four stanzas that has not yet been presented in the existing scholarship.

The chiastic macrostructure of the entire Canticle can be visualised as follows. The detailed lexical and thematic evidence for each correspondence is presented in the sections below.

Structure			
A	52–53	Blessing	Stanza 1: From History to the Temple
B	54–56	Blessing	Stanza 2: From the Temple to the Cosmos
B	57–73	Cosmic Exhortation	Stanza 3: Cosmic praise, from heaven to earth
A	74–90	Cosmic Exhortation	Stanza 4: Earthly praise, from earth to humanity

The Blessing: Text and Translation of Dan 3:52–56

Text	Translation
[52] Εὐλογητὸς εἶ κύριε ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, καὶ αἰνετὸς καὶ ὑπερυψούμενος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, καὶ εὐλογημένον τὸ ὄνομα τῆς δόξης σου τὸ ἅγιον καὶ ὑπεραινετὸν καὶ ὑπερυψούμενον εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[52] Blessed are you O Lord, God of our Fathers, and praiseworthy and super-exalted for the ages, and blessed is the name of your glory, the holy and super-praiseworthy and super-exalted for the ages
[53] εὐλογημένος εἶ ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῆς ἁγίας δόξης σου καὶ ὑπερυμνητὸς καὶ ὑπερένδοξος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[53] Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory and super-hymned and super-glorious for the ages
[54] εὐλογημένος εἶ ὁ ἐπιβλέπων ἀβύσσους καθήμενος ἐπὶ χερουβειν, καὶ αἰνετὸς καὶ ὑπερυψούμενος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[54] Blessed are you who view the depths sitting upon cheroubin and praiseworthy and super-exalted for the ages
[55] εὐλογημένος εἶ ἐπὶ θρόνου τῆς βασιλείας σου καὶ ὑπερυμνητὸς καὶ ὑπερυψούμενος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[55] Blessed are you upon the throne of your kingdom, and super-hymned and super-exalted for the ages
[56] εὐλογητὸς εἶ ἐν τῷ στερεώματι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ὑμνητὸς καὶ δεδοξασμένος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[56] Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven and hymned and glorified for the ages

The structural unity of the first section (Blessing) is confirmed by the use of the verbal adjective εὐλογητός (blessed or blessable), which appears both at the beginning (v. 52) and at the end of the section (v. 56).

The refrain is not uniform and shows small variations. It is identical only in vv. 52 and 55. The identical wording of the refrain at these two points suggests an internal subdivision of the section into two parallel units (stanzas). This parallel division is also supported by several correspondences between the stanzas, such as the preposition ἐν which identifies the places of praise: v. 53 ἐν τῷ ναῷ, "in the temple" (earthly praise); v. 56 ἐν τῷ στερεώματι, "in the firmament" (cosmic praise).

This poetic analysis also helps to understand the function of the participles in v. 55. These are parallel to the initial vocative κύριε. This vocative, at the beginning of the Song, not only constitutes a direct invocation but also identifies the logical subject of the section. Additionally, the only other subject (grammatical and logical) is τὸ ὄνομα ("the name") in v. 52cd.

Considering the poetic parallelism of the participles with this vocative, it is clear that these two attributive participles function as vocatives (for examples of this use, see Blass & Debrunner, 1976, pp. 340–341, § 412, note 10).

The following table shows the poetic structure of the section. Various markings, including different types of underlining, indicate recurring words in the text.

Stanza 1	Stanza 2
[52] Εὐλογητὸς εἶ κύριε ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, καὶ αἰνετὸς καὶ ὑπερυψούμενος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας,	[54] εὐλογημένος εἶ ὁ ἐπιβλέπων ἀβύσσους καθήμενος ἐπὶ χερουβειν, καὶ αἰνετὸς καὶ ὑπερυψούμενος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.
καὶ εὐλογημένον τὸ ὄνομα τῆς δόξης σου τὸ ἅγιον καὶ ὑπεραινετὸν καὶ ὑπερυψούμενον εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[55] εὐλογημένος εἶ ἐπὶ θρόνου τῆς βασιλείας σου καὶ ὑπερυμνητὸς καὶ ὑπερυψούμενος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.
[53] εὐλογημένος εἶ ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῆς ἁγίας δόξης σου καὶ ὑπερυμνητὸς καὶ ὑπερένδοξος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[56] εὐλογητὸς εἶ ἐν τῷ στερεώματι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ὑμνητὸς καὶ δεδοξασμένος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.

In the two stanzas, we note a movement from historical-earthly praise (v. 52), through the temple (vv. 53–54), to cosmic-universal praise (vv. 55–56).

Stanza 1: From History to the Temple

The Canticle opens with a specific focus on historical-earthly praise. The God who is blessed is the God who revealed Himself to the Fathers throughout history, making His name known to them. His praise is expressed and celebrated in the Temple, the specific place where His presence is assured.

