

THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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TO DETERMINE THE MESSAGE of the Book of Daniel, it is first necessary to understand the composition and design of the book as a whole. However, many critical scholars have questioned the book's unity and authorship. Although there are exceptions, critical scholars generally maintain that chapters 7–12 were written after the earlier chapters by an author living at the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century B.C.¹ Many also say that the author's purpose was to encourage his fellow Jews who were suffering persecution under Antiochus. This 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 Beyerle, who distinguishes the court tales in chapters 1–6 from the visions in chapters 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*):

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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 sixth century B.C. Not all critical scholars, however, are convinced that these chapters should be properly labeled as apocalyptic genre. Philip R. Davies, for instance, has argued that chapters 8–12 are not apocalypses but are visions that demonstrate eschatology ("Eschatology in the Book of Daniel," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17 [June 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 B.C.) by supplementing it with new apocalyptic instructions of topical interest (chapters 8, 9, and 10–12)" ("The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 83 [Boston: Brill, 2001], 171–204).

the court-tales reflecting the fate of Jews in the diaspora, and the visions offering examples of persecuted, pious Jews in Jerusalem."²

Not all critical scholars, however, have rejected the book's unity, two exceptions being 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 having been written, he says, in the second century B.C.). But most critical scholars have rejected the idea of a single author and a unified composition of the book.⁴ For them chapters 7–12 are primary, and the author of these chapters added chapters 1–6 to the book. The implication of such an approach, of course, is that the purpose and meaning of chapters 1–6 are now different from what they originally were.

For those who reject the authorship of the book by Daniel in the sixth century B.C., theories abound as to how and when the final composition came into being. Collins suggests that the Hebrew-Aramaic text of Daniel evolved through five stages.⁵

(1) The individual tales of chapters 2–6 were originally separate, although the form in which they first circulated is unknown.

(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

² Stefan 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*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 517–29; and H. H. Rowley, *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 249–80. Cf. Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1941), 764.

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

⁵ John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 38. Lester L. Grabbe presents a similar theory on the composition of Daniel ("A Dan[iel] for All Seasons: For Whom Was Daniel Important?" in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, 229–46).

⁶ Collins's rationale for separating Daniel 3:31–6:28 from the larger Aramaic section of the book is the fact that the Old Greek translation of these chapters significantly differs from that of the Masoretic text and Theodotion's Septuagint. Collins says this is evidence of a different Semitic *Vorlage*, which suggests, he believes, that this material once circulated as an independent document.

chapter 1, in the Hellenistic period.

(4) Daniel 7 was composed in Aramaic in the early years of Antiochus Epiphanes's persecution of the Jews before the desecration of the temple. Chapters 1–7 may have circulated briefly as an Aramaic book.

(5) Between 167 and 164 B.C. the Hebrew chapters 8–12 were added, and chapter 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 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 chapters 7–12 versus narrative stories in chapters 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

Conservative evangelicals, however, insist on the unified authorship of the book by the historic person of Daniel who lived in the sixth century B.C.⁹ This, however, does not imply that all agree

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 (winter 1986): 106–12. Summarizing M. Nel's article on the literary genre of the stories in Daniel ("Literaire 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 classification of genres impedes the discussion" (*Old Testament Abstracts* 25 [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: Eerdmans, 1969), 1106–27; Gleason L. Archer Jr., "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 4–6, 12–26; and Bruce K. Waltke, "The Date of the Book of Daniel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 133 (October–December 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 Gleason L. Archer Jr., "The Aramaic of the 'Genesis Apocryphon' Compared with the Aramaic of Daniel," in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. Barton Payne (Waco, TX: Word, 1970), 160–69; idem, "The Hebrew of Daniel Compared with the Qumran Sectarian Documents," in *The Law and the Prophets*, ed. J. H. Skilton (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 470–81; K. A. Kitchen, "The Aramaic of Daniel," in *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.

on the book's literary structure or the author's controlling purpose for writing. In general most scholars (both critical and evangelical) see ten primary units to the composition of the book, corresponding to the chapter divisions, with chapters 10–12 forming one complete vision (and hence one unit). Historically the tendency has been to see a major division at the end of chapter 6, 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

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? To understand the structural composition of the book this linguistic division must be taken into account. Two significant studies, one by Lenglet and one by Gooding, question the traditional division of the book after chapter 6, and both of them rely on the paralleling of key motifs between chapters.

LENGLET'S CONCENTRIC STRUCTURE FOR CHAPTERS 2–7

In 1972 Lenglet wrote that chapters 2–7 were a literary unit, not only because of the commonality of Aramaic but also 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.

