# Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 30: Daniel: John Goldingay

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# Author’s Preface

One bright and cold January day in about 1981, a year or two after inviting me to write the Word Commentary on Daniel, David Allan Hubbard asked me for lunch at the Waldorf Hotel in London to discuss the possibility of my joining the faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. I had eventually accepted the first invitation but I didn’t think seriously about the possibility of moving to Fuller until nearly twenty years later, when I was honored to be invited to occupy a chair endowed in David Hubbard’s name. As I prepare to give up this chair another twenty years later, I dedicate this second edition of the commentary to his memory.

But not to him alone. I dedicated the first edition to my teenage sons, Steven and Mark, expressing the hope that they might stand with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. I now have two teenage grandchildren, and I am delighted to reflect on the fact that one is called Daniel, while the other is called Emma, which on one understanding is an abbreviation of a name whose significance all four heroes of this book would affirm, “God is with us.”

It was in writing on Daniel that I learned the craft of commentary-writing, which I then sought to hone in writing on Isaiah, Psalms, and Hosea to Micah. I looked forward to coming back to Daniel, partly to see what I would now do differently. I first worked through the original edition of this commentary as if it were a draft that I was reworking and tidying up. Then I read as much as I could of the voluminous scholarship on Daniel published over the past thirty years, which you will find reflected in the text. It didn’t make me change my mind about big things, but it did give me new things to say.

# Epigraphs (without heading)

If sometime you write something

It should go down into the ears of Maecius

And those of your father, and ours, and it should be suppressed until the ninth year.

It will be able to be destroyed,

What you have not published; a voice sent out does not know how to return.

Si quid tamen olim  
scripseris, in Maeci descendat iudicis aures,  
et patris, et nostras; nonumque prematur in annum.  
Membranis intus positis, delere licebit  
quod non edideris: nescit vox missa reverti.[[1]](#footnote-1)

I am aware of the plausible nature of allegories, but… I am not captivated by these enticements myself, and wish all my hearers to be persuaded of this,—nothing can be better than a sober treatment of Scripture.[[2]](#footnote-2)

We have now given the views that seem to us clear or probable. Let us now ask God to pardon any slips or errors; for what we have given is not any positive opinion, but merely a probablity. The Almighty himself has said that *the words are shut upand sealed till the time of the end.* At that time it shall be revealed at the hand of the wise; *the wise shall understand.* God Almighty, in His mercy and loving-kindness, bring near their realisation. Amen.[[3]](#footnote-3)

# Abbreviations

Abbreviations for Biblical Books:

Gen, Exod, Lev, Num, Deut, Josh, Judg, Ruth, Sam, Kings, Chron, Ezra, Neh, Esth, Job, Ps(s), Prov, Ecc, Song, Isa, Jer, Lam, Ezek, Dan, Hos, Joel, Amos, Obad, Jonah, Mic, Nah, Hab, Zeph, Hag, Zech, Mal.

Matt, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Rom, Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, Thess, Tim, Titus, Phlm, Heb, James, Pet, John, Jude, Rev

Other abbreviations (including Deuterocanonical and other ancient works):

1Q, 2Q, etc. Scrolls from Qumran Cave 1, Cave 2, etc. (followed byname of work or biblical book)

1QapGen The Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran Cave 1

1QH 1QHodayot, the Thanksgiving Psalms from Qumran Cave 1.

1QM 1QMilḥamah, the War Scroll from Qumran Cave 1

1QpHab The Habakkuk pesher from Qumran Cave 1

1QS 1QSerek Hayyaḥad, the Community Rule from Qumran Cave 1

1QSa An appendix to 1QSerek Hayyaḥad, the Rule of the Congregation

4QPrNab The Prayer of Nabonidus from Qumran Cave 4

A The Aleppo codex of MT, made in Tiberias, long kept at Aleppo, now in Jerusalem

*ABR Australian Bible Review*

*AfO Archiv für Orientforschung*

Akk. Akkadian

*AHw* Von Soden, W. *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*. 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981.

*AJSL American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*

*ANEP* Pritchard, J. B. (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Picturess* Relating to the Old Testament. Revised ed., Princeton: Princeton University, 1969

*ANET* Pritchard, J. B. (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Revised ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969

*ANRW* H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der romischen Welt.* Berlin: de Gruyter.

*Ant*. *Antiquities*

*APB Acta patristica et byzantina*

*Apoc. Apocalypse of*

Aq Aquila’s Greek translation of the Old Testament

Aram. Aramaic

*AUSS Andrews University Seminary Studies*

*b. Babylonian Talmud* (followed by tractate title)

BA Biblical Aramaic

*BASOR Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*

*BBR* *Bulletin for Biblical Research*

BDB Brown, F., Driver, S. R., and Briggs, C. A. (eds.) Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament. Corrected ed., Oxford: Clarendon, 1962.

*BetM Bet Miqra*

BH Biblical Hebrew

BHK R. Kittel (ed.), *Biblia hebraica,* 3rd ed. Stuttgart: Wurttembergische, 1937.  
BHS K. Elliger et al. (eds.), *Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia*. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977.  
*Bib Biblica*

*BibSac Bibliotheca sacra*

*BIOSCS Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*

*BJRL Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*

BL H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramdischen.*Halle: Niemeyer, 1927.

*BO Bibliotheca orientalis*

*BR Biblical Research*

*BZ Biblische Zeitschrift*

C The Cairo Geniza manuscript of Daniel

c. circa (about)

*CAD* Gelb, I. J., et al.*The [Chicago] Assyrian Dictionary*. 21 vols. Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956-.

*CBQ Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

*CBR Currents in Biblical Research*

CD The Cairo Genizah copy of the Damascus Document

CSCO Corpus Scriptorium Christianorum Orientalium

*DCH* D. J. A. Clines (ed.), *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. 8 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (vols. 1-5) and Sheffield Phoenix Press (vols. 6-8), 1993-2011

DG Gibson, John C. L. *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar – Syntax*. Edinburgh: Clark, 1994.

Diss. Dissertation

dittog. dittography

DJD Discoveries in the Judaean Desert. Oxford: Clarendon.

*DOTT* Thomas, D. W. *Documents from Old Testament Times*. London: Nelson, 1958.

*DSS* García Martínez, F., and E. J. C. Tigchelaar (eds.).*The Dead Sea Scrolls*. Reprinted Leiden: Brill, 2000.

*DTT* Jastrow, M. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature.* New York: Choreb, 1926.

EA Eastern Aramaic

ed(s). editor(s), edited by

Esd Esdras

esp. especially

ET English translation

et al. et alii (and others)

*ETL Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*

*EvQ Evangelical Quarterly*

*EvT Evangelische Theologie*

EVV English Versions

*Exp Expositor*

*ExpT Expository Times*

f feminine

G Greek (both OG and Th)

*GBA* Rosenthal, F. *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1961.

Gk. Greek

GKC *Gesenius’* *Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch. Trans. A. E. Cowley. London: OUP, 1910. Repr. 1966.

GNB Good News Bible Translation

haplog. haplography

*HALOT* L. Koehler et al. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Trans. M. E. J. Richardson. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

*HBT Horizons in Biblical Theology*

Heb. Hebrew

*HS* R. J. Williams. *Hebrew Syntax*. 3rd ed., revised and expanded by J. C. Beckman. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976.

*HTS Hervormde Teologiese Studies*

*HUCA Hebrew Union College Annual*

*HW Hebräische Wortforschung* (W. Baumgartner Festschrift). Leiden: Brill, 1967

*IBD* J. D. Douglas et al. (eds.). *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Leicester, UK: IVP, 1980.

*IBHS* B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.

*IDB* K. Crim et al. (eds.). *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.* 4 volumes plus Supplementary Volume. Nashville: Abingdon, 1962-76.

inf. infinitive

*Int Interpretation*

*JANESCU Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Societry of Columbia University*

*JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society*

*JATS Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*

JB Jerusalem Bible translation

*JBL Journal of Biblical Literature*

*JBQ Jewish Biblical Quarterly*

*JCS Journal of Cuneiform Studies*

Jdt Judith

*JETS Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*

*JJS Journal of Jewish Studies*

*JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies*

JPS Jewish Publication Society of America

JPSV JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh, 2nd ed., Philadelphia: JPS, 1999

*JQR Jewish Quarterly Review*

*JSJ Journal for the Study of Judiasm in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*

*JSOT Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

*JSP Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*

*JSS* *Journal of Semitic Studies*

*JTS Journal of Theological Studies*

K The ketiv or written (consonantal) text

*KD Kerygma und Dogma*

KJV King James Version (Authorized Version)

L The Leningrad Codex of MT, made in Cairo but now in Leningrad (St. Petersburg)

lit. literally

LW Luther’s Works

m masculine

m. Mishnah (followed by tractate title)

Macc Maccabees

mg margin

ms[s] manuscript[s]

*MSJ The Master’s Seminary Journal*

MT Masoretic Text, as printed in BHS.

n. note

NAB New American Bible

*NERT* Beyerlin, W. (ed.), *Near Eastern Religious Texts relating to the Old Testament*. Trans. J. Bowden. London: SCM, 1978.