The initial invocation "God of the Fathers" is a typical and frequently attested biblical formula. It refers directly to the history of salvation and to God's choice to bind Himself to a lineage and to specific historical people, whose acknowledged heirs and representatives are the three young men. The expression "Our Fathers" refers primarily to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen 50:24; Exod 3:15–16; 4:5; Deut 6:10; 29:12; 30:20; 1 Chr 29:18; Acts 3:13; 7:32), but their descendants must

also be understood as included in the expression (cf. the Prayer of Manasseh, Odes 12:1; Lk 1:55; Acts 3:25).

The Name (ὄνομα) also evokes the historical dimension of the covenant. YHWH revealed Himself to the Fathers by making His Name known (Gen 17:1; Exod 3:14; 6:3). To invoke His Name implies a request for His active presence and historical intervention (1 Sam 20:42; 2 Sam 6:18; 2 Kgs 2:24). Although YHWH has His dwelling place in heaven (Deut 4:36; 26:15), He chooses an earthly dwelling in which His name may dwell (Deut 12:11; 14:23; 16:11). Consequently, the name appears as the objective and almost material presence of YHWH in the dwelling place built for him (2 Sam 7:13; 1 Kgs 3:2; 5:17; 8:17). The name, therefore, guarantees God's historical presence in the Temple. It is the historical-salvific aspect of YHWH manifested to humanity (Bietenhard, 1967, pp. 255–260).

As John J. Collins notes, "Some scholars have supposed that the reference here [to the temple] is to the heavenly temple, but nothing requires that interpretation" (Collins, 1993, p. 205). The only other passage in the Septuagint (LXX) where the terms ναός (temple), ἅγιος (holy) and δόξα (glory) appear together is Sir 49:12, which can help interpret v. 53. This verse belongs to the section commonly known as the "Praise of the Ancestors", specifically where Zerubbabel and Joshua are praised as temple rebuilders (Sir 49:11–13). In that passage, it is evident that the ναὸς ἅγιος is the historical Temple of Jerusalem, which was prepared "for eternal glory" (εἰς δόξαν αἰῶνος).

Finally, even the term δόξα (glory) evokes the historical dimension of revelation. It represents the very essence of God and the manifestation of His presence (Isa 30:30; Ps 101:16 LXX). The divine light that shines during the proclamation of the Law, in the Tabernacle, and in the Temple is precisely the δόξα θεοῦ – the concrete and historical presence of YHWH (Kittel & von Rad, 1964, p. 245).

Stanza 2: From the Temple to the Cosmos

In stanza 2, the focus shifts from the temple (v. 54) to the cosmos (vv. 55–56). Thus, we move from the historical-earthly idea to the cosmic-universal idea.

Verse 54, which opens the stanza, connects the two ideas by combining the expressions ὁ ἐπιβλέπων ἀβύσσους (God who scrutinises the abyss: cosmic-universal idea) and καθήμενος ἐπὶ χερουβειν (God seated on the cherubim of the ark of the covenant: historical-earthly idea).

The expression ὁ ἐπιβλέπων ἀβύσσους is a *hapax legomenon*. The term ἄβυσσος has a marked cosmic character in Late Greek. It is primarily an adjective that expresses the concept of "bottomless, profound, unlimited, infinite". In the LXX, the word is used mainly as a noun and, translating the Hebrew תְּהוֹם, mainly designates the cosmic depths, the primordial abysses (Gen 1:2; Ps 32:7 LXX; Ps 103:6 LXX; Prov 8:24). The term is also associated with both the deep sea (Isa 44:27; Job 41:23) and with the "kingdom of the dead" (Ps 106:26 LXX; Rom 10:7) (Jeremias, 1964, p. 10). The term ἄβυσσος denotes an unfathomable reality for human beings, inaccessible and uncontrollable. Only God is capable of dominating it (Job 41:24; Sir 1:3; 43:23).

In contrast, the construction καθήμενος ἐπὶ χερουβειν occurs six other times in the LXX (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Kgs 19:15 = Isa 37:16; 1 Chr 13:6; Ps 79:2 LXX; 98:1 LXX). Only in 1 Sam 4:4 and 1 Chr 13:6 does the expression appear outside of a prayer context. In those two passages, it is connected to the movement of the Ark of the Covenant. In all other occurrences, the prayers refer to the Creator God who reigns over the earth and listens to – and thus can save – His people. The phrase καθήμενος ἐπὶ χερουβειν recalls the arrangement of the interior of the דְּבִיר where the inner wings of the cherubim touched each other to form a "throne" (1 Kgs 6:27). This imagery appears to originate from the Canaanite-Phoenician thrones of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages. Two "cherubs" (winged lions) normally decorated them (Keel, 1972, pp. 149–150).

Therefore, verse 54 combines these two images and serves as a connecting verse between the historical-salvific and cosmic perspectives. It unites the God who "looks into the depths" (cosmic perspective) with the King-God "seated upon the cherubim" – that is, the God present upon the Ark of the Covenant and within the Temple (historical perspective). Furthermore, the expression καθήμενος ἐπὶ χερουβειν, by referring to the Throne of God (as demonstrated by the following *parallelismus membrorum*), evokes a vision of God as a King surrounded by the celestial host of His angels and as the Ruler of the entire cosmos.

