

BBH Workbook p. 91 #2

(Eccl 3:17)

את-הצדיק ואת-הרע ישפט האלhim

את-

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

MORPHOLOGY

The form **את-** (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

את הַשְׁמִים וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ (God created) the heavens
and the earth (Gen 1:1)

אֶת-נִינְוָה (he built) Nineveh

(Gen 10:11)

(B) PREPOSITION “WITH”

אֶת-הָאָבָן וְאֶת-הַעֲץ with stone and with wood

(Jer 3:9)

את יעקב with Jacob (Exod 1:1)

Context indicates when **את/את** 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

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

(B) PREPOSITION “WITH”

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

הצדיק

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

- the definite article (**ה-**)
- the adjective **צדיק**, here functioning substantively

GRAMMAR

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 הַטוֹבָה the good land (Deut 1:35)

רָעָה גְּדֹלָה great calamity (Dan 9:12)

צָמֵח צִדְיק a righteous branch (Jer 23:5)

גְּדוֹלָה עַצְוֹם וּרְבָה 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.,

רְחִמָּי רְשָׁעִים the compassion of the wicked is cruel
אֲכַזְׂרִי (Prov 12:10)

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

זָקֵן הָאִישׁ the man was old

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

הַיְפָה the beautiful one (Song 1:8)

הַעֲצָל the lazy person (Prov 10:26)

GRAMMAR

We know **צדיק** 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 **וְאֵת** 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.)

הַרְשָׁעָה

הַרְשָׁעָה, “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.

יִשְׁפּט

טִישֶׁפְתָּ, “(he) will judge,” is the Qal Imperfect 3ms of **טִשְׁפַּךְ**.

האלֹהִים

הָאֱלֹהִים, "God," consists of

- the definite article
 - the noun **אלֹהִים**

GRAMMAR

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

ישפט האלים is the subject of **בְּ**.

Excursus: The Two אֶתְּנָאָתִים

We are now in a position to understand why the two **בְּנָאָת**s in Ecc 3:17 are the definite direct object marker and not the preposition "with."

There are two grammatically possible ways of translating Ecc 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 **תְּנָאֹת**s are taken to be the definite direct object marker. In sentence (2), both **תְּנָאֹת**s are taken to be the preposition “with.”

(It is also grammatically possible to take one **תְּנָאֹת** 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:

את־ה־צדיק	DIRECT OBJECT
וְאֶת־ה־רֹשֵׁעַ	DIRECT OBJECT
יִשְׁפַּט	VERB
הָאֱלֹהִים	SUBJECT

Final Translation

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