NETS Pietersma, A., and Wright, B. G. (eds.). *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. New York: OUP, 2007

NIV New International Version

*NKZ* Neue kirkliche Zeitschrift

*NovT Novum Testamentum*

NPNF P. Schaff (ed.), Nicene and Post-Nicene

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

n.s. new series

*NTS New Testament Studies*

OG The Old Greek translation of the Old Testament

OP Old Persian

*OTP* Charlesworth, J. H. (ed.). *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983-85  
*OTS Oudtestamentische Studien*

PGJ. Migne (ed.), Patrologia graeca

PLJ. Migne (ed.), Patrologia latina

pl. plural

*PRS Perspectives in Religious Studies*

PS Payne Smith, J. (ed.), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*. Oxford: OUP, 1902.

*PTR Princeton Theological Review*

Q The qere’ or vocalized text—that is, the text as read out.

*RB Revue Biblique*

*ResQ Restoration Quarterly*

*RevExp Review and Expositor*

*RevQ Revue de Qumran*

RV (English) Revised Version

RSV Revised Standard Version

s. singular

SCO *Studia classica et orientalia* (FS A. Pagliaro; 3 vols.; Rome[Istituto di Glottologia], 1969)  
*SEÅ Svensk exegetisk årsbok*

*Sem Semitica*

*Sib. Or. Sibylline Oraclwa*

*SJOT Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*

*ST Studia Theologica*

Syh The Syriac translation of Origen's Hexapla

Sym Symmachus’s Greek translation of the Old Testament

Syr The Syriac translation of the Old Testament, as

*T.* *Testament of*

*TGUOS Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society*

Th Theodotion’s Greek translation of the Old Testament

*Them Themelios*

*TLZ Theologische Literaturzeitung*

Tob Tobit

*TQ Theologische Quartalschrift*

*Trev Theologische Revue*

*TTH* Driver, S. R. *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and Some Other Syntactical Questions*. 3rd ed. Oxford: OUP, 1892

*TTP* Menthen, G. (ed.). *Thesaurus theologico-philologicus*. Vol. 1. Amsterdam: Excudunt Henricus, 1701.

*TTZ Trierer theologische Zeitschrift*

*TWAT* Botterweck, G. J. et al. (eds.). *Theologisches Worterbuch* *zum Alten Testament.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970-. English trans. by J. T. Willis et al., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-

*TWNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theologisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933-78. Trans. G. W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the NewTestament.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964- 76.

*TynB Tyndale Bulletin*

*TZ Theologische Zeitschrift*

*UF Ugaritische Forschungen*

*USQR Union Seminary Quarterly Review*

*VD Verbum Domini*

Vg The “Vulgate” Latin translation of the Old Testament as printed in R. Weber (ed.), *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam* 3rd ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelanstalt, 1983

*VT Vetus Testamentum*

WA Martin Luther’s *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimer Ausgabe). Weimar: Böhlaus.

*ZA Zeitschrift für Assyriologie.*

*ZAW Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

*ZNW* *Zeitschrift fur die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Note on chapter and verse references:

Where the verse numbers in English translations and in printed Hebrew Bibles differ, I give the reference in English Bibles; in a reference such as 4:1-3 [3:31-33], the first reference is the one in English Bibles, the second is the one in printed Hebrew Bibles.

# Introduction: The Interpretation of Daniel

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The Book of Daniel which this commentary studies is one recension of the varied literature associated with Daniel’s name,[[4]](#footnote-4) the recension written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic which appears in the Jewish scriptures among the Writings and in the Christian scriptures among the Prophets. Its narrative is set in the time of the neo-Babylonian empire and the first years of the Persian era. After the scene is introduced in chap. 1, Daniel takes center stage in chap. 2, outdoing the expertise of the Babylonian royal advisers by the power of God, and thereby being able to reveal how political events are to unfold until God sets up his own rule and brings an end to all others. Chap. 2 thus opens up the book’s two main subsequent themes, the exploits of Daniel and his friends as members of the royal court (chaps. 3–6) and the revelations regarding the future that are given to him (chaps. 7–12). The revelations are cryptically expressed, but when explicitly interpreted within the book they focus on events to take place in Jerusalem in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Story and vision give the book as a whole a double focus: it traces an arc leading from the dispersion in the sixth century to the Jerusalem of the second century.

The book’s Aramaic in 2:4b–7:28 is a form of Imperial Aramaic, the international language of the Middle East through much of OT times (cf. 2 Kgs 18:26).[[5]](#footnote-5) It contains a fair number of Akkadian and Persian words and in chap. 3 three Greek ones. Its use of Aramaic matches the stories’ setting in the eastern dispersion of the Jewish people. It is distinguishable from the later Aramaic of Qumran but it might be dated anywhere between the late sixth and early second centuries BC, though its spelling may have been updated later in light of the ongoing development of the living language.[[6]](#footnote-6) The Greek words hardly necessitate a date after the Greek conquest of the Middle East, given the earlier spread of Greek culture even in Palestine.[[7]](#footnote-7) The Hebrew of 1:1–2:4a; 8:1–12:13 also includes some Persian words and a number of Aramaisms, and it is written in a distinctive style and idiom with a number of uncertainties about the meaning of individual words and phrases. It has been suggested that the Hebrew sections were translated from Aramaic,[[8]](#footnote-8) or at least written by author(s) more at home in Aramaic. The range of possible dates for the Hebrew would be similar to that for the Aramaic.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Over the millennia since its composition, Daniel has been continuously studied and expounded. A consideration of this study and exposition is interesting in its own right and revealing of a series of questions regarding the book’s content, background, and meaning that provide part of the agenda for our own interaction with the book. We will return to some of them in the *Conclusion* to the commentary, in light of the chapter-by-chapter study.

## Daniel at Qumran: Manuscripts of the the Book

The visions in Daniel promise (among other things) a miraculous deliverance from the oppressive rule of Antiochus Epiphanes, and such a deliverance happened. It would hardly be surprising if this event dissolved any doubt regarding the divine origin of the visions, and also encouraged study of the book to see what further insight might emerge from it. The incompleteness of the visions’ fulfillment would reinforce that encouragement.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The Qumran scrolls are a key resource for our knowledge of the varied Daniel literature from late Second Temple times. It seems plausible that the Qumran community’s interest in Daniel links with the sense of a need for deliverance and of the prospect of the end of the age, which it shares with the visions. Among the scrolls there are a eight fragmentary copies of the collection of stories and visions which appears in the version of Daniel in the Hebrew scriptures, which copied over a period beginning only two or three decades after the deliverance in the 160s. There are thus more copies of Daniel from Qumran than of any other book within the Hebrew scriptures, which in itself suggests that this Daniel scroll had a special importance for the community. The manuscripts are as follows:

1QDana: 1:10-17; 2:2-6

1QDanb: 3:22-30

4QDana: 1:16-20; 2:9-11, 19-49; 3:1-2; 4:32-33 [29-30]; 5:5-7, 12-14, 16-19; 7:5-7, 25-28; 8:1-5; 10:16-20; 11:13-16

4QDanb: 5:10-12, 14-16, 19-22; 6:7-21, 26-28 [8-22, 27-29]; 7:1-6, 11(?), 26-28; 8:1-8, 13-16

4QDanc: 10:5-9, 11-16, 21; 11:1-2, 13-17, 25—29

4QDand: a few lines badly decayed

4QDane: a few tiny fragments from chap. 9, none more than one complete word

6QDan (a papyrus): 8:16-17 (?), 20-21 (?); 10:8-16; 11:33-36, 38.[[11]](#footnote-11)

While chap. 12 does not feature among these manuscripts, it is referred to in 4QFlorilegium (4Q174), a commentary on a number of passages that were believed to relate to “the end of the days”; these passages include texts from Exodus, 2 Samuel, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos—and Daniel, specifically 11:32 and 12:10.[[12]](#footnote-12) Thus all twelve chapters of the book are represented one way or another among the Qumran scrolls.

