APPENDIX D

THE UNITY AND LITERARY STRUCTURE
Of The Book of Daniel

INTRODUCTION

In order to extract the *message* of the book from the text, it is necessary to first understand the composition and authorial design of the book as a whole. Yet it is at this very point that we encounter problems, for critical scholarship in general has called into question the very idea of the book's unity and authorship. Although there are certainly exceptions to be found, critical scholars generally maintain that chapters 7–12 were written subsequent to the earlier chapters by an author living at the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the 2nd century BC.[1] Furthermore, the author's alleged purpose was to encourage his fellow Jews who were suffering persecution under Antiochus. This, then, is said to be the controlling purpose of the book, and the other material (particularly chapters 1–6) is then explained in some secondary way.

Thus, Stefan Beyerle, who distinguishes the court tales in Daniel 1–6 from the latter visions of Daniel 7–12, argues that these major blocks arose from different social settings: "if the text is taken as a starting-point, the court-tales and visions—representing two different genres—go back to different social settings (Sitze im Leben): the court-tales reflecting the fate of Jews in the diaspora, and the visions offering examples of persecuted, pious Jews in Jerusalem."[2]

That is not to say that all critical scholars have rejected the book's unity. Exceptions could be found with Otto Eissfeldt and H. H. Rowley.[3] Rowley, in particular, has argued strongly for the unity of the book, though he also seeks to explain the entire book in light of Antiochus and the Maccabean revolt (the whole composition being written in the 2nd century BC). But for the most part, critical scholars

---

[1] One common argument for the late dating of Daniel is the claim that these chapters are representative of *apocalyptic* literature, a literary genre that did not arise until well after the 6th century BC. Not all critical scholars, however, are convinced that these chapters should be properly labeled as apocalyptic genre. P. Davies, for instance, has argued that chapters 8–12 are not apocalypses but visions that demonstrate eschatology ("Eschatology in the Book of Daniel," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17 [1980]: 33-53). Other scholars see *apocalyptic elements* even in the earlier portions of the book. Recently, Rainer Albertz has argued that chapters 2–7, comprising "the original Aramaic apocalypse" should be dated to the reign of Antiochus III, and that subsequently the "Hebrew author wished to make full use of the older apocalypse during the ongoing rebellion against Antiochus IV Epiphanes (about 165 BC) by supplementing it with new apocalyptic instructions of topical interest (chapters 8,9, and 10–12)" (see especially pages 188-91 of "The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, edited by John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, 171-204, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 83,1 [Leiden/Boston/Cologne: Brill, 2001]).

[2] Beyerle, "The Book of Daniel and Its Social Setting," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, 211.

[3] Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament, An Introduction*, translated by Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965): 517-29; and H. H. Rowley, "The Unity of the Book of Daniel," in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965): 249-80. Cf. R. H. Pfeifer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1941): 764.

have rejected the idea of a single author and a unified composition of the book.[4] For them, chapters 7–12 are primary, and it was the author of these chapters who first incorporated chapters 1–6 into the book. The implication of such an approach, of course, is that the original purpose and meaning of chapters 1–6 are now different from what they originally were.

For those who reject the Danielic authorship of the book in the 6th century BC, theories abound as to how and when the final composition came into being. John J. Collins, in his noteworthy critical commentary in the Hermenia series, suggests that the Hebrew-Aramaic text of Daniel evolved through several stages:[5]

1. The individual tales of chaps. 2–6 were originally separate, although we cannot be sure of the form in which they originally circulated.

2. There was probably an initial collection of 3:31–6:29, which allowed the development of two textual traditions in these chapters.[6]

3. The Aramaic tales were collected, with the introductory chap. 1, in the Hellenistic period.

4. Daniel 7 was composed in Aramaic early in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, before the desecration of the temple. Chapters 1–7 may have circulated briefly as an Aramaic book.

5. Between 167 and 164 B.C.E. the Hebrew chapters 8–12 were added, and chap. 1 was translated to provide a Hebrew frame for the Aramaic chapters. The glosses in 12:11-12 were added before the rededication of the temple.

    Others have proposed alternative theories, but as Matthias Henze has put it, "It is clear, then, that the textual history of the court tales differs significantly from that of the apocalyptic visions."[7] Yet the bifurcation of material based on literary genre alone (i.e., apocalyptic visions in 7–12 versus narrative stories in 1–6) fails to justify a redactional composition of the book stemming from different eras. As some scholars have pointed out, even the court tales in the first half of the book have *apocalyptic themes* within them.[8]

---

[4] More recently, Jan-Wim Wesselius has differed from prevailing critical opinion by asserting the entire book was composed as a whole just before the beginning of the Hasmonean revolt, rather than by the redaction of pre-existing texts ("Discontinuity, Congruence and the Making of the Hebrew Bible," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 13:1 [1999]: 24-77).