The mention of θρόνος (v. 55) makes explicit the vision of God as cosmic sovereign. The image of God's throne is used in contrast to the earthly kingship of the human king (1 Kgs 22:19 = 2 Chr 18:18). In the prophets and psalms, it takes on a cosmic scope. The throne will last forever (Lam 5:19) and has existed since eternity (Ps 92:2 LXX); it is "in heaven" and this expresses the cosmic sovereignty of God (Isa 6:1; 14:13; 66:1; Ps 10:4 LXX; Ps 102:19 LXX; Wis 9:10; Heb 8:1). In late Judaism, as in the NT, the image often takes on a connotation of eschatological judgement (Dan 7:9; Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Rev 4:4; 11:16; 20:4) (Schmitz, 1965, p. 163).

Finally, in v. 56 we find the place of cosmic praise: ἐν τῷ στερεώματι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. The expression refers explicitly to the creation story (Gen 1:1–20), where the construct στερέωμα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ appears five times out of its 11 total occurrences in the LXX (Gen 1:8, 14–15, 17, 20; the other occurrences are in Exod 24:10; Deut 33:26; Ps 18:2 LXX; Sir 43:1, 8).

The prepositional phrase governed by ἐν emphasises that this praise occurs inside the "firmament" – that is, in the realm of creation itself. God's praise in the "firmament of heaven" is therefore a universal celebration offered by all created things. This theme is made explicit and explored in depth in the subsequent list of creatures invited to praise and bless Him.

Cosmic Exhortation: Text and Translation of Dan 3:57–90

Stanza 3: Cosmic praise, from heaven to earth (vv. 57–73)

a. Heavenly praise above the heavens (vv. 57–64)

[57] εὐλογεῖτε, πάντα τὰ ἔργα κυρίου, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[57] Bless; all you Works of the Lord, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[59] εὐλογεῖτε, οὐρανοί, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[59] Bless; you Heavens, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[58] εὐλογεῖτε, ἄγγελοι κυρίου, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[58] Bless; you Angels of the Lord, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[60] εὐλογεῖτε, ὕδατα πάντα τὰ ἐπάνω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[60] Bless; you all Waters above the heaven, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.

[61] εὐλογείτω πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις[1] τὸν κύριον. ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[61] Bless; all you Powers, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[62] εὐλογεῖτε, ἥλιος καὶ σελήνη, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[62] Bless; you Sun and Moon, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[63] εὐλογεῖτε, ἄστρα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[63] Bless; you Heaven's Star, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[64] εὐλογεῖτε, πᾶς ὄμβρος καὶ δρόσος, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[64] Bless; all you Storm and Dew, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.

b. Heavenly praise under the heavens (vv. 65–73)

[65] εὐλογεῖτε, πάντα τὰ πνεύματα, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[65] Bless; all you Winds, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[66] εὐλογεῖτε, πῦρ καὶ καῦμα[2], τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[66] Bless; you Fire and Burning, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[67] εὐλογεῖτε, ψῦχος καὶ καύσων, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[67] Bless; you Chill and heat, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[68] εὐλογεῖτε, δρόσοι καὶ νιφετοί, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[68] Bless; you Dews and Snowfalls, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[71] εὐλογεῖτε, νύκτες καὶ ἡμέραι, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[71] Bless; you Nights and Days, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[72] εὐλογεῖτε, φῶς καὶ σκότος, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[72] Bless; you Light and darkness, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[69] εὐλογεῖτε, πάγος καὶ ψῦχος, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[69] Bless; you Ice and Chill, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[70] εὐλογεῖτε, πάχναι καὶ χιόνες, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[70] Bless; you Frosts and Snows, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[73] εὐλογεῖτε, ἀστραπαὶ καὶ νεφέλαι, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[73] Bless; you Lightnings and Clouds, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.

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1 δύναμις primarily indicates "power, potency, strength (both physical and moral)". The term is often used as a collective noun to denote an army or forces, analogous to the Hebrew חֵיל. In the present context – following the celestial waters and preceding the sun, moon, and stars – the term indicates the heavenly host, composed of both angels and the powerful celestial bodies that are specified thereafter (sun, moon, stars). Cf. Dan 8:10 (Moore, 1977, p. 71).

2 καῦμα and καύσων are synonyms. Both derive from the root καυ (to burn). The suffix -μα indicates the result or effect of an action, while -ων is generic. It appears that there is no real difference between the two terms. However, it is noted that the noun καῦμα, unlike καύσων, is attested in some Greek texts with the sense of the "burn" of cold (Montanari, 2025, *s.v.* καῦμα). This suggests a potential chiasmus between the verses.