4QFlorilegium (col. II) uses the expression”as is written in the scroll of Daniel the prophet,” paralleling its use of the phrase “as is written in the scroll of Isaiah the prophet,” which suggests that Daniel has similar status to Isaiah. Geza Vemes makes the nice comment that “all the textual evidence relating to Daniel suggests that its inclusion in the Hebrew canon occurred in a hurry.”[[13]](#footnote-13) But if by a canon we mean an officially recognized and circumscribed list of books,[[14]](#footnote-14) it may be anachronistic to argue over whether the Qumran community had a canon which did or did not include Daniel. We know of no occasion when the Jewish community decided on a canon; as far as we can tell, it drifted into a having the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings in particular as its scriptures. But the prominence of Daniel at Qumran parallels the way it had a place in the canon understood as a collection of core documents that were believed to be of divine origin, attracted rewriting, attracted interpretation, and mediate the voice of an authoritative teacher.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The Qumran manuscripts of Daniel are a thousand years older than our oldest copies of the Masoretic Text, but their (unvocalized) text almost entirely corresponds to that of MT.[[16]](#footnote-16) Most differences are matters of spelling and grammar, which have sometimes been updated. A few more significant variants may put us on the track of an earlier version of the text than MT’s (see e.g., the notes in this commentary at 2:24; 7:1; 8:4; 10:16; 11:17) or may indicate additions or changes in the Qumran versions (see e.g., the notes at 5:7, 12).[[17]](#footnote-17) Some differences imply agreement with OG (2:5; 10:16) or Th (1:12; 3:23).[[18]](#footnote-18) But in general the sQumra manuscripts suggest that virtually no change of significance happened to the text of Daniel between the time of their copying and the form that appears in MT.

## Further Danielic Material at Qumran

Among the Qumran scrolls are also a number of other Aramaic documents mentioning Daniel or related to the Hebrew-Aramaic Daniel scroll in some way.[[19]](#footnote-19) The latter include a Prayer of Nabonidus, who is healed from a seven-year illness through the ministry of a Jewish exorcist, whose focus thus overlaps with that of Daniel 4.[[20]](#footnote-20) Two fragmentary scrolls (4Q243 and 244) apparently come from a work relating how Daniel gives Belshazzar an account of history from creation to the end of the age, which overlaps with the focus of Daniel 11.[[21]](#footnote-21) Another (4Q245) comprises a list of priests and kings and a promise of judgment on wickedness and of restoration. Yet another (4Q246) may be taking up Daniel 7.[[22]](#footnote-22) As its title implies, 4QFour Kingdoms (4Q552-53) may also be related to the Daniel materials.[[23]](#footnote-23) It has been suggested that the Jeremiah Apocryphon to which at least some of 4Q383-92 belongs incorporates a reworking of material in Daniel, from within a few decades of the completion of the Hebrew-Aramaic Daniel scroll.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Given that the visions in Daniel had not been completely fulfilled in the downfall of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Qumran community believed they were to be fulfilled in their day, and they saw themselves as the embodiment of the discerning teachers (משכילים) and the holy ones on high in Daniel.[[25]](#footnote-25) In keeping with their general expository method, they applied prophecies from Daniel to themselves; the Damascus Rule offers “the first of a long line of commentaries” on Dan 9:24–27.[[26]](#footnote-26) 11Q13 (11QMelch) alludes to the tenth jubilee with apparent reference to Daniel and likely reference to this same passage;[[27]](#footnote-27) words from Dan 9 also underlie one of the psalms in 11QPsa and the 4Q liturgical text “The Words of the Luminaries.”[[28]](#footnote-28) Partly on the basis of Dan 9 the Essenes were expecting the Messiah between 3 BC and AD 2.[[29]](#footnote-29) Daniel’s portrait of Antiochus as the embodiment of godless wickedness furnishes them with a portrait of their enemies, especially the Wicked Priest. The framework for the picture of the End in the War Scroll, 1QM, “draws its inspiration from Daniel xi. 40–xii. 3.”[[30]](#footnote-30) There already appears here a major theme of Danielic study. While the conservative Jewish community had experienced a great deliverance that it could see as a fulfillment of promises in Dan 10–12, the End had not come; history has continued to unfold and wickedness has continued, inside and outside the Jewish community. Yet far from passing into disrepute, Daniel exercised a growing influence. What 1QM perceives in Daniel is not merely a falsifiable timetable of events but encouragement to people living in the midst of crisis.[[31]](#footnote-31)

The Qumran documents also include copies of different sections of *1 Enoch*. During the Persian and Greek eras there had been developing a substantial literature connected with the name of Enoch, and this literature may be dependent on Daniel at a number of points. Current opinion dates much of *1 Enoch* 1–36; 72–108 earlier than Daniel or within the same period, so that in principle it is as likely that Daniel is dependent on *1 Enoch* as vice versa,[[32]](#footnote-32) though many of the parallels (e.g., the use of animal imagery in *1 Enoch* 90) need not require dependence either way. The situation is different with *1 Enoch* 37–71, the Parables or Similitudes. The Parables are uninstanced at Qumran, and current opinion regards them as belonging to the Roman period. Their most interesting correspondence with Daniel is their speaking of a humanlike figure and of one advanced in days (cf. Dan 7:13). “That son of man” (*1 Enoch* 46–48, alongside the “head of days” with hair white like wool; see also chaps. 62; 69), God’s elect and righteous one, is apparently identified with the Messiah (48:10),[[33]](#footnote-33) though Enoch himself is later addressed as “son of man” (71:14). Thus Dan 7 is one of the texts used to interpret the significance of Enoch and his translation, reported with such tantalizing brevity in Gen 5:21-24; and the allusion leads to or justifies a belief in Enoch’s functioning as eschatological judge. As in Dan 7, however, “son of man” suggests an image, not a title.

## The First Greek Translation of Daniel

Early interest in Daniel appears further in the translation of a longer collection of Daniel material into Greek for Jews in the wider world, which then found its way into the collection of Jewish scriptures accepted in the Greek-speaking churches and still appears in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bible and in the Protestant Apocrypha or Second[ary] Canon. The “Old Greek” translation was known to the translator of the later Greek version referred to as Theodotion, and both were known to NT writers, while the reference in 1 Macc 1:54 to a βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως, an “abomination of desolation,” follows OG’s translation of the Hebrew expression in Dan 11:31. These considerations suggest that OG comes from the same period as the oldest of the Qumran manuscripts, the second half of the second century BC. The translation thus dates from within decades of the book’s composition, as they do. It is therefore the more striking that the translation renders the expanded version of the book, augmented by a prayer and an act of praise incorporated into chap. 3, and by extra stories, about Susanna and about Bel and the Snake. These extra elements in the book also seem likely to be translations of Hebrew or Aramaic originals, though they may be later additions to OG.[[34]](#footnote-34)

OG is known only through the papyrus Manuscript 967[[35]](#footnote-35) from the second or third century AD (which has chaps. 7—8 in their chronological place before 5—6), through Codex 88, the Chigi manuscript of Origen’s Hexapla, from the ninth to eleventh centuries, and through a ninth-century manuscript of the Syriac translation of the Hexapla (Syh).[[36]](#footnote-36) OG is mostly close to MT but is further from it in chaps. 4–6. Perhaps OG has reworked the Aramaic text of those chapters (possibly it was the work of a different translator)[[37]](#footnote-37) or perhaps it follows a rewritten version[[38]](#footnote-38) or perhaps it translates a different version[[39]](#footnote-39)—as OG a whole translates the longer edition of the book.

OG differs from MT in one or two subsequent key passages. Its version of 9:24–27 makes more explicit than MT that the passage refers to events in the time of Antiochus: it dates the events of v 26 after 7 + *70* + 62 years—the 139th year of the Seleucid era being c. 172. It also makes explicit—with the benefit of hindsight—that many sevens would elapse after the removal of the desolating abomination and before the End.[[40]](#footnote-40) In 7:13, according to OG, the humanlike figure comes not ἕως παλαιοῦ ἡμερῶν (“*to* one old in days”), but ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν (“*as* one old in days”). This reading may be original; or it may be a slip; or it may reflect Christian claims for Jesus’ divinity.[[41]](#footnote-41) Such differences from MT may thus again indicate that OG is in part paraphrastic/targumic/midrashic, the last element including both modifications based on other scriptures and other embellishments, in the manner of the Genesis Apocryphon.[[42]](#footnote-42) But R. H. Charles saw OG as often a better guide to the original Hebrew than MT,[[43]](#footnote-43) Pace argues that at least in chaps. 7–12 OG is for the most part a literal rendering of a variant Hebrew tradition such as the Qumran finds now prove to have existed for other books,[[44]](#footnote-44) while Grelot suggests that OG is a translation of a second-century BC Hebrew version of the original Aramaic.[[45]](#footnote-45)