[5] John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermenia Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 38. For a similar theory regarding the composition of Daniel, see Lester L. Grabbe, "A Dan(iel) for All Seasons: For Whom Was Daniel Important?" in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, edited by John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, 229-46, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 83,1 (Leiden/Boston/Cologne: Brill, 2001).

[6] Collin's rationale for separating chapters 3:31–6:28 from the larger Aramaic section is the fact that the Old Greek translation of these chapters significantly differs from that of the MT and the Greek of Theodotion. For him, this is evidence of a different Semitic *Vorlage*, which suggests that this material once circulated as an independent document.

[7] Matthias Henze, "The Narrative Frame of Daniel: A Literary Assessment," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods* 32 (2001): 5-24.

[8] T. A. Boogaart, "Daniel 6: A Tale of Two Empires," *Reformed Review* 39:2 (Winter 1986): 106-112. Summarizing M. Nel's article on the literary genre of the stories in Daniel (see "Literêre genre van die Daniëlverhale," *In die Skriflig* 35 [2001]: 591-606), Christopher T. Begg writes, "He concludes that there is no consensus regarding the classification of the genre of the stories and that the lack of an agreed-on system for the

Conservative evangelicals, however, insist on the unified authorship of the book by the historic person of Daniel living in the 6th century BC.[9] This, however, does not imply that all would agree on the book's literary structure or the author's controlling purpose for writing. In general, most scholars (critical and evangelical) would see ten primary units to the composition of the book, corresponding to the chapter divisions, except for the fact that chapters 10–12 form one complete vision (and hence one unit). Historically, the tendency has been to see a major division at the end of chapter six, with chapters 1–6 describing "court tales" from the life of Daniel and chapters 7–12 recording a series of visions given personally to Daniel.[10]

Traditional Division of Daniel	
Court-tales From The Life of Daniel	Visions Given To Daniel
Chapters 1–6	Chapters 7–12

---

classification of genres impedes the discussion" (*Old Testament Abstracts* 25:2 [June 2002]: 304).

[9] For a general evangelical treatment of the book's unity, historicity and early dating, see R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1969): 1106-27; Gleason L. Archer, Jr., "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1985): 4-6, 12-26; and Bruce K. Waltke, "The Date of the Book of Daniel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 133 (Oct-Dec 1976): 319-29. Several evangelical studies involving linguistic analysis have demonstrated that Daniel's Aramaic and Hebrew clearly antedate the state of the languages in the second century. See G. L. Archer, Jr., "The Aramaic of the 'Genesis Apocryphon' Compared with the Aramaic of Daniel," *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, edited by J. Barton Payne (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1970): 160-69; "The Hebrew of Daniel Compared with the Qumran Sectarian Documents," *The Law and the Prophets*, edited by J. H. Skilton (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974): 470-81; K. A. Kitchen, "The Aramaic of Daniel," *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale, 1965): 31-79; and Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The Greek Words in Daniel in the Light of Greek Influence in the Near East," in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, 170-200.

[10] Regarding "court tales" as a specific literary genre, see Richard D. Patterson, "The Key Role of Daniel 7," *Grace Theological Journal* 12:2 (1991): 248. He provides the following insights: "Such stories have as their central plot an account of the heroic exploits of a godly exile in a foreign court. This person's godly walk and wisdom prove his worth in various tests. He then rises to such personal prominence that he is able to improve the well-being of his people or even effect their deliverance. These narratives customarily include such elements as: (1) a specific test involving faith, morality, or compromise of covenantal standards, (2) the friendliness of some resident court official, (3) besting the foreigners in contests or conflict, and (4) an unexpected extraordinary resolution to a besetting problem" (248). Elsewhere, Patterson has argued on the basis of comparing "court tales" from the first and second millennia BC that the material in Daniel 1–6 must predate the Hellenistic or late Persian periods for their origin (see "Holding on to Daniel's Court Tales," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36:4 [Dec 1993]: 445-54).