¹⁰ Regarding "court tales" as a specific literary genre see Richard D. Patterson, "The Key Role of Daniel 7," *Grace Theological Journal* 12 (1991): 248. "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" (ibid.). Elsewhere Patterson has argued on the basis of comparing "court tales" from the first and second millennia B.C. that the material in Daniel 1–6 must predate the Hellenistic or late Persian periods ("Holding on to Daniel's Court Tales," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36 [December 1993]: 445–54).

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

| Lenglet's Concentric Structure for Daniel 2-7 | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| A | B | C | C' | B' | A' |
| Fourfold periodization of Gentile powers to rule over Israel | Divine deliverance of those faithful to God (from the furnace) | Divine humbling of Babylonian king (Nebuchadnezzar) | Divine humbling of Babylonian king (Belshazzar) | Divine deliverance of those faithful to God (from the lion's den) | Fourfold periodization of Gentile powers to rule over Israel |
| Chapter 2 | Chapter 3 | Chapter 4 | Chapter 5 | Chapter 6 | Chapter 7 |

This structural understanding corresponds well with the Aramaic boundaries of the book. Yet it must be observed that chapter 7 is not merely a duplication of chapter 2. Chapter 7 seems to focus again on the general scheme of four kingdoms, but it 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.

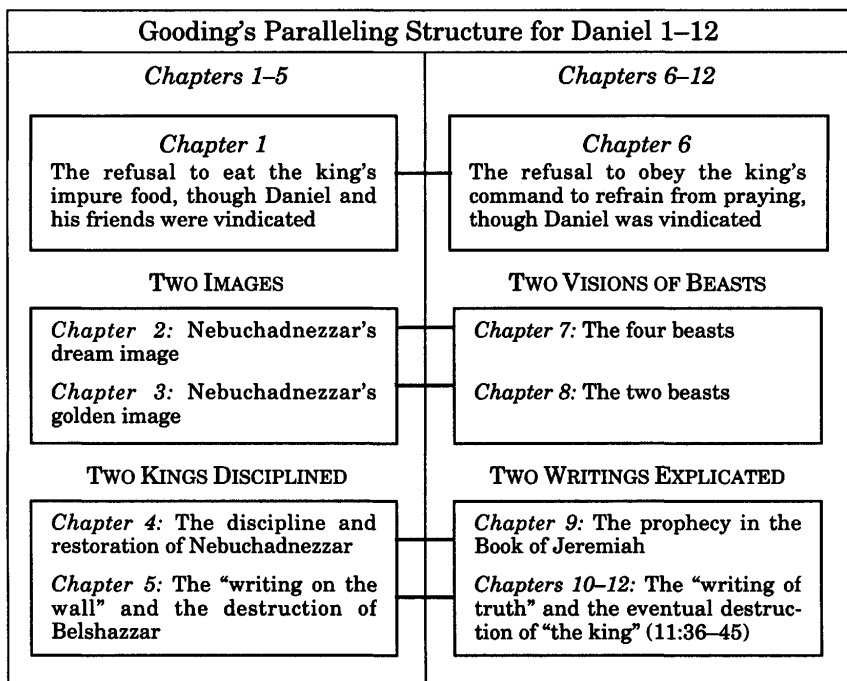
Furthermore it is doubtful that the Aramaic portion of Daniel is merely late material incorporated into a document comprising the latter chapters of the book (an argument also used to assert their historical unreliability). The affinity of the Aramaic portion with known fifth-century Aramaic documents argues for its early composition. 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 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

¹² Douglas E. Fox, "Ben Sira on OT Canon Again: The Date of Daniel," *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (fall 1987): 344-45.

GOODING'S PARALLELING STRUCTURE

Writing in 1981, Gooding took notice of Lenglet's work but suggested a radically different pattern for the entire book. "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 For him the turning point of the book is at the end of chapter 5 rather than the end of chapter 7 (or chapter 6, according to the traditional view). Gooding's theory has 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.



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 his

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

article. In support of his view he notes that the vessels of the temple, mentioned 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. The second group demonstrates the progressive deterioration in the attitudes of the Gentile emperors toward God. "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, and his structural understanding influences his concept 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 disagree with Gooding's structure by noting that chapter 6 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 Babylonian era, whereas chapter 6 opens the Medo-Persian era. Although the Babylonian Empire appears again in chapter 8, the emphasis in the remainder of the book falls on kingdoms that followed Babylon. Furthermore Gooding's theory properly couples chapters 4 and 5, for both stress royal discipline, and chapter 5 utilizes elements that had been narrated in chapter 4 (i.e., the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar's pride). This close association of chapters 4 and 5, however, does not *prove* Gooding's overall scheme, for Lenglet's theory also maintains this connection between chapters 4 and 5.¹⁶

In Gooding's seemingly plausible theory, several weaknesses

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁶ For more on the close association between chapters 4 and 5 see William H. Shea, who argues for a chiasmic structure to each of those two chapters: "Further Literary Structures in Daniel 2-7: An Analysis of Daniel 4," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 23 (summer 1985): 193-202; and *idem*, "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 (autumn 1985): 277-95.

may be noted. First, his view does not explain the Aramaic section in chapters 2–7. He rather cursorily dismisses this matter when he states, “As O. Eissfeldt . . . has said, ‘An explanation of the double language which is entirely satisfactory has not yet been proposed by anyone.’”¹⁷ However, it is difficult to believe that the author had no purpose in composing these chapters in Aramaic; the issue calls for further attention.