## Daniel in the Greek-speaking World

First and Second Maccabees (c. 100–63 BC) speak in terms similar to Daniel’s regarding some of the events of the Antiochene crisis: they assume that the original reference of the phrase “the abomination of desolation” in Dan 9:27 and 11:31 is to Antiochus’s cultic innovation. The stories in Dan 1–6 provide Maccabees with perspectives on the pressures of the Antiochene crisis (1 Macc 1:41–43; 2:59–60).[[46]](#footnote-46) But there are ideological differences between 1 Maccabees and Dan 7–12: the former strongly affirms the active measures of the Maccabees and omits reference to the idea of resurrection. The theology of 2 Maccabees is closer to Daniel’s; it is more inclined to tell a story that corresponds to Daniel. The suggestion has been made that Dan 3 (specifically the OG version) was part of the inspiration for the book of Judith.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Although the Greek translation of the scriptures was made for Jews, it became in particular the church’s Bible, but in the church the original Greek translation of Daniel was replaced by another, more literal version, closer to MT. Jerome, in his preface to his Latin translation of Daniel, says that he has no idea why it happened,[[48]](#footnote-48) and we still have no idea. Having become the translation that appears in the Septuagint as a whole, this further Greek rendering of Daniel is much better attested than OG. Rahlfs’s edition of the “Septuagint” as a whole, Ziegler and Munnich’s edition of Greek Daniel, and NETS include both versions. While the newer translation is credited to Theodotion (c AD 180), we have noted that its renderings are known before his time; both OG and Th are reflected in the NT. Perhaps Th is an alternative Greek version from some other part of the pre-Christian Hellenistic/Roman world, possibly a revision of OG to render the translation more literal, or an alternative translation that often follows OG.[[49]](#footnote-49) “There is scholarly consensus on relatively few issues regarding the textual history of OG-Dan and Th-Dan.”[[50]](#footnote-50)

The commentary on Daniel by Origen (185–254)[[51]](#footnote-51) has not survived, but Origen has abiding significance in connection with Daniel through his Hexapla, a six-column collation of the Hebrew OT with various Greek versions. During the second century a number of further alternatives to OG had come into existence, including a very literal version by Aquila and a freer one by Symmachus.[[52]](#footnote-52) Greek versions were also translated into Latin and later into Coptic (Sahidic/Bohairic, third century) and Ethiopic (fourth century). Origen himself was concerned for the Church to get the OT text right, not least so it could argue with Jews on a common basis. Perhaps it was through his work in the Hexapla that OG came to be supplanted by Th in the LXX; it might have been preferred because it strucj closer to the Hebrew. At the same time, the Hexapla was long our sole source for the oldest complete manuscripts of OG Daniel, 88 and Syh, as well as for fragments of Aquila and Symmachus.

Uncertainty also attaches to the origin of the Syriac translation of Daniel. There are no clear indications that it is of Christian background, nor that it is dependent on OG or Th; it may be an independent translation from a Hebrew tradition related to but slightly different from MT, perhaps deriving from Edessa in Turkey, the “literary capital” of the Syrian world in pre-Christian and Christian times.[[53]](#footnote-53) The earliest Armenian translation was based on the Syriac.[[54]](#footnote-54)

## Daniel in the New Testament

The motif of the “Human Figure” (conventionally, “Son of Man”) who appears in Dan 7 features prominently in the accounts of Jesus’ life and teaching that came to be included in the NT, though the historical and exegetical questions they raise are much controverted.[[55]](#footnote-55) The expression for “Human Figure” may have other backgrounds as well as Dan 7:13–14, but the NT asserts that Jesus *is* that “Human Figure” who “has authority on earth” (Mark 2:10; cf. Matt 28:18).[[56]](#footnote-56) It thus uses Dan 7 as *1 Enoch* does, to express the conviction that *its* hero has ascended as the “Human Figure” and will return with the clouds. Further, it implicitly connects with Dan 7 its awareness that “the Human Figure must suffer” before he “comes in glory” (Mark 8:31, 38; cf. 14:62, “with the clouds of the heavens”); Dan 7:21, 25 also speaks of the suffering of the sacred ones, and the Human Figure motif may have corporate as well as individual connotations. Further, Jesus qualifies the statement that the Human Figure comes to be served, by declaring that he comes first to serve (Mark 10:45; cf. Dan 7:14).

A messianic interpretation of Dan 7 might not have been seen as a Christian innovation even within rabbinic Judaism. R. Akiba (c. AD 120) refers Dan 7 to David, though others fault this understanding because it plays into the hands of Christians (*b. Sanh*. 38; see also 96; 98 [Joshua ben Levy, c. AD 250]).[[57]](#footnote-57) If OG identifies the humanlike figure with the one “old in days,” then Matthew’s quoting of OG is significant.[[58]](#footnote-58) Conversely, this identification links with developing Jewish thinking in terms of “two powers in heaven”[[59]](#footnote-59)—or it may be a continuation of an older idea of the conflation of two such powers.[[60]](#footnote-60)

Even if “the most conspicuous and important influence of Daniel on the New Testament lies in the role of Dan 7:13 in the development and transmission of the ‘Son of Man’ tradition,”[[61]](#footnote-61) that influence is much broader. It is the final fulfillment of that promise in Jeremiah taken up in Daniel that Jesus brings.[[62]](#footnote-62) If apocalyptic is at all the mother of Christian theology,[[63]](#footnote-63) Daniel contributed to this mothering. Mark’s Jesus begins his ministry by proclaiming that the reign of God that Daniel promised is at hand: the time he spoke of is fulfilled (cf. Dan 2:44; 7:22). The motif of the reign of God has significant background in Daniel; indeed, “the Christian reception of the book of Daniel was perhaps most predominant in the thematic function of ‘kingdom’” throughout the book.[[64]](#footnote-64)

Luke begins his gospel with Gabriel appearing once more at the time of the evening offering, to announce the beginning of a chain of events that will lead to Jesus’ presentation in the temple, as periods amounting to 490 days are fulfilled (cf. Dan 9).[[65]](#footnote-65) Luke’s Jesus sees himself as the stone that crushes, the very embodiment of the rule of God (20:18; cf. Dan 2:44–45). John’s Jesus talks about resurrection in terms that follow Dan 12 (5:28–29; cf. Matt 13:43; 25:46). Perhaps Peter (Matt 16:37-39) is the embodiment of the rock in Dan 2.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Jesus’ discourse concerning the End speaks in Danielic fashion of troubling rumors, the final affliction, many stumbling, the need to endure to the end, the deliverance of the elect, the desolating sacrilege, the need to understand, and the coming of the Human Figure in clouds with great power and glory: “the main part of the eschatological discourse is based on a coherent exposition of or meditation on these texts in Daniel [in chaps. 2 and 7–12].”[[67]](#footnote-67) Elsewhere, however, Jesus may distance himself from apocalyptic esotericism built on passages such as 2:19–23 (Matt 11:25–27; Luke 17:20–21).[[68]](#footnote-68)

Daniel’s influence on Paul may operate partly via the “midrash” underlying Mark 13. First Thessalonians 4–-5 reflects Dan 7 and 12; the portrait of “the lawless one” in 2 Thess 2 reflects that of Antiochus in Dan 7–11; 1 Cor 15:23–28 is shaped by Dan 7.[[69]](#footnote-69) Daniel thus facilitates Paul’s formulating his teaching about the End; and no biblical work has greater influence on the Apocalypse of John, a work written for a community under a pressure analogous to that which affected conservative Jews in the second century BC.[[70]](#footnote-70) John’s visions of Jesus and of the heavens (Rev 1; 5; 20) are shaped significantly by Dan 7 and by the description of the angelic appearance in Dan 10, and the animals of Dan 7 are an important source for the vision of the animal in Rev 13; 17; the beast terrorizing the people of God is now Rome.[[71]](#footnote-71)

Elsewhere in the NT, the list of people commended for their trust in Heb 11:33-38 reflects Dan 3 and 6,[[72]](#footnote-72) while the “last hour” in 1 John recalls Dan 8.[[73]](#footnote-73)

## Daniel in Judaism after AD 70

Within Judaism, Dan 7 also contributed to *Apoc. Baruch* (see chap. 39 for the four empires), *T. Abraham* (see chaps. 11—13 for the influence of Dan 7)[[74]](#footnote-74)and *Apoc. Ezra*. Ezra’s vision of an eagle symbolizing Rome (2 Esdr 11–12) is “a midrash on Daniel 7” or “a rereading of Daniel 7.”[[75]](#footnote-75) The interpreting angel notes that in seeing the fourth empire as Rome he is giving Daniel’s vision an interpretation different from that given to Daniel himself (12:11–12). The reinterpretation of the fourth empire as Rome would enhance Daniel’s importance and influence; the visions do not refer merely to some past event.[[76]](#footnote-76) While there is no Daniel targum, the assumption that the fourth kingdom is Rome appears elsewhere in targumic literature.[[77]](#footnote-77)

Then in a dream Ezra sees “something resembling a man” emerging from the sea and flying with the clouds of the heavens to act as judge (2 Esdr 13). It is God’s son; here too Dan 7 is being used in connection with developing understandings of the Messiah, perhaps partly in response to the Christian interpretation of Dan 7:13 as applying to Jesus.[[78]](#footnote-78) It may also be dependent on Dan 2 as one of the sources of its allusions to a stone-mountain.[[79]](#footnote-79)