Stanza 4: Earthly praise, from earth to humanity (vv. 74–90)

c. The earthly praise of terrestrial creatures (vv. 74–81)

[74] εὐλογείτω ἡ γῆ τὸν κύριον· ὑμνείτω καὶ ὑπερυψούτω αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[74] Let the Earth bless the Lord; let it sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[75] εὐλογεῖτε, ὄρη καὶ βουνοί, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[75] Bless; you Mountains and Hills; the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[76] εὐλογεῖτε, πάντα τὰ φυόμενα ἐν τῇ γῇ, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[76] Bless; all you that grows in the earth, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[78] εὐλογεῖτε, θάλασσαι καὶ ποταμοί, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[78] Bless; you Seas and Rivers, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[77] εὐλογεῖτε, αἱ πηγαί, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[77] Bless; you Springs, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[79] εὐλογεῖτε, κήτη καὶ πάντα τὰ κινούμενα ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[79] Bless; you Sea-monsters and all that move in the waters, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[80] εὐλογεῖτε, πάντα τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[80] Bless; you all Birds of the sky; the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[81] εὐλογεῖτε, πάντα τὰ θηρία καὶ τὰ κτήνη, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[81] Bless; you all wild Animals and domesticated, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.

d. The earthly praise of men (vv. 82–88)

[82] εὐλογεῖτε, οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[82] Bless; Sons of men, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[83] εὐλογεῖτε, Ισραηλ, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[83] Bless; you Israel, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[84] εὐλογεῖτε, ἱερεῖς, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας	[84] Bless; you priests, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[85] εὐλογεῖτε, δοῦλοι, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[85] Bless; you Servants, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[86] εὐλογεῖτε, πνεύματα καὶ ψυχαὶ δικαίων, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[86] Bless; you Spirits and Souls of the righteous, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.
[87] εὐλογεῖτε, ὅσιοι καὶ ταπεινοὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.	[87] Bless; you Saints and humbles of heart, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages.

[88] εὐλογεῖτε, Ανανία Αζαρία Μισαηλ, τὸν κύριον· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ὑπερυψοῦτε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὅτι ἐξείλατο ἡμᾶς ἐξ ᾅδου[3] καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς θανάτου ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ μέσου καμίνου καιομένης φλογὸς καὶ ἐκ μέσου πυρὸς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς.	[88] Bless; you Ananias, Azarias, Misael, the Lord sing hymns and super-exalt him for the ages. For [He] removed us from Hades and from the hand of death preserved us and delivered us from the midst of the flame of the burning furnace and from the midst of the fire delivered us.

e. Global conclusion (vv. 89–90): Summary imperatives and general reasons for praise

[89] ἐξομολογεῖσθε[4] τῷ κυρίῳ, ὅτι χρηστός, ὅτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τὸ ἔλεος[5] αὐτοῦ.	[89] Acknowledge the Lord, for he is kind, because forever is his mercy.
[90] εὐλογεῖτε, πάντες οἱ σεβόμενοι τὸν κύριον τὸν θεὸν τῶν θεῶν· ὑμνεῖτε καὶ ἐξομολογεῖσθε, ὅτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ.	[90] Bless, you all who worship the Lord God of gods; sing hymns and acknowledge. because forever is his mercy.

Clearly, verses 57–90 form a structural unit, characterised by the same refrain and the repeated anaphora of εὐλογεῖτε. This section can be precisely bisected by v. 74, the only verse that presents a singular subject (ἡ γῆ) and a third-person imperative verb. It is noted that verses 61 and 64, although presenting a verb grammatically in the singular, show a plural subject. This is also confirmed by the plural refrain. Thus, verse 74 is central and divides the section into exactly two halves. Furthermore, it marks the transition between the heavenly beings (vv. 57–73) and the earthly ones (vv. 74–88).

Commentators broadly agree on the following division: header (v. 57); invitation to celestial creatures (vv. 58–63); to natural phenomena (vv. 64–73); to terrestrial creatures (vv. 74–81); to men (vv. 82–88);

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3 Hades is the realm of the underworld, in Hebrew שְׁאוֹל. The term is used as a synonym for death. Wis 1:14; also Ps 48:16 LXX; 88:49 LXX; Hos 13:14.

4 ἐξομολογέω means both "to make an admission of wrong-doing/sin, confess, admit" and "to declare openly in acknowledgment, profess, acknowledge". From these two meanings arose the more general sense to praise, in acknowledgment of divine beneficence and majesty (Bauer, 2010, *s.v.* ἐξομολογέω).

5 ἔλεος: kindness or concern expressed for someone in need, mercy, compassion, pity, clemency, often from God towards man; "mercy, compassion, piety, clemency" (Bauer, 2010, *s.v.* ἔλεος).

conclusion (vv. 89–90) (Beentjes, 2020, p. 98). Some do not treat the heading as a separate unit (Delcor, 1971, p. 104; Rinaldi, 1962, p. 71) while others also omit the conclusion (Frizzell, 1981, pp. 42–45). Di Lella (1995, p. 84) treats verses 88c–90 as the conclusion. Only Alonso Schökel proposes a different structure of the entire Canticle: "La serie si può dividere facilmente: a sei invocazioni rivolte a Dio, seguono un invito universale, sei rivolti al cielo, dieci agli eventi naturali, otto agli animali e sette agli uomini" (Alonso Schökel & Sicre Díaz, 1996, p. 1434).