Second, Gooding’s reason for seeing a parallel between chapters 4 (the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar) and 9 (Jeremiah’s prophecy) is not convincing. He says they have a common theme of “God’s discipline on pride.”

Third, Gooding’s contention that chapter 5 (on the destruction of Babylon’s final ruler) and chapters 10–12 (on the destruction of the last Gentile ruler) are parallel is unconvincing. “But while in chapter 5 the end concerned is the end of the first Gentile power to destroy Jerusalem and suppress the Judaeen 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” (the Antichrist) who is destroyed. The point is that “parallels” can easily be found, and one must not make more of them than is legitimate. A similar situation exists between chapters 1 and 6 (which Gooding says are 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, the deliverance theme is 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). However, of benefit in Gooding’s scheme (as in Lenglet’s) is that 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 2 uses the imagery of a man, whereas chapter 7 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,

¹⁷ Gooding, “The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel and Its Implications,” 54.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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

A PROPOSAL: AN OVERLAPPING STRUCTURE

In the traditional approach to the Book of Daniel a major break occurs after chapter 6, thus dividing the material between the "court tales" in the first six chapters and the visions given to Daniel in the last six chapters. Lenglet, however, says the major break comes after chapter 7, based on the concentric arrangement of chapters 2-7.²¹ Gooding, on the other hand, asserts that the major break falls after chapter 5, based on the theory of an intricate paralleling structure between chapters 2-5 and chapters 6-12. Of these three views, only Lenglet's coincides with the linguistic division of the book, that is, the Aramaic section in chapters 2-7 in contrast to the Hebrew section in chapters 8-12. Because the linguistic division is a highly significant factor, Lenglet's theory is more convincing than the other two. But 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, for the book seems to have an overlapping structure. Two major divisions—chapters 2-7 and chapters 7-12—overlap. Thus chapter 7 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 | B | C | C' | B' | A' | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | Dream Four- part Image | Refusal to Worship Image | Humb- ling of King Neb | Humb- ling of King Bel | Refusal to Stop Praying | Four Beasts | Ram and Goat | Seventy Weeks | Final Vision Antiochus — Antichst |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10-12 |
| Hebrew | Aramaic | | | | | Hebrew | | | |

²⁰ Ibid., 61.

²¹ More recently 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 unit ("The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel," 178).

Three reasons support this view of an overlapping structure. (1) It takes into account the linguistic division of the book. (2) It recognizes Lenglet's observation of the concentric structure for chapters 2–7. (3) It recognizes that chapter 7 initiates a series of four visions given to Daniel. While such reasons alone are enough to support this structure, four additional matters confirm this theory.

THE TEMPORAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE BOOK

Chapters 2–6 are primarily (though not exclusively) historical, the focus being on God's dealing with kingdoms in Daniel's own lifetime.²² Chapters 8–12 are primarily future-oriented, the focus being on matters that went beyond the lifetime of Daniel (viz., the days of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the more distant future period of the Antichrist). Chapter 7, however, belongs to both. It reiterates the succession of ancient Gentile kingdoms; yet it provides more detail about the "latter days" when the Antichrist will arise.

THE DATING NOTICES IN THE BOOK

The way in which dates are noted in chapters 7–10 differs from the way they are noted in chapters 1 and 2. Chapters 1 and 2 have only these two notices: "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah" (1:1); and "Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar" (2:1).

But in chapters 7–10 a date notice heads every major unit in the section. "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw" (7:1). "In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me" (8:1). "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus . . . I, Daniel, observed" (9:1–2). "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel" (10:1).

This seems to be significant because chapters 2–7 are not strictly arranged chronologically (chapter 6 concerns the time of Darius, while chapter 7 relates to the earlier time of Belshazzar's kingdom), whereas the visions of chapters 7–12 are arranged in precise chronological order.