Josephus, too, believes that Daniel wrote of Rome (e.g., *Antiquities* 10.11.7 [10.276]. His hesitancy over revealing the meaning of chap. 2 (10.10.4 [10.210]) suggests that he assumes Rome is the fourth empire. The 490-years prophecy is fulfilled in the events of 66–70; Vespasian is the “prince to come” of that prophecy (e.g., *Jewish War* 6.5.4 [6.310–15]. But Josephus assumes that chap. 11 refers to Antiochus, and he uses Daniel broadly as a source for his retelling of the story of Israel from the exile onwards (e.g., *Antiquities* 10.10.1–10.11.7 [10.186–281])—and uses Daniel, among others, as an anticipation, a type, of himself.[[80]](#footnote-80) “By the time he wrote the *Antiquities,…* Josephus had decided to use Daniel as a basis for his interpretation of world history.”[[81]](#footnote-81)

For Josephus, as for the Greek Bible, Qumran, Jesus, and the NT writers, Daniel is a prophet and has similar authority to the prophets within the Hebrew scriptures. Associating Daniel with the prophets encourages an understanding of them as focusing on the End, and the match between Daniel’s prophecies and the abominations of the Romans may have made its place among the scriptures secure. Yet Josephus, at least, saw this attitude to Daniel as a partial cause of the revolt with its disastrous consequences.[[82]](#footnote-82) In the Hebrew Bible Daniel was finally located in its third section, the “Writings,” which suggests a more pedagogical reading of the book,[[83]](#footnote-83) even if for the book and the man “prophet or wise man” is too restrictive an alternative.[[84]](#footnote-84)

Beginning with the writings of the Roman period, one can distinguish two types of scriptural study, which might in a Jewish context be called expository midrash and situational midrash. In the former the biblical text sets the agenda, though the text is looked at in light of concerns and questions of the interpreter’s day. In the latter these concerns and questions set the agenda, and the biblical text is studied and appealed to selectively on the basis of whether it seems to deal with these concerns and questions. The study of Daniel in the period of the Talmud and among the Church Fathers can have either starting point (though as well as there being no targum of Daniel, “Midrash Daniel” comes from a much later period).[[85]](#footnote-85) It has been suggested that Daniel had a significant influence on the development of the Passover Haggadah,[[86]](#footnote-86) and it was one of the books read to the High Priest to keep him awake on the night before the Day of Atonement (*m. Yona* 1.6). In general, Jewish interpretation was wary of attempts to calculate when the End would come,[[87]](#footnote-87) and one could say that Talmudic rabbis were more inclined to read Daniel ethically or parenetically,[[88]](#footnote-88) Christian interpreters prophetically.[[89]](#footnote-89) One background to this divergence was the contrast between the Jewish and Christian conviction over whether the decisive fulfillment of prophecies such as Dan 9:24-27 had happened.[[90]](#footnote-90)

## Daniel in the Church 100-500

While patristic writers have their own parenetic interest in Daniel,[[91]](#footnote-91) their works thus focus more on the eschatological.[[92]](#footnote-92) The small horn in Dan 7—12, the one who embodies lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians, and the anti-Messiah in 1 John become a composite anti-Messiah figure.[[93]](#footnote-93) Athough the small horn receives many historical identifications as time goes by,[[94]](#footnote-94) Augustine comments that anyone who reads Dan 7—12 “even if half-asleep” will be able to see that “Daniel prophesies about the last judgement in such a way as to predict also the prior coming of the Antichrist.”[[95]](#footnote-95)

Occasional patristic writers assume that the fourth empire in Daniel is Greece or the subsequent Hellenistic monarchies and that the small horn is Antiochus, with the humanlike figure and the holy ones on high standing for the Jewish people in this context: see, e.g., *Demonstration* 5 of Aphrahat (270-345).[[96]](#footnote-96) Theodoret opposes a vew of this kind.[[97]](#footnote-97) The pagan philosopher Porphyry (233–304) likewise assumes that the latter two empires are Alexander and the Hellenistic monarchies and that Antiochus is the small horn, broken by the Maccabees. He assumes that the quasi-predictive historical account of Antiochus’s career continues through Dan 11 (and 12), inferring an account of his death from 11:40–45.[[98]](#footnote-98) Porphyry is concerned to show that there are no grounds for claiming that prophecies in Daniel refer to Christ, or to the Antichrist; the visions are quasi-predictions written after the Antiochene crisis was over.[[99]](#footnote-99) But the interpretation of the empires as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome predominates among Christians as among Jews, and writers often see themselves and their readers as thus near the End of which Daniel spoke (see e.g., *Barnabas* 4.4).

The focus of attention on stories such as Daniel 3 changes after Constantine. Augustine (354-430) neatly notes that Nebuchnezzar’s actions “foreshadowed” the early experience of the church and the experience of his own day—first Constantine’s persecution, then his conversion.[[100]](#footnote-100) Whereas Rome had been identified with the fourth empire and then came close to being identified with the fifth,[[101]](#footnote-101) “in Augustine’s hands the Roman Empire has lost its religious significance”; it is neither the beast nor God’s chosen instrument for the world’s salvation.”[[102]](#footnote-102)

Eusebius (263-339) in *Demonstrations* 8 passes on the calculation of Julius Africanus (160-240) that 490 years elapsed from the time of Nehemiah to Christ’s death, and from 300 it became usual to see Dan 9 as pointing to Christ.[[103]](#footnote-103) This belief would discourage false expectations of fulfillment in contemporary history. Yet such an interpretation also compares with Jewish approaches, which saw the four empires and the 490 years coming to a climax with Rome and the events of 70 and 135, though the understanding could also be used in anti-Jewish polemic to prove that the prophecies related to Jesus and not to these events.

## Patristic Commentators

In that context of persecution and of expectation of the coming end of the world, “it is no accident that the earliest surviving complete Greek biblical commentary is that of Hippolytus on Daniel and the earliest surviving Latin one is that of Victorinus on the Apocalypse, the one from the beginning, the other from the end of the third century”;[[104]](#footnote-104) though admittedly Hippolytus (170–235) “struggled with a genre of theological scholarship which had yet to be invented.”[[105]](#footnote-105) His concerns are not just confined to questions about the End; they include the book’s historical reference, its parenetic value, and its theological significance, sometimes reached by recourse to allegory (e.g., on chaps. 3 and 6).[[106]](#footnote-106) He and his successors assume that the revered figure and the human-like figure in Dan 7 are God the Father and Jesus, but in a reversal of the question whether Jesus as Son of Man is divine, other patristic writers can think in terms of the older, revered figure being the second person of the Trinity, not the first.[[107]](#footnote-107) Hippolytus’s words are “fighting words,” arguing on the basis of the text with Jews, pagans, and heretics, and challenging believers in Jesus to stand firm against the arrogance of the state.[[108]](#footnote-108) He thus sets the tone for much exposition of Daniel over the millennia.

Hippolytus’s parenetic interest is paralleled in evidence elsewhere of the stories’ significance for the life of the church (especially chaps. 3 and 6), as is indicated by their featuring in iconography and on tombstones and sarcophagi. They are symbols that could be linked typologically with Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection, and with the death of Christian martyrs.[[109]](#footnote-109) The points made in Dan 3 about empire and martyrdom, political disloyalty and religious fidelity, indeed suggest patterns of behavior for the community undergoing persecution.[[110]](#footnote-110) Origen, too, urges people in danger of martyrdom to recall the story of the three young men.[[111]](#footnote-111)

The “epoch-making”commentary of Jerome (331–420)[[112]](#footnote-112) is our source for knowledge of Porphyry’s work, which Jerome quotes extensively in order to refute it, and of writers such as Origen, since in explaining and clarifying the text he seeks to pass on the fruits of earlier commentators’ writings. Though he begins with a reference to Porphyry, he notes that predecessors such as Eusebius have already responded to him, and Jerome himself wants to put the emphasis on the fact that “none of the prophets has so clearly spoken concerning Christ as has this prophet Daniel,” who not only said Jesus would come but “set forth the very time at which He would come” (in 9:24-27).[[113]](#footnote-113)

Jerome also made a new Latin translation of Daniel, as of other OT books, to replace the Old Latin version made from the Greek. Jerome’s rendering, which came to be called the Vulgate or “common version,” was made from the Hebrew/Aramaic, though he referred to the Greek and it is thus not simply an independent witness to the Hebrew text of his day. Jerome’s involvement with the Hebrew/Aramaic text is also reflected in his utilization of Jewish exegesis in his commentary.[[114]](#footnote-114)

The commentary of John Chrysostom (347–407) survives only in fragments, but the popularity and importance of Daniel 3 is reflected in the way he (like other patristic writers) refers frequently to this story in other writings and draws theological and practical application from it.[[115]](#footnote-115) From the fourth century we also know of two Syriac writers on Daniel, Aphrahat (270-345) and Ephrem (306-73).[[116]](#footnote-116) They encourage their readers to trust in God in the context of subjection to the Persians. ”The succession of kingdoms in Daniel enjoyed divine sanction and the fourth kingdom, Rome, would endure until Christ’s second coming,” so Aphrahat’s audience “had nothing to fear from their Persian rulers.”[[117]](#footnote-117) Aphrahat’s interpretation thus parallels that of Jerome, who encouraged his readers that the continuing Roman empire undergirded the world order.[[118]](#footnote-118) Syriac study of Daniel 4 also contributed to the development of desert spirituality.[[119]](#footnote-119)