Such a division (though thematically correct) suffers from the linguistic observation that all the material in 2:4–7:28 is written in Aramaic, whereas the other material is in Hebrew. Why would the author deliberately choose to write a significant portion of the book in Aramaic, and why would he choose to break the material following chapter 7? Our understanding of the structural composition of the book must take this linguistic division into account. In this study, I would like to highlight two significant studies that would call into question this traditional division of the book, both of which rely on the paralleling of key motifs between chapters. Following an evaluation of these two works, I would like to propose my own scheme for understanding the structure of Daniel and then deduce a purpose statement from this for the message of the book as a whole.

LENGLET'S CONCENTRIC STRUCTURE FOR CHAPTERS 2–7

In 1972, Lenglet put forth a significant article arguing that chapters 2–7 were a literary unit, not only because of the commonality of Aramaic, but because they were carefully composed in a concentric structure.[11] He observed that there was a paralleling relationship between chapters 2 and 7, 3 and 6, and 4 and 5 based on similar thematic concerns. His theory could be summarized by the following chart:

Lenglet's Concentric Structure for Daniel 2–7					
A	B	C	C'	B'	A'
Four-fold Periodization of Gentile Powers to Rule Over Israel	Divine Deliverance of Those Faithful to God (From Furnace)	Divine Humbling of Babylonian King (Nebuchad-nezzar)	Divine Humbling of Babylonian King (Belshazzar)	Divine Deliverance of Those Faithful to God (From Lion's Den)	Four-fold Periodization of Gentile Powers to Rule Over Israel
Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7

The positive factor about Lenglet's structure is that it corresponds quite well with the Aramaic section of the book. Yet it must be conceded that chapter 7 is not merely a duplication of chapter 2. It seems to reiterate the general scheme of four kingdoms, but goes further in presenting new aspects (the "little horn") as well as developing further some of the matters only lightly treated in chapter 2 (e.g., the Messianic role). Nevertheless, Lenglet's scheme is quite plausible.

Furthermore, it is doubtful that the Aramaic portions of Daniel are merely late material incorporated into a document comprising the latter chapters of the book (an argument also used to assert their historical unreliability). Their affinity with known fifth-century Aramaic documents argues for their early composition. Douglas E. Fox writes,
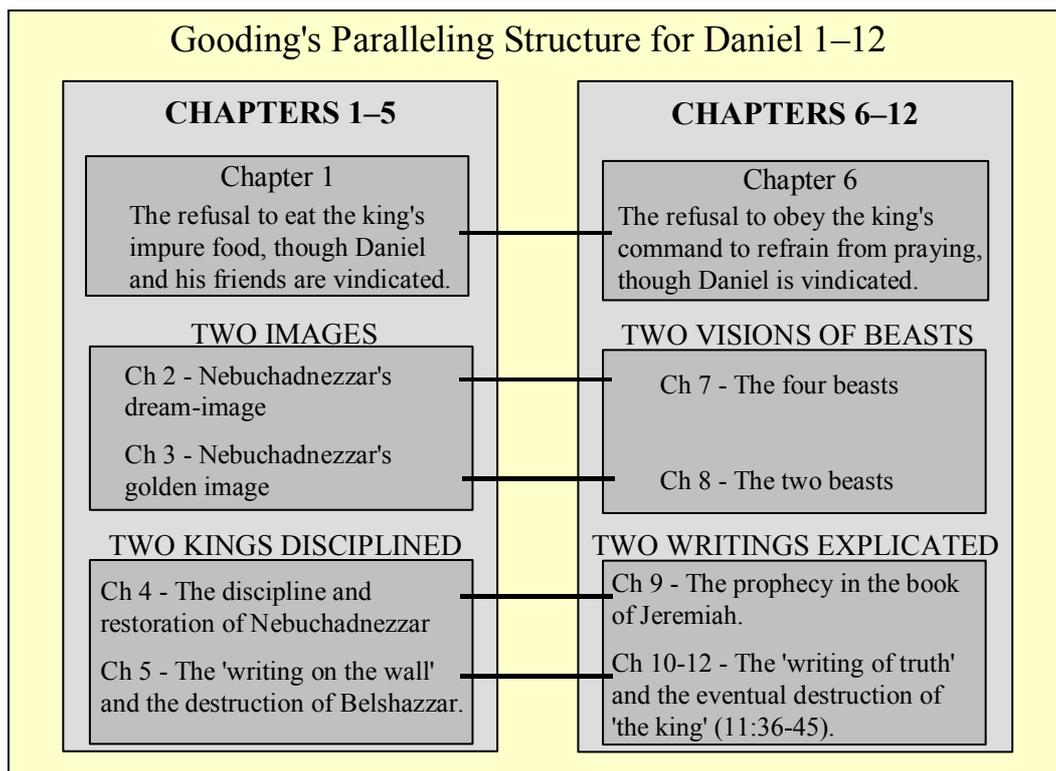
> Recent studies on the Aramaic of Daniel indicate that it is closely akin to the fifth-century Imperial Aramaic of Ezra and the Elephantine papyri, but very different from the later Palestinian derivations of Imperial Aramaic witnessed by the Genesis Apocryphon and the Targum of Job found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. It now appears that "the Genesis Apocryphon furnishes very powerful evidence that the Aramaic of Daniel comes from a considerably earlier period than the second century BC." Of the fragments of Daniel that have