I propose a different division based on content: celestial creatures above the heavens (vv. 58–64); natural phenomena under the heavens (vv. 65–73); terrestrial creatures (vv. 74–81); men (vv. 82–88).

Thus, the verses that open the sections appear as summary "titles" of the sections:

v. 57 "all you Works of the Lord": general title of the section.
v. 58 "Heavens": all the works in heaven follow.
v. 65 "all you Winds": all the elements linked to the air and the atmosphere follow.
v. 74 "Earth": all the beings on the globe follow.
v. 82 "Sons of men": different categories of men follow.

The main difference from previous commentators is the placement of verse 64 within the section on celestial creatures, a choice that I will explain in the following pages.

The cosmic exhortation section (vv. 57–90) clearly moves from heaven to humanity in a descent of praise. Human beings are the culmination of this praise, just as they are the climax of the creation narrative, having been created in God's image (Gen 1:26–27; Ps 8 LXX) (Di Lella, 2008, p. 62).

Verses 89–90 conclude the Canticle. These verses are general in character and express the reasons for the cosmic praise required by the entire Canticle. It is evident that they employ standard liturgical formulas. For example, the phrase ὅτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ appears frequently in the LXX (1 Chr 16:34, 41; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3. 6; 20:21; Ezr 3:11; 1 Macc 4:24; Ps 105:1; 106:1; 117:1–4. 29; 135:1–26; Jer 40:11; Dan 3:89–90). Furthermore, v. 89 is identical to the opening of several Psalms (Ps 105:1; 106:1; 135:1 LXX). It is observed that the causal

subordinate clauses in these two verses omit the verb, each functioning as a "nominal clause". This absence of a defined temporal reference effectively expresses the eternal nature of the reasons for praise.

Stanza 3: Cosmic praise, from heaven to earth

a. Heavenly praise above the heavens (vv. 57–64)

Verse 57 serves as a title: all the beings subsequently listed belong to the "works of the Lord" (Gloger, 2024, p. 250); they are nothing but creatures of God.

Verses 58–64 then list works located "above the heavens", which are considered closest to the Lord and upon which He exerts direct "influence".

The heavens, summoned to praise God as the first element (v. 59), refer to the divine dwelling place. In the heavens are found the throne of God (Ps 10:4 LXX; 102:19 LXX; Wis 9:10; Heb 8:1) and the abode of the angels (Gen 21:17; 22:11).

Angels (v. 58) always serve before the throne of God (Ps 102:20 LXX; Tob 12:15) and their fundamental task is to praise Him (Di Lella, 1995, p. 80; Gloger, 2024, p. 252).

Next come the "waters above the heavens" (v. 60), which refer to the creation and separation of the waters above and below the firmament (Gen 1:7 is the only other text where the attributive construction ὕδωρ τὸ ἐπάνω is found).

The heavenly army (v. 61), which appears central to the elements of this first section (excluding the title), summarises, as a collective term, all the "powers" of the section: all heavenly creatures are part of God's army and are at his command (Gloger, 2024, p. 257).

The sun, moon, and stars (vv. 62–63), which were worshipped as deities by the pagans and sometimes by the Israelites (Deut 4:19; 17:3; Job 31:26–28), are presented not merely as created elements (Gen 1:16), but as participants called to join the praise of God (Di Lella, 2008, p. 61). God exercises power over them (Am 8:9; Jos 10:12) and they promptly obey Him (Ep Jer 59 = Bar 6:59).

Storms and dews (v. 64: ὄμβρος καὶ δρόσος) may seem like atmospheric elements that should not fall within otherworldly celestial praise, as current scholarship suggests.

However, a lexical analysis and the immediate context show that these storms and dews must be included in this section. Specifically, a closer look at the vocabulary shows that they are closely linked to the divine will. The only passage in which both terms appear in close proximity is Deut 32:2. In this context, the terms are found in parallel with the word of God: what is said by God is like dew, like rain (storm) on the grass. Therefore, storms and dews descend directly from God's will, as Deut 32:2 makes clear.

Furthermore, both elements are instruments of God. The term ὄμβρος is rare in the LXX: in addition to Deut 32:2 and Dan 3:64, it occurs only in Wis 16:16 and Sir 49:9; in both texts, it appears as divine punishment that overwhelms the wicked. This is evident in Wis 16:16 but less clear in Sir 49:9. The Greek text of Sir 49:9a says: καὶ γὰρ ἐμνήσθη τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐν ὄμβρῳ ("and indeed [God] remembered the enemies in the storm"). The reference is probably to storms unleashed by God's wrath against false prophets (Ezek 13:13) or eschatological storms in the oracle of judgement against Gog and Magog (Ezek 38:22). However, both the Hebrew and Syriac texts refer to Job in v. 9a; the Greek translator probably interpreted the name איוב as "enemy", from the root איב "to be hostile". Thus ὄμβρος seems to be the hurricane in which God manifests himself to Job (Job 38:1) (Palmisano, 2016, p. 474; Skehan & Di Lella, 1987, p. 542). Additionally, in classical Greek, the term indicates a thunderstorm, a downpour sent by Zeus and, in some instances, a storm of blood or fire (Montanari, 2025, *s.v.* ὄμβρος). If we also consider the context under study, it is therefore evident that ὄμβρος designates a particular theological storm, linked to the direct will of God.