From the fifth century we know of two Greek commentaries, a fragmentary work by Polychronius (who died in 430) and a commentary by Theodoret (393–457) which takes a a historical and exegetical approach, though Theodoret emphasizes in his preface that Daniel belongs among the prophets (of Jesus) rather than among the Writings.[[120]](#footnote-120) LikeJerome, Theodoret comments that Daniel predicts Jesus more clearly than any other prophet, and even provides the date of his coming,[[121]](#footnote-121) though this understanding of the seventy weeks is but one of a variety of ways of understanding them.[[122]](#footnote-122)

## Daniel in the Medieval Period 500-1400

There are a number of early medieval works associated with the name Daniel.[[123]](#footnote-123) The sixth-century Byzantine hymnwriter Romanos wrote a kontakion, a kind of poetic homily with musical accompiment, about the story in Dan 3 which was the subject of something like a liturgical drama which took place in Advent.[[124]](#footnote-124) The Greek *Last Vision of Daniel*, the Syriac *Young Daniel a*pocalypse, and the related Syriac *Apocalypse of Daniel*[[125]](#footnote-125) may all come from the seventh century; the ninth-century Greek *Apocalypse of Daniel* [[126]](#footnote-126) is a quasi-prediction of eighth-century wars followed by an actual prophecy of the Antichrist and of Christ’s appearing at the End. The assumption that the fourth empire is Greece and the small horn Antiochus is still alive in the Syrian tradition in glosses to the Syriac translation of Daniel that identify the small horn as Antiochus; the glosses perhaps belong to the sixth century.[[127]](#footnote-127) But the usual view is that the empires extend into the writers’ period, so that Daniel’s four-empire scheme provides the framework for understanding world history throughout the medieval period—and beyond, until the view that the empires belonged to the second temple came to predominate and a basis for structuring world history disappeared.[[128]](#footnote-128) The Syriac tradition thus updates Daniel’s four-empire scheme to incorporate the Arab conquest.[[129]](#footnote-129)

Daniel does not appear in the Quran, but he features in Islamic tradition as an Israelite prophet who preached in Babylon urging people to turn back to God and spoke of the coming of Mohammed. Moslem traditions also have versions of the story of Daniel in the lions den and of the vision of the statue—and stories about his corpse and his signet ring.[[130]](#footnote-130)

The Old English poem *Daniel* is loosely based on the OT Daniel story (esp. on chap. 3), turning its amphasis to a warning about pride, and Daniel is an inspiration for other Old English works including the Canterbury Tales, and further European works in the period.[[131]](#footnote-131) “The stories and characters from the book of Daniel were commonplace in the medieval imagination as the book’s literary imagery permeated the medieval European religion, art, and literature that formed the context for the E[nglish]W[ycliffite]S[ermons].”[[132]](#footnote-132) The twelfth- or thirteenth- century “Play of Daniel” from France was revived and recorded in New York in the 1950s. In the thirteenth-century stained glass of Chartres Cathedral, Daniel is one of the four prophets on whose shoulders the four authors of the Gospels stand.

The promise that “knowledge will be manifold” was key to justifying the growth of theological and scientific knowledge and learning in the Middle Ages and beyond, for scholars from Jerome and Gregory the Great to Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton.[[133]](#footnote-133) As the Middle Ages gave way to the Renaissance, the commentary by the Franciscan teacher Nicholas of Lyre in Normandy (1270-1349) became the first printed Bible commentary, *Postillae perpetuae in universam S. Scripturam*. He learned Hebrew and read rabbinic commentators such as Rashi, whose work he also mediated to later Christian commentators. He concerned himself both with a literal interpretation of the text’s meaning for people of its day and with a Christological interpretation. Other exegetes of his time had inferred from Daniel 12 that the Antichrist’s reign would begin around 1365; he opposed such views. He related the vision in chap. 2 to Christ’s first coming and the visions in chaps. 7—12 to his second coming on the basis of seeing them to have two literal senses, one referring to Antiochus and one (which we might call typological) to the Antichrist. But he declines to connect them with particular dates.[[134]](#footnote-134)

Meanwhile, in 1096 an offshoot of the Crusades was the first pogroms against the Jewish communites of the Rhineland, and Jewish writers of the period take Daniel and his friends as models for a portrayal of Jewish martyrs.[[135]](#footnote-135) Daniel thus continues to be important for Jews challenged to live faithfully in a hostile world, inboth its stories and its visions.[[136]](#footnote-136)

## The Masoretes

To the Jewish scholarship of the first millennium we owe the preservation and standardization of the Hebrew Bible—the consonantal text over the first five centuries, the pointing over the succeeding five. Generally this scribal work was concerned to preserve one standard text of the Bible, but a distinctive feature with regard to Daniel is the number of alternative readings retained. These alternative readings appear in the margins of extant manuscripts as the masora (tradition), and they are reproduced in BHS: almost any verse, at least in the Aramaic chapters, provides examples. Some represent expansions or abbreviations of the text; most are matters of spelling, pronunciation, and morphology, though even they reflect an instinct to keep the text up-to-date and readable.[[137]](#footnote-137) This instinct may also have affected matters of more substance in the text, for example, in the incorporation of explanatory glosses. An independent manuscript of Daniel from about the seventh century was among those found in the geniza of a Cairo synagogue.

The Masoretes’ activity came to a climax with the work of the ben Asher family. This tradition’s oldest manuscript containing Daniel is the Aleppo codex (A, long kept in the Aleppo synagogue), copied about 930. BHS is based on the oldest complete Hebrew Bible, the Leningrad codex (L, located in the Leningrad Library and entitled B 19A), copied in 1008/9. This version of Daniel the one translated in this commentary unless otherwise noted. As a result of the work of the Masoretes almost all other Hebrew manuscripts disappeared. The other manuscripts to which BHS refers are thus ultimately offsprings of MT, and where they vary from MT, such variants have likely come into the text at this later stage and I thus refer to them as “medieval mss”; they do not witness to a tradition older than MT.[[138]](#footnote-138)

The textual work of the medieval period was complemented by the systematic production of Hebrew grammars, dictionaries, and commentaries, designed to facilitate access to the text’s original meaning. A key figure is Saadia Gaon in Babylon (872–942), whose works included a translation of Daniel into Arabic, the everyday language there, and a commentary on the book. It was another period of eschatological expectation, which is one aspect of the background to the writing of a number of commentaries on Daniel. There were also apparently a number by Karaite authors, of which the most famous is that of Yephet ibn Ali (c. 1000) in Arabic. The Karaites stressed the authority of the scriptures alone, questioned the authority of midrashic traditions, and sought to be rigorously literal in their interpretation. Thus Yephet insisted against Saadia that “days” in Daniel means “days” and should not be taken to mean “years” so as to refer it to contemporary events in a way that tends to be proved wrong by events. This stance does not mean that Yephet in practice avoided following traditional interpretations or avoided what seems to us *re*application of the text, in referring Dan 8 and 11 to events of his own day such as the invasion of Mecca.[[139]](#footnote-139) But the pressure of Karaite interpretation drove mainstream rabbinic scholarship in a literal, historical direction.

In France, Solomon bar Isaac, Rashi (1040–1105), wrote a substantial commentary on Daniel that combined a concern for the literal sense with a willingness to incorporate traditional midrashic material. Rashi dated the fulfillment of its “messianic” prophecies in the fourteenth century, which was his way of discouraging expectations for his own day. From Spanish Jewry, Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra (1091–1167) produced a more rigorous literal exegesis, encouraging the reader to avoid attempting to calculate when Daniel’s prophecies would be fulfilled, on the grounds that we will not know until it happens (see his comment on 11:31). He refers the prophecies to political events of the Roman period (chap. 9) and of his own day (chap. 7) as well as of the second century (chap. 8). The commentary attributed to Saadia (“Pseudo-Saadia”) in the Rabbinic Bible (see next section) dates from the same period as Ibn Ezra. The commentary of Levi ben Gershon, Gersonides (1288–1344) from Provence was also included in some editions of the Rabbinic Bible. The medieval Jewish commentaries handle most of the same exegetical problems as modern commentaries, and often the latter can take discussion of such problems little further (see, e.g., 2:1, נהיתה; 6:18 [19] דחון; 7:4 נטילת; 9:21 מעף ביעף).