---

[11] A. Lenglet, "La structure littéraire de Daniel 2–7," *Biblica* 53 (1972): 169-90.

been found at Qumran, the points in the book where the language changes from Hebrew to Aramaic are attested. This means the present structure of Daniel, with its changes between Aramaic and Hebrew, is very ancient. With its early variety of Aramaic, Daniel is certainly earlier than the Aramaic found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. For these reasons, no one today should assert that Daniel is dependent on Ben Sira: the early Aramaic in Daniel precludes such a possibility. So discoveries since Nöldeke's day make his suggestion that "Daniel" used Ben Sira highly suspect.[12]

GOODING'S STRUCTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Writing in 1981, David Gooding took notice of Lenglet's work, but suggested a radically different patterning that encompassed the entire book. He wrote, ". . . further observation suggests that the pattern is deliberate, that the book's ten component parts were intentionally arranged in two groups of five each, with chapter 5 forming the climax of the first group, and chapters 10–12 the climax of the second."[13]   So now the turning point of the book becomes the end of chapter 5 rather than the end of chapter 7 (or ch 6 as the traditional view would have it). Gooding's theory does have the advantage of being more intricate, for there are not only *binding relationships* within each of the two cycles but also relationships between the paralleling members of each cycle.

Gooding's Paralleling Structure for Daniel 1–12

CHAPTERS 1–5	CHAPTERS 6–12
Chapter 1 The refusal to eat the king's impure food, though Daniel and his friends are vindicated.	**Chapter 6** The refusal to obey the king's command to refrain from praying, though Daniel is vindicated.
TWO IMAGES Ch 2 - Nebuchadnezzar's dream-image Ch 3 - Nebuchadnezzar's golden image	**TWO VISIONS OF BEASTS** Ch 7 - The four beasts Ch 8 - The two beasts
TWO KINGS DISCIPLINED Ch 4 - The discipline and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar Ch 5 - The 'writing on the wall' and the destruction of Belshazzar.	**TWO WRITINGS EXPLICATED** Ch 9 - The prophecy in the book of Jeremiah. Ch 10-12 - The 'writing of truth' and the eventual destruction of 'the king' (11:36-45).

---

[12] Douglas E. Fox, "Ben Sira on OT Canon Again: The Date of Daniel," *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (Fall 1987): 344-345.

[13] David W. Gooding, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel and Its Implications," *Tyndale Bulletin* 32 (1981): 43-79.

Although the horizontal relationships between the corresponding pairs are not readily apparent in each case from the above diagram, to his credit Gooding does endeavor to explain them in the course of his article. As support of his view, he notes that the vessels of the Temple introduced in chapter 1 appear again at the climax to group 1 in chapter 5, which tends to bind the entire series together as a unit. In the second group, there is a motif that plays itself out, namely the progressive deterioration in the attitudes of the Gentile emperors to God. Gooding writes,

> But just as Nebuchadnezzar's idolatrous and unsatisfactory treatment of the divine vessels in Group 1 led on to Belshazzar's immeasurably worse treatment of those vessels, so Darius' temporary banning of prayer to Israel's (and anybody else's) God in Group 2 heads a progression that gets steadily worse until the ultimate horror, when the king of 11:36ff exalts himself above every god, the God of Israel included. . . . It rightly forms the climax of Group 2 as Belshazzar's impiety formed the climax of Group 1.[14]

Thus (in Gooding's view) the fifth item in each group forms a marked climax to the thought-flow within the group. His structural understanding thus influences his conception of the book as a whole:

> The total message of the book, then, is nothing less than a survey, part historical and part prophetic, of the whole period of Gentile imperial rule from Nebuchadnezzar's first assault upon Jerusalem and the removal of its Davidic king until the abolition of all Gentile imperial power and the setting up of the Messianic kingdom.[15]

Some might fault Gooding for the fact that chapter six is a "court tale" just like chapters 1–5, thus casting doubt on a major break after chapter 5. In support of Gooding's theory, however, is the fact that chapter 5 brings to a close the *Babylon era*, whereas chapter 6 opens the Medo-Persian era. Although the Babylonian empire will appear again (and ch 8 is dated to that period), the emphasis in the remainder of the book clearly falls on those kingdoms which follow Babylon. Furthermore, Gooding's theory properly *couples* chapters 4 and 5, for both place a stress on royal discipline, and the 5th chapter utilizes elements that had been narrated in the 4th (i.e., the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar's pride). This close association of chapters 4 and 5, however, does not <u>prove</u> Gooding's overall scheme, for Lenglet's theory as well would maintain this connection of chapters 4 and 5.[16]

Despite what appears to be certain plausibility to Gooding's theory, there are certain criticisms that must be faced. First and foremost is the obvious lack of explanation for the Aramaic section in chapters 2–7. He rather cursorily dismisses this matter when he states, ". . . as O. Eissfeldt (528) has said, 'An explanation of the double language which is entirely satisfactory has not yet been proposed by anyone.'"[17] It is extremely difficult to believe that the author had no purpose in composing these chapters in Aramaic, and it is somewhat naïve to assert that there is no satisfactory explanation. I will contend that there is. A second criticism of Gooding in my opinion is that I do not find his case

---

[14] Ibid., 57.

[15] Ibid., 68.

[16] For further help demonstrating the close association of chapters 4 and 5, see the two articles by William H. Shea who argues for a chiastic structure to each: "Further Literary Structures in Daniel 2–7: An Analysis of Daniel 4," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 23:2 (Summer 1985): 193-202; and "Further Literary Structures in Daniel 2–7: An Analysis of Daniel 5, and the Broader Relationships Within Chapters 2–7," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 23:3 (Autumn 1985): 277-95.

[17] Gooding, 54.

arguing for a parallel between chapter 4 and chapter 9 to be convincing (Gooding thinks they have a common theme of "God's discipline on pride"). The danger in this case is the imagining of a parallel that really does not exist (my point is that weak parallels can easily be found between any two literary documents).

Another criticism of Gooding involves his contention of a parallel between chapter 5 (the destruction of Babylon's final ruler) and chapters 10–12 (the destruction of the last Gentile ruler). He states,

> But while in chapter 5 the end concerned is the end of the first Gentile power to destroy Jerusalem and suppress the Judaean kings, the end in chapters 10–12 is that of the last Gentile power; it is in fact nothing less than The End, preceded by an unprecedented time of trouble and accompanied by the resurrection of the dead (12:1-2).[18]

While one could look at the relationship between these chapters in this way, it is not compelling because one could just as easily posit a certain parallel between chapters 7 and 10–12. In the latter case, both culminate with the "beast" (i.e., the Antichrist) that is destroyed. My point is that "parallels" can easily be found, and one must take care not to arbitrarily make more of them than one should. A similar situation exists between chapters 1 and 6 (which Gooding takes as parallel). He observes, "In chapter 1 Daniel refuses to take part in unclean Gentile practice; in chapter 6 he refuses to abstain from Jewish religious practice."[19] While this is true, I find the *deliverance theme* to be a stronger motif behind chapter 6, thus suggesting that a better parallel could be found between chapters 3 and 6 (as Lenglet has called for).

For the reasons stated above (particularly the lack of synchronization with the language shifts), I am not convinced of Gooding's theory. What remains of worth, however, is that in Gooding's scheme (as in Lenglet's) chapter 2 is parallel to chapter 7. Whereas the similarity is obvious (a series of four kingdoms), Gooding has helpfully highlighted the differences as well. Chapter two uses the imagery of a man, whereas chapter seven that of animals. He concludes,

> The pairing of these two chapters, then, with their striking similarities and yet more striking differences, seems to be aimed at calling attention to the fact that there are two different ways of looking at, and estimating the character of, Gentile imperial rule, its strengths and weaknesses. And it is surely a sign of balanced judgment on the part of our author to show that Gentile governments are from one point of view man-like, humane, majestic, but plagued with the weakness of incoherence, and at the same time to show from another point of view that Gentile governments are basically amoral, self-seeking, cruelly destructive, animal-like power-blocs.[20]

MY PROPOSAL: AN OVER-LAPPING STRUCTURE

The traditional approach to the book has been to see the major break for the book after chapter 6, thus dividing the material between the "court tales" and the visions given to Daniel. Lenglet's theory sees the major break after chapter 7. For him, the concentric arrangement of chapters 2–7 supports this decision.[21] Gooding, on the other hand, asserts that the major break falls after chapter 5 based on the

---

[18] Ibid., 63.