The term δρόσος is common. It appears frequently in the LXX (there are 54 occurrences). In various contexts, dew appears as a gift from heaven, for example, during the wilderness journey narrated in Exodus (Exod 16:13; Num 11:9). In other contexts, it is used as a metaphor: in Hos 14:6, God himself will be like the dew for Israel; in Mic 5:6, the remnant of Jacob will be like the dew sent by the Lord amongst many

nations. The two texts in which the term appears most frequently are Judg 6:37–40 (four occurrences), where it is evident that the dew comes directly from God – Gideon explicitly asks God for dew on the fleece as a divine sign and receives it – and Dan 3:50. 64. 68. However, the clearest evidence of the connection between the dew of Dan 3:64 and God is found in its immediate context (Collins, 1993, p. 206). In Dan 3:50, the angel comes down and brings a "dew wind" into the furnace to save the three young men, so that they can sing their thanksgiving.

In addition, the term also occurs later, in v. 68, among the works under the heavens, where it is associated with snowfall, a purely atmospheric phenomenon. Rather than an inconsistency, this repetition is intentional. It suggests the presence of two distinct types of dew: a theologised dew, linked directly to the divine will, and a common dew, understood merely as an atmospheric agent.

Thus, both the lexical and contextual analyses converge to support the placement of v. 64 within the celestial section.

The following table presents the arguments for the placement of v. 64 (ὄμβρος καὶ δρόσος) within the celestial section (vv. 57–64).

Lexical	ὄμβρος as divine storm	All four LXX occurrences (Deut 32:2; Wis 16:16; Sir 49:9; Dan 3:64) denote a storm of direct divine origin, not an ordinary atmospheric phenomenon.
Lexical	two distinct types of δρόσος	δρόσος as being of divine origin (Judg 6:37–40; Dan 3:50. 64); δρόσος as a common atmospheric agent (Dan 3:68)
Context	Dan 3:50: immediate context	The angel brings a πνεῦμα δρόσου into the furnace to rescue the three youths: the δρόσος of v. 50, like that of v. 64, is thus a direct miraculous act of God, not a natural element.
Intertext	ὄμβρος and δρόσος only in Deut 32:2	Rain and dew descend as God's word from above: the criterion is divine origin rather than atmospheric location.

b. Heavenly praise under the heavens (vv. 65–73)

The works situated under the heavens, within the cosmo-terrestrial realm and the atmosphere, follow. These are identified as "atmospheric elements" (Klein, 2013, p. 262) and "meteorological phenomena" (DiTommaso, 2021, p. 374). The list is expansive and arranged in a seemingly haphazard manner, including atmospheric and meteorological phenomena (winds, dew, snowfall, ice, snow, frost, lightning, clouds);

thermal and climatic variations with associated elements (fire, burning of the cold, cold, ice, heat); temporal and luminous cycles (nights, days, light, darkness).

A certain preference for cold and wet winter phenomena is evident (Dan 3:67. 68. 69. 70. 73) (Alonso Schökel & Sicre Díaz, 1996, p. 1435). This can be explained both by the arid conditions of the Middle East, where water scarcity makes all rain, snow and frost a blessing (Di Lella, 1995, pp. 80–81) and by the context of the Song, in which the three young men are saved from the fire (Bogaert, 1993, pp. 28–29; Di Lella, 2008, p. 59).

Verse 65 functions simultaneously as a transitional element and a section header. The "title" "all you winds" (v. 65) acts as a structural bridge between the "direct" works of God and subsequent meteorological phenomena, thereby operating as a double-duty modifier.

The winds (πνεύματα) belong to the sub-heavenly realm as meteorological agents, yet their association with divine action (Gen 8:1; Jon 4:8; Exod 10:13. 19; 14:21; Num 11:31) links them also to the "theologicalized" works of the preceding section.

In addition, the function of verse 65 as a double-duty modifier is also supported by the fact that it centrally divides the third stanza, leaving exactly eight verses on either side.

Stanza 4: Earthly praise, from earth to humanity

c. The earthly praise of terrestrial creatures (vv. 74–81)

All beings that exist on the earth are listed in vv. 74–81. Here, the imperative to praise encompasses elements of physical geography (mountains, hills, seas, rivers, springs); plant life (v. 76: "every element that grows/sprouts on the earth") and animal life (sea monsters, fish, birds, wild and domestic animals).

The "earth" itself is exhorted to bless the Lord (v. 74). The noun γῆ can be interpreted both as an abstract term (earth understood as a global terrestrial whole) (Gloger, 2024, p. 280) and as a concrete term (earth understood as soil, terrain, surface) (Moore, 1977, p. 72). However, the particular structural function of this verse suggests an abstract interpretation

encompassing all earthly creation. Earlier, multiple heavens could be envisaged (οὐρανοί Dan 3:59), as presented in ancient cosmology – in Babylon there were three, in the Bible three to seven (1 Kgs 8:27; 2 Cor 12:2), seven to nine among the Greeks and seven heavens are also found in the Quran (sura 78:12) (Ravasi, 1985, p. 972). Now the earth is unique and contains within itself all plant and animal life (Gloger, 2024, p. 277).