## Towards the Rabbinic Bible

The last great medieval exegete of Daniel, or its first Renaissance humanist exegete in his critical scholarly approach, was Isaak Avravanel (Abarbanel) (1437–1508).[[140]](#footnote-140) Yet his ה ע שו הי מעני (*Wells of Salvation*, 1496), written after the Jews’ expulsion from Spain, seeks to enable his fellow Jews to learn from Daniel how to live in exile during the continuing rule of the fourth, Roman empire, as they await the messianic rule on earth; he is not merely a pious exegete trying to unravel the problems of the scriptures, but an exile seeking refuge and hope.[[141]](#footnote-141) Avravanel sharply argues that large-scale Christian conversions to Islam belie the claim that Christendom was the rule that would never pass to another people (Dan 2:44). Christians, he argues, fix the historical facts to match their exegesis of Daniel.[[142]](#footnote-142)(Calvin counters that argument by urging that Christ’s reign is invisible and not external.)[[143]](#footnote-143)

One stimulus for the rabbinic writers’ work, then, is the pressure placed on Judaism by the Christian Church, with its claim that the Jewish scriptures refer to Jesus. Like the patristic commentators, the Jewish exegetes want to understand Daniel in a way that relates it to their own day and is consistent with their theological views (e.g., that the messiah has *not* yet come). They are less reticent than some of their predecessors about working out when God would fulfill his purpose.[[144]](#footnote-144) Daniel’s visions can be taken to come to their historical climax with the Moslem Arab empire or the Christendom of their day (see, e.g., Yephet’s extended treatment of chap. 11). The empires may then be Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome/the Arabs (a view Ibn Ezra refers to), or Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece-Rome, and the Arabs (Ibn Ezra himself), or Persia-Babylon-Media, Greece-Rome, Persia-Rome, and Islam (Ibn Daud, 1110-80),[[145]](#footnote-145) or Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome divided into Christendom and Islam (Ibn Yachya, 1120-96), or Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome/Christendom (Avravanel). The 1290 days/years could be expected to terminate in 968 (Saadia), in 1352 (Rashi), or in 1358 (Gersonides et al.), while Avravanel promises that the 3 1/2 periods, the 2,300 days/years, and the 1335 days/years will all end in 1503. While Ibn Ezra takes the small horn of 8:9 to be Antiochus rather than Titus (Rashi) or “Ishmael,” the Arabs (Ps-Saadia),[[146]](#footnote-146) the interpretation of all the vision material as relating to Antiochus appears only in Galipapa (1310–80).[[147]](#footnote-147) We do not know how he came to this distinctive view. In the next century Albo (1380-1444) in his *Book of Principles* chap. 42 takes it up in order to deny that messianic hopes are essential to Jewish faith.

The invention of printing led to the first editions of גדולות מקראות, the “Great Scriptures,” usually known in English as the Rabbinic Bible, beginning in 1517. They comprise the Hebrew text with the targums and the commentaries of exegetes such as Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Pseudo-Saadia. They are utilized by that greatest of Christian exegetes John Calvin (1509-64), though the rabbis’ work was also mediated through the commentary of Nicholas of Lyre, and Calvin indulges additionally in controversy with the more recent work of Avravanel (see Calvin’s commentary on 2:44–45). Calvin’s own interpretation of Daniel’s visions is quite historical within the framework of the assumption that the fourth empire is Rome.[[148]](#footnote-148) Figures such as the 490 years of Dan 9 are not to be treated as if they were designed to give precise chronological information. The fifth regime arrived with Christ, but it is spiritual and invisible, “a spiritual return from exile”;[[149]](#footnote-149) Rome is not to be demonized.[[150]](#footnote-150) The point about the prophecies was to encourage the faithful in OT times,[[151]](#footnote-151) but the implication is not that they are irrelevant to later centuries, and Calvin finds Daniel speaking to contemporary questions: chap. 3 shows that kings are justified in punishing heretics (Calvin is following Augustine); 4:27 [24] and 6:22 [23] do not teach justification by works. The influence of the Rabbinic Bible can also be seen in commentators such as Hugh Broughton (1549-1612) and Andrew Willet (1562-1621), and in the KJV, which often follows the medieval commentaries rather than the ancient versions (e.g., 2:5 “dunghill”; 4:27 [24] “break off”; in both cases, compare Rashi).[[152]](#footnote-152)

## The Reformation

The centuries of the medieval Jewish exegetes were the centuries of millennarian movements in Christian Europe. After the death of the German emperor Frederick I during the Crusades, prophets began to speak of a future Frederick as an Emperor of the Last Days. While Revelation was their key biblical resource, there is a striking appeal to Daniel in the anonymous *Book of a Hundred Chapter*s, written near the beginning of the sixteenth century.[[153]](#footnote-153) Frederick is one who will restore Germany to the position of supremacy God intended: Daniel’s four empires are France, England, Spain, and Italy, while Germany is the fifth and greatest empire, which will not pass away.

The centuries of the millennarian movements were also preoccupied by the figure of the Antichrist. Daniel’s “small horn” was one important source for such teaching, elaborated in the medieval “Antichrist legend” that tells how this pseudomessiah will come to Jerusalem and enforce worship of himself for three and a half years until put down by Michael. It was also possible, however, to see the Antichrist as a principle of opposition to Christ already embodied in the papacy or in Islam, as it had been in Antiochus and in Rome.[[154]](#footnote-154)

In the years that followed the posting of his theses at Wittenberg in 1517, Martin Luther (1483-1546) came to the conclusion that the Pope was the Antichrist of whom Dan 8 speaks. Thomas Müntzer (1489-1525) had been attracted first to Luther, then to millennarianism, but in 1524 he preached a sermon on Dan 2 to the Princes of Saxony in which he declared tht the last of the world empires was coming to an end. The challenge to the princes was to take up the sword to slay God’s enemies. They were like Nebuchadnezzar and his court; Müntzer implicitly offered to be a modern Daniel to replace the useless sages—Luther and his kind—with whom the princes were currently encumbered.[[155]](#footnote-155) Within a year Müntzer had taken up the sword himself in the Peasants’ Revolt and lost his life.[[156]](#footnote-156)

During the 1520s the advance of the Turks in Europe increased, and whereas Luther had earlier stressed that the Antichrist was to be broken without hand, his *Heerpredigt wider dem Türken* (1529) not only identified the Turks with the fourth beast (specifically, with the small horn) but encouraged people to join in the eschatological battle against them.[[157]](#footnote-157) Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) had published an exposition of Dan 7 in this context, and his focus on the Turks and on the Pope also finds expression in his commentary on Daniel. Melanchthon saw Antiochus and the Antichrist as referring to the Turks and the Pope; Daniel thus offered comfort to the church in the face of such enemies.[[158]](#footnote-158)

Luther hastened through his Prefaces to the books of the OT so as to reach this work so relevant to the situation in which he and his people lived, and on which he then wrote particularly extensively. In his perception of the true church’s final conflict with the forces of evil, the latter are indeed embodied in both the Turks and the Pope.[[159]](#footnote-159) While noting the encouragement and example offered by the stories, he gives most space to the visions. The four empires are Assyria-Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, the last living on in the German empire, currently threatened by the Turks—Mohammed being the small horn—but certain to survive until the final consummation of God’s reign. Though Antiochus appears in chaps. 8 and 11, these prophecies also point to the Antichrist. Daniel 11:36–45 refers directly to the Antichrist, who is identified with the celibate papacy (cf. 11:36–37). “Lutheranism was the only major confession of the Reformation era to give a clear, virtually doctrinal sanction to a powerful sense of eschatological expectancy.”[[160]](#footnote-160)

In 1543 Luther published a substabtial diatribe “On the Jews and Their Lies” which he described as a response to a Jewish diatribe and in which he argued vigously and belligerently in the manner of John the Baptizer or Paul concerning the messianic signifcance of Gen 49, 2 Sam 7, Hag 2, and then of Dan 9.[[161]](#footnote-161) Jews and Christains were agreed that the seventy weeks of years looked forward to the decades leading up to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, but is Jesus the anointed one who will then be killed, or is it King Herod Agrippa I, who died suddenly a decade later?[[162]](#footnote-162)

While Daniel’s popularity had been encouraged by Luther,[[163]](#footnote-163) it was discouraged by Calvin’s more historical approach, which did not apply the visions beyond the Roman period. But Zwingli’s successor in Zurich, Heinrich Bullinger (1504-75), continued to maintain the views of Melanchthon and Luther in his sermons on Daniel.[[164]](#footnote-164)

## Daniel and the Millennium in England

Luther’s exposition of Dan 8 as relating to the Antichrist/the pope was published in England by John Frith (1503-33), writing under the pseudonym Richard Brightwell. Other aspects of continental influence reached the English reformers through their exile in Europe. George Joye (1495-1553), exiled for his Protestant beliefs for a second time from 1540 to 1547, encouraged himself and others by producing a translation and exposition of Daniel, based on the commentaries of continental reformers, Melanchthon, Oecolampadius, Pellikan, and Draconites.[[165]](#footnote-165) “Apocalyptic in the early [English] Reformation was primarily a theology of persecution and a theology of history.”[[166]](#footnote-166) In Scotland, John Knox (1513-72) relates how in 1547 he preached his first ever public sermon in St. Andrews on Dan 7:24–25, which he applied to the papacy.[[167]](#footnote-167) The note on Dan 12:4 in the Geneva Study Bible of 1560 declared that the commission to Daniel to seal the book until the time of the end applied “until the time that God has appointed for the full revelation of these things: and then many will run to and fro to search for the knowledge of these mysteries, which things they obtain now by the light of the Gospel.”