[19] Ibid., 63.

[20] Ibid., 61.

[21] More recently, Rainer Albertz has defended the division of the book based on languages, and has argued that the well thought-out structure of Daniel 2–7 makes it highly probable that this stands as a literary

theory of an intricate paralleling structure between chapters 2–5 and chapters 6–12. Of these three theories, only Lenglet's coincides with the linguistic division of the book, i.e., the Aramaic section (ch 2–7) in contrast to the Hebrew section (ch 8–12). Because I feel that the linguistic division is too significant a factor to overlook, Lenglet's theory appears to be more convincing than the other two. While I agree with his theory of a concentric arrangement to chapters 2–7, however, I feel that it is not enough simply to divide the book into two major parts after chapter 7. The structure of the book is more complex than this, and appears to me to involve an "over-lapping" structure. For reasons that I will shortly bring forth, I feel that the book does not have a single dividing point, but rather involves two major divisions that *over-lap* with one another, namely, chapters 2–7 and chapters 7–12. Thus, chapter seven belongs to both halves.

	Concentric Structure Establishing God's Sovereignty Over Gentile Empires						Visions Given to Daniel			
Historical Setting						Vision 1	Vision 2	Vision 3	Vision 4	
	A Dream: Four-Part Image	**B** Refusal To Worship Image	**C** Humb-ling Of King Neb.	**C'** Humb-ling Of King Bel.	**B'** Refusal To Stop Praying	**A'** Four Beasts	Ram & Goat	70 Weeks	Final Vision Antiochus — Antichrist	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10–12	
H	Aramaic						Hebrew			

Three immediately obvious reasons support this view of an over-lapping structure:

1. This takes into account the linguistic division of the book.

2. This recognizes Lenglet's observation of the concentric structure for chapters 2–7.

3. This recognizes that chapter 7 does seem to initiate a series of four visions given to Daniel.

While such reasons alone are enough to support the preceding proposal of an over-lapping structure, I believe that there are even further matters that would confirm this theory.

A.   The Temporal Perspective of the Book

First, we should notice the *temporal perspective* of the book. Chapters 2–6 are primarily (though not exclusively) <u>historical</u>, the focus being on God's dealing with ancient kingdoms in Daniel's own lifetime.[22] Chapters 8–12 are primarily <u>future oriented</u>, the focus being on matters that went beyond the lifetime of Daniel (namely, the days of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the still distant future period of the Antichrist). Chapter 7, however, belongs to both. It tends to

---

unit ("The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel," 178).

[22] I realize that chapter two is not merely *historical*, because the imagery of the statue does have futuristic elements, namely the feet of iron and clay, as well as the (Messianic) "kingdom" that would put an end to all Gentile kingdoms. However, I would contend that the <u>emphasis</u> of the chapter is on the historical past, because the dream is given to Nebuchadnezzar to help him understand that his kingdom is not an *eternal kingdom* but rather one kingdom in a chain of others, all of which will eventually give way to a kingdom established by God. In contrast, chapter seven is a vision given to Daniel, and the emphasis is not upon Babylon's role but the far distant future when the rule of Antichrist will be surpassed by the kingdom given to the "son of man."

reiterate the succession of ancient Gentile kingdoms, yet begins providing more detail about the "latter days" when the Antichrist would arise.

B.   The "Dating Notices" of the Book

Second, we should take note of the dating mechanism of the book. There is a noticeable difference in the way that *dates* are provided beginning with chapter 7. Although we have *date notices* at the beginning of both chapters one and two, the remainder of chapters 1–6 is devoid of these.

> Ch 1:1 – "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, . . ."

> Ch 2:1 – "Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, . . ."

Beginning with chapter 7, however, there is a *date notice* at the head of every major unit within this section:

> Ch 7:1 – "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw . . ."

> Ch 8:1 – "In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared . . ."

> Ch 9:1 – "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, . . . I Daniel observed . . ."

> Ch 10:1 – "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed . . ."