Plant life (v. 76) is presented in an unusual way, without naming any plants, but using the substantival participle of φύω (to spring up, to put forth shoots; to grow). In this way, the fundamental character of these beings is highlighted: growing and sprouting in an almost mysterious way.

The list ends with every animal in the waters – represented by three types of water bodies: seas, rivers and springs (vv. 78–77) – in the sky (v. 80), and on the earth (v. 81). The repetition of the adjective πᾶς ("All") in the three verses underlines the universality of the animal world. The order of animals (fish, birds and land animals, up to humans) corresponds to the order of the fifth and sixth days of creation (Gen 1:20–25) (Di Lella, 2008, p. 61; Moore, 1977, p. 73).

d. The earthly praise of men (vv. 82–88)

The call to humankind (vv. 82–88) concludes the Canticle by presenting, with a progression from the general to the particular, different categories of human beings called to praise.

The list can be divided into the following categories: generic humanity (οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων "Sons of men" – all humanity, although v. 82 functions as the section's title – and "Israel" – one people in particular); religious humanity ("priests, servants of the Lord, righteous, devotees and humbles"); "Historical" (narrative) humanity ("Ananias, Azariah and Mishael"). The progression culminates with direct mention of the three narrative protagonists. They themselves also express the specific cause of praise: salvation obtained. In this way, the experience of salvation in history motivates and justifies the universal call to praise.

In this section, the list emphasises religious humanity (vv. 84–87) as if to suggest that each person – from humanity in general, but especially

from Israel – must adopt this disposition to worship God in a manner acceptable to Him. This disposition is defined by the various traits of those summoned to praise. Indeed, verses 86–87 call upon the righteous, the holy and the humble. These two verses form a parallelistic chiasmus and must therefore be read together. The religious men of the Canticle are the "righteous" (δίκαιοι), the "saints" (ὅσιοι) and the "humble" (ταπεινοί) with regard to the "spirit" (πνεῦμα), the "soul" (ψυχή) and the "heart" (καρδία). This encompasses every aspect of their being. In the context of Dan 3, it is clear that the first "humble, holy and righteous" are Azariah, Ananias and Misael (Di Lella, 1995, p. 84), who accept martyrdom out of faithfulness to the law (so they are righteous), entrusting their oppression to God (and this is the disposition of the humble; cf. Dan 3:37), praying in the manner of the psalms (the ὅσιοι [חָסִידִים] are the faithful of the Psalter who present their entire lives to God in prayer). Moreover, in the Song they appear as those who understand the wisdom of creation and the ways of God underlying it (as the "saints" (ὅσιοι) in Sir 39:24).

The reasons for praise are expressed by four parallel subordinate clauses, which form a double chiasmus (v. 88). These clauses use three synonymous verbs: ἐξαιρέω (to deliver someone from peril or confining circumstance, set free, deliver, rescue); σῴζω (to preserve, save from both natural and eternal dangers and afflictions [e.g. judgement, sin]: to save, keep alive); ῥύομαι (to rescue from danger, save, rescue, deliver, preserve). These are well-attested in the LXX and their use together serves to encompass each type of salvation: from the Exodic one (the paradigm of every act of salvation for Israel; Exod 3:8; 6:6; 12:27; 14:30; Deut 33:29) to the eschatological one (Isa 63:16; Ezek 37:23; Zech 9:9. 16; 10:6; 12:7; Zeph 3:17. 19).

e. Global conclusion (vv. 89–90): Summary imperatives and general reasons for praise

The Canticle ends with the appeal to all the Lord's worshippers, serving as a synthesis of all the previous categories invoked, both cosmic and human.

The last exhortation (v. 90) addresses "all who worship the Lord" (πάντες οἱ σεβόμενοι τὸν κύριον). The verb used (σέβω) means "to express

in gestures, rites, or ceremonies one's allegiance or devotion to deity" (Bauer, 2010, *s.v.* σέβω). In the context of Azariah's Prayer, the three singers are understood as worshippers (σεβόμενοι) upon whom shame and dishonour (αἰσχύνη καὶ ὄνειδος) have fallen (Dan 3:33).

Particularly significant is the occurrence of the participle σεβόμενοι in Isa 66:14. In this text, σεβόμενοι translates עֲבָדָיו (his servants), designating those to whom the "hand of the Lord" will reveal itself. The context of Isa 66 has a wholly universal character, an aspect that closely associates it with the Canticle. From this perspective, the σεβόμενοι are his servants, that is, those who worship him and recognise him as the true God. Nebuchadnezzar is the first concrete example of a worshipper after the Canticle: to him the "hand of God" manifested itself when he witnessed the miraculous salvation of the three young men.

