

BBH Workbook p. 91 #2

(Eccl 3:17)

אַתְּ־הַצַּדִּיק וְאֶת־הַרְשָׁע יִשְׁפֹּט הָאֱלֹהִים

אַתְּ

Context indicates that the אַתְּ which begins the present sentence is the definite direct object marker. (On this see further below.)

MORPHOLOGY

The form אַתְּ (pointed את when not attached to another word by means of a Maqqef) may be either

- (a) the definite direct object marker, or
- (b) the preposition "with."

For example,

(A) DEFINITE DIRECT OBJECT MARKER

אַתְּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ (God created) the heavens
and the earth (Gen 1:1)

אַתְּ־נִינְוָה (he built) Nineveh
(Gen 10:11)

(B) PREPOSITION "WITH"

אַתְּ־הָאֶבֶן וְאֶת־הָעֵץ with stone and with wood

(Jer 3:9)

את יַעֲקֹב with Jacob (Exod 1:1)

Context indicates when אֶת/אֵת is the definite direct object marker and when it is the preposition “with.”

When the definite direct object marker and the preposition “with” appear with pronominal suffixes, their forms are distinct. For example,

(A) DEFINITE DIRECT OBJECT MARKER

אֹתוֹ (you shall serve) him (Deut 10:20)

(B) PREPOSITION “WITH”

אִתּוֹ (the guests who were) with him
(1 Kgs 1:41)

הַצְדִּיק

הַצְדִּיק, “the righteous (person),” consists of

- the definite article (הַ)
- the adjective צְדִיק, here functioning substantively

Adjectives can function in any of three ways: attributively, predicatively, and substantively.

An **attributive adjective** agrees in definiteness or indefiniteness with and always follows the noun it modifies. The adjectives in the following phrases are functioning attributively:

הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה	the good land	(Deut 1:35)
רָעָה גְדוֹלָה	great calamity	(Dan 9:12)
צֶמַח צְדִיק	a righteous branch	(Jer 23:5)
גּוֹי גְדוֹל עֲצוּם וְרַב	a great, mighty, and numerous nation	(Deut 26:5)

A **predicate adjective** never takes the article. It therefore

- agrees in indefiniteness with the noun it modifies if that noun is indefinite; e.g.,

רַחֲמֵי רְשָׁעִים	the compassion of the
אֲכֹזֵרִי	wicked is cruel
	(Prov 12:10)

- disagrees in definiteness with the noun it modifies if that noun is definite; e.g.,

זָקֵן הָאִישׁ	the man was old
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(1 Sam 4:18)

A predicate adjective may precede or follow the noun (or, as in the following cases, the pronoun) it modifies. For example,

טָמֵא הוּא it is unclean (Lev 11:4)

הוּא חָכָם he is wise (Isa 31:2)

A **substantive adjective** is usually (but not always, especially in poetry) articular and does not modify a noun; rather, it itself acts as a noun. The following adjectives are functioning substantively:

הַטּוֹב וְהַיָּשָׁר the good and the right (Deut 12:28)
(i.e., what is good and what is right)

הַיְפָה the beautiful one (Song 1:8)

הָעֵצֵל the lazy person (Prov 10:26)

GRAMMAR

We know צַדִּיק in Eccl 3:17 is functioning substantively because it does not modify a noun but is itself acting as a noun.

וְאֵת־ consists of

- the conjunction Waw
- the definite direct object marker אֵת־

GRAMMAR

As with אֵת־ earlier in the present sentence, it is context that indicates that the אֵת־ here is the definite direct object marker and not the preposition “with.” (On this see further below.)

הַרְשָׁע

הַרְשָׁע, “the wicked (person),” consists of

- the definite article
- the adjective רָשָׁע, here functioning substantively

MORPHOLOGY

When the definite article is prefixed to רָשָׁע, the Resh rejects the Daghesh Forte of the article and the Pathach of the article lengthens to Qamets in compensation.

יְשַׁפֵּט

יִשְׁפֹּט, “(he) will judge,” is the Qal Imperfect 3ms of שָׁפַט.

הָאֱלֹהִים

הָאֱלֹהִים, “God,” consists of

- the definite article
- the noun אֱלֹהִים

GRAMMAR

Both the anarthrous form אֱלֹהִים and the articular form הָאֱלֹהִים are employed in the Bible to refer to God.

הָאֱלֹהִים is the subject of יִשְׁפֹּט.

Excursus: The Two אֶת־

We are now in a position to understand why the two אֶת־s in Eccl 3:17 are the definite direct object marker and not the preposition “with.”

There are two grammatically possible ways of translating Eccl 3:17:

- (1) *God will judge the righteous (person) and the wicked (person).*
- (2) *God will judge **with** the righteous (person) and **with** the wicked (person).*

In sentence (1), both אֶת־ are taken to be the definite direct object marker. In sentence (2), both אֶת־ are taken to be the preposition “with.”

(It is also grammatically possible to take one אֶת־ as the definite direct object marker and translate the other one “with,” though such an analysis is clearly incorrect.)

The meaning of all the words in Eccl 3:17 taken together, as well as common sense and a knowledge of theology, informs us that sentence (1) above is the correct translation.

Excursus: Parts of Speech

Eccl 3:17 contains the following major parts of speech:

אֶת־הַצְּדִיק	DIRECT OBJECT
וְאֶת־הַרְשָׁע	DIRECT OBJECT
יִשְׁפֹּט	VERB
הָאֱלֹהִים	SUBJECT

Final Translation

God will judge the righteous (person) and the wicked (person).