That there is significance to this seems to be confirmed by the further observation that chapters 2–7 are not strictly chronologically arranged (ch 6 concerns the time of Darius, while ch 7 backs up to the earlier time of Belshazzar's kingdom), whereas the visions of chapters 7–12 are arranged in precise chronological order.

C.   The Concluding Motifs to Each Unit

Third, the *concluding motifs* to each of the ten units of the book seem to place an emphasis upon chapter 7. In chapters 1–6 each chapter ends with either an exaltation of Daniel or by God being honored and praise (and in several cases we have both). That is, the concluding paragraph to each chapter contains an *exaltation/honoring motif* (either of Daniel or Daniel's God). Chapter two, for instance, concludes with both an exaltation of Daniel and the honoring of God:

> "Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. The king answered Daniel and said, 'Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.'"

Likewise, chapter six has similar motifs:

> "Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, . . . 'I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion will be forever. He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.' So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

Similar constructions can be found in 1:18-21, 3:28-30 (in this case, Daniel's three friends are exalted), 4:36-37, and 5:29-30. In chapters 8–12, however, the concluding paragraph to each unit generally emphasizes a much different motif, namely, the opposition and defeat of a future

ruler who is determined to crush and afflict the saints of God (see 8:23-27; 9:27; and 11:44-45).[23] In each case, this future ruler is the Antichrist (except 8:23-27 which seems to portray Antiochus IV Epiphanes as a *type* of the Antichrist). Chapter seven appears to be unique, in that both motifs appear in the concluding paragraph, i.e., both the exaltation of God and the opposition/defeat of the future ruler. Notice the words of Daniel 7:25-27:

> "And he [the "little horn"] will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him."

Once again, chapter seven is highlighted as unique and belonging to both the preceding chapters as well as the following chapters.

D.   The "Person" of Narration

Fourth (and finally), we would do well to take notice of the perspective of narration. In chapters 1–6, the stories are consistently narrated from the *3ʳᵈ person* in regard to Daniel. Chapter 1:8 provides a typical example of this: "But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food." Daniel's thoughts and actions are described from the 3ʳᵈ person (as though the stories are being narrated by an imaginary author). Exceptions to this (e.g., 2:27-45) occur in passages that appear as quotations of Daniel's speech.

In chapters 8–12, however, the material is narrated from the *1ˢᵗ person* perspective. Notice the beginning of chapter 8: "In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. And I looked in the vision." In general, the remainder of the book continues to be narrated in the 1ˢᵗ person (though the introduction to the final unit [10:1-3] quickly shifts from the 3ʳᵈ person to the 1ˢᵗ). With chapter seven, however, it is technically in the 3ʳᵈ person, though in practicality in the 1ˢᵗ. That is, the whole chapter is presented as a "summary" of Daniel's vision, in which the vision is communicated from the perspective of the 1ˢᵗ person. Notice carefully the introductory verses:

> "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote down the dream down and related the following summary of it. [shift to 1ˢᵗ person]   Daniel said, 'I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.'"

It is understandable that the narration of the chapter would continue in the 1ˢᵗ person as long as it is being presented as a "summary" of his vision. We would expect that once Daniel's report is completed, the narration would shift back to the third person. This, however, is not what happens. Instead the narration continues in the 1ˢᵗ person, as we see in Dan 7:28:

> "At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself."

---

[23] The material in 11:36–12:4 seems to stand as the last major unit of the book, with 12:5-13 constituting an epilogue to the book (Daniel's response to the vision). Thus Dan 11:44-45 can rightfully be viewed as part of the concluding unit to chapters 10–12.

With this, the next chapter (i.e., ch 8) immediately opens in the 1st person. That this is unusual can be demonstrated from the observation of how chapter two is narrated. We have a long section in the first person throughout 2:27-45, because this is presented as *reported speech* (i.e., a quotation of what Daniel said to the king). Immediately following, however, the text (as expected) returns to the third person:

> "Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense" (2:46).

The remaining verses of the chapter (2:47-49) continue in the third person. Thus, chapter seven is quite unique in how it utilizes the *person* of narration.