The Canticle therefore ends with the most universal invitation: all who recognise the Lord as God and worship him – i.e. the entire creation previously listed – are exhorted to praise the "God of the gods" (a Hebrew superlative construction indicating the supreme God), since his mercy knows no temporal or spatial limits.

This universal invitation is appropriately placed at the end of the praise of humanity; indeed, the human being is the only creature who possesses the authority to call all the works of the Lord to the duty of blessing Him (Frizzell, 1981, p. 46). This general appeal to acknowledge and praise the Lord can only be made by human beings who, having been created in the image of God, are unique among all creatures in being able to command the rest of creation to acknowledge, bless, and sing hymns to God, recognising His kindness and endless mercy.

Conclusion

Looking at the structure as a whole, it is possible to identify a chiastic macrostructure organised around the theme of praise. In the blessing section, the praise ascends from a historical-earthly idea to a cosmic idea, while in the exhortation section, the praise slowly descends from heaven (cosmic idea) to the earth and specifically to the history of the

three men in the furnace (earthly-historical idea). Thus, the poetic arc follows an earth–heaven, heaven–earth trajectory, incorporating the endless cosmic prayer of heaven into each historical prayer.

The following table shows the correspondences between the stanzas.

Stanza 1 (A) vv. 52–53	**Stanza 4 (A) vv. 74–90**
"God of the Fathers; Name"	"Sons of men; Israel… Ananias, Azariah, Misael"
Historical-earthly praise / Temple	Historical-earthly praise / Religious humanity
Stanza 2 (B) vv. 54–56	**Stanza 3 (B) vv. 57–73**
"Firmament of heaven"	"heavens, angels, waters… lightnings and clouds"
Cosmos as a place of praise	Cosmos as a subject of praise

The following table summarises the proposed structure.

Structure			
A	52–53	Blessing – Stanza 1: From history to the temple v. 52 historical-earthly praise v. 53 Temple	
B	54–56	Blessing – Stanza 2: From the temple to the cosmos v. 54 Temple (God reigns over the cosmos from the temple) vv. 55–56 cosmic-universal praise	
B	57–73	Cosmic exhortation – Stanza 3: Cosmic praise, from heaven to earth	
		vv. 57–64	a. Heavenly praise above the heavens
			heavens, Lord's angels, waters above the heavens, powers, sun and moon, stars of heaven, storms and dew.
		vv. 65–73	b. Heavenly praise under the heavens
			winds, fire and burning [of cold], cold and heat, dew and snowfall, nights and days, light and darkness, ice and cold, frost and snow, lightning and clouds.
A	74–90	Cosmic exhortation – Stanza 4: Earthly praise, from earth to humanity	
		vv. 74–81	c. The earthly praise of terrestrial creatures
			mountains and hills, plants (everything that grows on the earth), seas and rivers, springs, sea monsters and fish (everything that moves in the waters), birds, wild and domestic animals.
		vv. 82–88	d. The earthly praise of men
			Generic humanity: sons of men, Israel. Religious humanity: priests, servants of the Lord, the righteous, devotees and the humble " Historical" (narrative) humanity: Ananias, Azariah, Misael.
		vv. 89–90	e. Global conclusion: Summary imperatives and general reasons for praise
			All the Lord's worshippers

Abstract

The descent of praise. A Literary Structure of the Song of the Three Jews (Dan 3:52–90)

This article proposes a poetic and structural analysis of the Canticle of the Three Young Men (Greek Dan 3:52–90) in the Theodotion version, the recension most widely attested in the manuscript tradition and most commonly used in ecclesial liturgy. Working from the critical text of Ziegler (1999), the study identifies a four-stanza structure organised around two main sections – a Blessing (vv. 52–56) and a Cosmic Exhortation (vv. 57–90) – and argues for a chiastic macrostructure governing the composition as a whole. In the Blessing, praise ascends from the historical-earthly sphere (the God of the Fathers and his Name) through the Temple to the cosmic-universal realm (God's throne and the firmament of heaven). In the Exhortation, an inverse movement unfolds: beginning from the heavenly realm above and below the skies (vv. 57–73), praise descends progressively through the earthly creation (vv. 74–81) to humanity in its various categories (vv. 82–88), culminating in the three protagonists whose personal experience of salvation both grounds and motivates the universal demand for praise. The analysis draws on lexical, grammatical and intertextual arguments, with particular attention to key terms such as ἄβυσσος, δρόσος, ὄμβρος and σεβόμενοι, and situates the Canticle within the broader tradition of biblical cosmological hymnody. The article concludes that the poetic trajectory of the Canticle – earth to heaven, heaven to earth – serves to inscribe every historical prayer within the unending cosmic praise that resounds before God.

Keywords: Daniel 3; Canticle of the Three Young Men; Benedicite; Septuagint; Theodotion; biblical poetry; hymn structure; deuterocanonical additions; Greek Daniel; biblical cosmology

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6 For abbreviations, see: Schwertner, S. M. (2014). *IATG³: Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete: Zeitschriften, Serien, Lexika, Quellenwerke mit bibliographischen Angaben* (3rd rev. and expanded ed.). De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110407273

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