²² Chapter 2, of course, 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 will put an end to all Gentile kingdoms. However, the emphasis of the chapter is on the historical past, because the dream was given to Nebuchadnezzar to help him understand that his kingdom was not an eternal kingdom but rather one kingdom in a chain of others, all of which would eventually give way to a kingdom established by God. In contrast chapter 7 is a vision given to Daniel, and the emphasis is not on Babylon's role but on the far distant future when the rule of Antichrist will be surpassed by the kingdom given to the "Son of man."

THE CONCLUDING MOTIFS IN EACH UNIT

The concluding motifs in each of the ten units of the book seem to place an emphasis on chapter 7. In chapters 1–6 each chapter ends with either Daniel being honored or God being exalted and praised (and in several cases they are both). Chapter 2, 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’ ” (2:46–47).

Chapter 6 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’ ” (6:25–28).

Similar constructions occur in 1:18–21; 3:28–30 (in this case, Daniel’s three friends were exalted); 4:36–37; and 5:29–30. In chapters 8–12, however, the concluding paragraph of each unit generally emphasizes a much different motif, namely, the opposition and defeat of a future ruler who will martyr many saints (8:23–27; 9:27; 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 7 seems unique in that both motifs appear in the concluding paragraph, that is, both the exaltation of God and the opposition and defeat of the future ruler. “He [the ‘little horn’] will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One . . . and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But . . . 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” (7:25–27). Thus chapter 7 belongs to both the preceding chapters and the following chapters.

²³ Daniel 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 11:44–45 can rightfully be viewed as part of the concluding unit to chapters 10–12.

THE “PERSON” OF NARRATION

In chapters 1–6 the stories are consistently narrated from the third person in regard to Daniel. An example of this is in 1:8. “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 in the third 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 first-person perspective. “In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel. . . . And I looked in the vision” (8:1). In general the remainder of the book is narrated in the first person (though the introduction to the final unit [10:1–3] quickly shifts from the third person to the first). Chapter 7, however, is technically in the third person, though in practicality it is in the first. 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 first person. “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 the dream down and related the following summary of it. Daniel said [shift to first person], ‘I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea’” (7:1–2).

It is understandable that the narration of chapter 7 would continue in the first person so long as it is being presented as a “summary” of his vision. One would expect that once Daniel’s report was completed, the narration would shift back to the third person. This, however, is not what happens. Instead the narration continues in the first person, as seen in 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.”

Chapter 8 immediately opens in the first person. That this is unusual can be demonstrated from the observation of how chapter 2 is narrated. That chapter has 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 this, 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” (v. 46). The remaining verses of the chapter (vv. 47–49) continue in the third person. Thus chapter 7 is unique in the way it utilizes the person of narration.

Obviously then Daniel 7 stands out as unique in the book. Through these numerous literary techniques the author was high-

lighting this chapter for the readers' attention. In some instances it is linked with chapters 2-6 while in other instances with chapters 8-12. Thus chapter 7 is a "hinge" chapter to the book. "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

IMPLICATIONS OF THE LITERARY STRUCTURE

What implications does this view have for the message and purpose of the Book of Daniel? To answer this, the emphasis of the two major sections of the book should be noted, taking into account the overlap. Thus one must look for the rationale behind chapters 2-7 and then for chapters 7-12.

The first major section (chapters 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 reason for Israel's exile (see chapter 9 in this regard), chapters 2-7 pertain to the Gentile nations in their relationship to Israel's exile. Israel's discipline would not be a mere seventy 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 on Israel will be removed, and believing Israel will be allowed to enjoy Messiah's kingdom. In light of what is revealed in the opening and concluding chapters of 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 before 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 establish the messianic kingdom, and that no adversary can successfully oppose Him (2:44; 4:3, 34-35; 5:21; 6:26; 7:14, 27).

The second major section (chapters 7-12) more particularly addressed the nation of Israel, which explains the shift back to Hebrew after chapter 7. Each of Daniel's four visions emphasizes the future ruler who will stand in opposition to Israel and who will be

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

bent on persecuting her. This is the Antichrist, who will serve as God's final means of His discipline on Israel (though in chapter 8 he is typified by Antiochus). Foolishly Israel will initially put her trust in him (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, who 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 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 focused the readers' attention on chapter 7. This chapter is the most beautiful expression of God's ultimate purpose of good, not only for Israel but also for all peoples. "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" (7:13–14).

A certain gloom is present in the Book of Daniel; Israel had been exiled in Babylon because of her covenant unfaithfulness, but in addition she must endure God's hand of discipline throughout history. Yet her hope, as well as the hope of all peoples and nations, is on the kingdom to be given to the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the ages. To receive 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 that of any other ruler throughout Gentile history) is the only one that really matters. As Nebuchadnezzar himself confessed, "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation" (4:3).

Thus the purpose of the Book of Daniel could be stated this way: "To demonstrate 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."



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