What do we conclude from all these observations? I think we can safely say that chapter seven of Daniel stands out as unique to the book. Through these numerous literary techniques, the author is able to *highlight* the chapter for our attention. Furthermore, it appears in some instances as *linked* with chapters 2–6 while in other instances with chapters 8–12. Thus, chapter seven is a "hinge chapter" to the book. With this conclusion, Patterson agrees,

> The key role of chapter 7 to the book of Daniel is thus readily apparent. Its central location and close correspondence with the two major portions make it evident that Daniel 7 is in many respects the key that unlocks the door to the problem of the unity, as well as the understanding, of the book.[24]

While others have noticed the uniqueness of chapter 7 and even its function as a *hinge chapter*, the significance of this article is the more thorough-going substantiation for this.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE LITERARY STRUCTURE

If my thesis is correct regarding the literary structure of the book, what implications does this have for the message and purpose of the book? To answer this, we should first attempt to seek the emphasis of the two major sections of the book, taking into account the overlap. Thus, we must look for the rationale behind chapters 2–7 and then for chapters 7–12.

The first major section (2–7) emphasizes the Gentile nations under whom Israel is being disciplined. This would explain why these chapters were written in Aramaic, for Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of the Gentile world in Daniel's day. Since the general context of the whole book is the theological reasons for Israel's exile (notice particularly ch 9 in this regard), chapters 2–7 probably have something to do with the Gentile nations as they relate to Israel's exile. We learn from the Book of Daniel that Israel's discipline will not be a mere 70 years, but rather a discipline spanning the complete course of history up to the Second Coming of Christ. Only when Christ returns, the Antichrist is defeated, and Messiah's kingdom is formally established will Israel's discipline be lifted. Until then, she will be dominated by Gentile kingdoms. In the final analysis, God's discipline upon Israel will be removed, and "believing Israel" (*the true Israel!*) will be allowed to enjoy Messiah's kingdom. In light of what is revealed in the opening and concluding chapters to this section, it is fair to say that chapters 2–7 depict the role, character, and succession of the Gentile nations of the world under whom Israel is being disciplined prior to Messiah's kingdom. These chapters affirm that these Gentile kingdoms have the right of world sovereignty (under God's authority) until God is pleased to

---

[24] Richard Patterson, "The Key Role of Daniel 7," 252.

establish the everlasting Messianic kingdom, and that no adversary can successfully oppose Him (note especially 2:44; 4:3, 34-35; 5:21; 6:26; and 7:14, 27).

The second major section (7–12) is more particularly aimed at the nation of Israel herself, which explains the shift back to Hebrew after chapter 7. Now we have a series of four visions given to Daniel, and in each case there is an emphasis upon the future ruler who stands in opposition to Israel and who is bent on persecuting her. In the final analysis, this is the Antichrist . . . and he has the role of being the final means of God's discipline upon Israel. Foolishly, Israel will initially put her trust in him (see 9:26-27), but will eventually suffer much at his hands. As a tool to grasping how utterly despicable and wrathful he will be toward Israel, the Book of Daniel highlights the historical figure of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This historical figure emulates what the eventual Antichrist will be and do, thus serving as a *biblical type* of the Antichrist. The *motif* of suffering at the hands of the future Antichrist thus undergirds chapters 7–12.

Daniel 7 thus serves as a pivot or hinge to both major sections of the book. What has been introduced in chapters 1–6 is reiterated in chapter 7 (the role of Gentile kingdoms and their subjection to God's sovereignty and eventual kingdom), and what is highlighted in chapter 7 (the "little horn" that comes out of the fourth beast = the Antichrist) is played out in the remaining chapters of the book. Through such literary techniques, the author carefully causes our attention to be fixed on chapter 7 of Daniel. As we do so, we find in the very heart of this chapter the most beautiful expression of God's ultimate purpose of good, not only for Israel but for all peoples of the world:

> "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed" (Dan 7:13-14).

There is a certain gloom to the Book of Daniel, namely, that Israel not only has gone into the Babylonian exile because of her covenant unfaithfulness, but that she must endure God's hand of discipline throughout the ages of history (*indeed she will suffer much!*). Yet her hope, as well as the hope of all peoples and nations, is on the kingdom to be given the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the ages. To achieve this consolation, one must be properly related to the person for whose glory it is being given (to be a kingdom subject, one must have faith in the King Himself). His kingdom (not Nebuchadnezzar's or any other ruler throughout Gentile history) is the only kingdom that really matters. As Nebuchadnezzar himself confessed, "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation" (Dan 4:3).

Thus the purpose of the Book of Daniel could be stated this way:

> To establish that God is sovereignly in control of the nations under whom Israel is being disciplined until the time comes when He will bring in Messiah's kingdom, and that Israel will ultimately be restored and blessed in this kingdom after she has first undergone tribulation and sufferings imposed by the Antichrist.