In England’s native apocalyptic tradition, too, the mass could be seen as the desolating sacrilege of Daniel: Wycliffe’s *Wyckett*, which speaks in these terms, was first published in 1546. In mid-sixteenth-century England the natural way to apply the passages about the small horn was to the papacy. In contrast, however, the next English commentary on Daniel, by Broughton, published in 1596, denied Daniel’s prophecies any historical reference beyond the Antiochene period. While the latter part of the century saw a lively general sense that the End was imminent and a sporadic interest in calculating its date, Daniel does not seem to have contributed to this computing, though Joye’s commentary had offered some calculations pointing to the end of the century. There was a spirited disagreement on the interpretation of 9:24–27 between Edward Lively (1545-1605), who accepted the MT punctuation of 9:25, and Broughton, who rejected it in favor of a punctuation open to seeing the passage as a prophecy of Christ.[[168]](#footnote-168) Thomas Brightman (1562-1607) developed a revisionist understanding of the chronology in Revelation and Daniel and also critiqued the Church of England as Laodicean (see Rev 3:14-22); his commentary on the last part of Daniel could be published only after his death, in 1635.[[169]](#footnote-169)

As ecclesiastical and political events developed, the Antichrist came to be seen not only in the Roman church but in the Church of England and in the monarchy. William Aspinwall (1605-62) in the 1650s saw Charles I as the small horn in Dan 7, England, Scotland, and Wales as the three horns that were broken off, the Puritan parliament as the holy ones, and the Puritans’ rule as the rule Daniel speaks of: the fifth monarchy is now beginning.[[170]](#footnote-170) Thomas Harrison (1616-60) justifies the fifth monarchists’ violence by noting that Dan 7:18 said that the saints would *take* the rule; in 1653 the fifth monarchist John Tillinghast (1604-55) redated the beginning of the 1290 years to 366, when the temple was actually destroyed, so that it would now end in 1656.[[171]](#footnote-171) In due course the fifth-monarchy men themselves identified the Protector’s dominion as that of the Beast, to be terminated after its due three and a half years in 1657.[[172]](#footnote-172) Like Münster, Gerrard Winstanley (1609-76) believed in taking action, but his action was something non-violent; he belonged to the “Diggers,” who believed it was appropriate to dig up common land in order to farm it. In *The Fire in the Bush*, he outlined the revelation on which he acted: Daniel’s four beasts are kingly power, the power to imprison, the power to buy and sell the earth and its produce, and the power of the clergy.[[173]](#footnote-173)

Among others, John More argued on an exegetical basis with Aspinwall in his *A Trumpet Sounded* (1654) by pointing out that Charles did not fit Daniel’s portrait. He killed no kings; it is Cromwell who is the small horn. But history was a more compelling judge of Danielic exegesis. After the end of the fifth monarchy movement, the eschatological hopes to whose shaping Daniel made a key contribution centered on less political events, such as the conversion of the Jews already emphasized by Brightman and Ephraim Huit (1591-1644).[[174]](#footnote-174) The historical approach to interpretation practiced by writers such as Calvin (his *Institutes* quotes Dan 2:34 in this connection) and Broughton did not prevent them from expecting a future fulfillment of OT prophecies of the world’s acknowledgment of God, an expectation taken up by the Puritans, with the encouragement of passages such as Dan 2:34–35, 44; 7:26–27. This approach was to be one important stimulus for the development of the missionary movements of the next two centuries.[[175]](#footnote-175)

## On the Eve of Biblical Criticism

The seventeenth century saw developing interest in the two related convictions that underlie the critical study of Daniel that is characteristic of academic study in the modern period. As well as the belief that all the prophecies relate historically to the time of Antiochus, there is also the inference that this period was when the book was written. At both points critical study came to affirm what Porphyry declared in the second century. Thus Benedict de Spinoza (1632-77), the unapocalyptic unobservant Jew, in the tumultuous seventeenth-century context from which he was apparently insulated, seems to have studied Daniel in a detached fashion within this framework in the course of thinking his way through questions about the origin of the scriptures.[[176]](#footnote-176)

In contrast, his fellow-Portuguese contemporary the Jesuit preacher and writer António Viera (1608-97) wrote an extensive “History of the Future” or “Key to the Prophets” or “Fifth Empire” in which he took Daniel’s four-empire scheme as the basis for a promise that the tough aspects of Portugal’s current experience were but the preliminaries to the fulfillment of God’s final purpose, which would be good news for Portugal.[[177]](#footnote-177)

In England, likewise, on one hand the work of Anthony Collins (1676-1729) presents the main features of the critical argument for the second-century date of Daniel : the historical problems, the Greek words, the prophecies relating to the second century (Collins is taking up the work of Porphyry), the book’s location among the Writings, and the late Aramaic.

Yet as the critical approach to Daniel was developing, “leading British churchmen and theologians” and “leading British radicals and socialists”—not a mere lunatic fringe—continued to see events of their day as the fulfillment of Daniel’s visions and of other prophetic material in the scriptures.[[178]](#footnote-178) Isaac Newton (1642-1727) the mathematician and physicist also wrote on the prophecies in Daniel, which God gave “not to gratify men's curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the event,” so that “the event of things predicted many ages before, will then be a convincing argument that the world is governed by providence.” The four empires are Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, with the succeeding European nations being the ten horns; the seventy weeks extend from Ezra to the death of Christ.[[179]](#footnote-179) Newton mostly declined to infer future dates from the visions, though he did say that he expected the end to come in 2060. This calculation had the advantage of being a long way away from his own time and that of his rash contemporary interpreters (even the present writer will not live long enough to see whether the mathematician’s calculation was correct, but one or two of my readers may see it). Charles Wesley (1707-88), who appreciated Newton’s work on the prophecies, was less reticent. In a letter of 1754 he explains that in his own day God had shaken off the seals on the scroll and enabled him to generate the year 1794 as the date for the arrival of the fifth regime, given that 2300 years (8:14) would then have elapsed from 538 BC.[[180]](#footnote-180)

In the nineteenth century, Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-90) argued in the fifth volume of his Tracts for the Times that Rome has not yet divided into ten regimes; Antiochus in Daniel is a foreshadowing of the Antichrist, and the fulfillment of this aspect of Daniel’s prophecy is also still to come.[[181]](#footnote-181) E. W. Bullinger (1837-1913), who had been made a Doctor of Divinity for his service of the church in the realm of biblical criticism,[[182]](#footnote-182) edited *The* *Companion Bible*, which identifies Islam as a fifth empire (Dan 2:41-43) to follow Rome before the coming of God’s final reign. Other writers found other insights on recent, contemporary, and coming events : Dan 4:19 [16] refers to the French Revolution;[[183]](#footnote-183) so does 11:36–39;[[184]](#footnote-184) 8:14 refers to the events of 1814[[185]](#footnote-185) or to the year 1867, when the papacy will fall[[186]](#footnote-186) (the interpreters are usually Protestant and the interpretations match). The renowned Irish preacher and evangelist Henry Grattan Guinness calculated that the end would come in 1919-23; E. H. Horne (who had meanwhile published his own study of the interpretation of prophecy) produced a revised edition of his book in 1918, by which time some of Guinness’s predictions had been fulfilled.[[187]](#footnote-187) At the same time such writers found edification in the stories, and their exposition of the visions was designed not merely to satisfy curiosity but to encourage people to live in faithfulness and hope as they knew the End was coming.

In the United States, in the 1820s a Baptist layman in Vermont, William Miller, concluded from his study of Daniel that the Second Coming of Jesus would occur about 1843. The 2,300 days of Dan 8:14 denoted 2,300 years, which had begun in 457 with the decree of Artaxerxes mentioned in Ezra 7.[[188]](#footnote-188) A Millerite movement gained strength as the date approached, and even continued after 1843.[[189]](#footnote-189) The failure of the expectation and the disappointment did not lead to a discrediting of the conviction that Jesus’ coming was imminent, and in 1897 the prominent Adventist writer Uriah Smith published expositions of Daniel which consciously follow Hippolytus, see the pope as the small horn, and continue to understand 1843-1844 as the end of the 2300 days/years and as the beginning of the End.[[190]](#footnote-190) Smith’s works are still being reprinted and the same understanding appears in the writings of Adventist academic theologians in the twenty-first century.[[191]](#footnote-191) Conversely, critical opinions were slower to develop in the United States, but a more subtle, more secular use of the Daniel figure appears in the work of American novelists such as James, Melville, and Hawthorne.[[192]](#footnote-192)

## Pre-modern and Modern Coexisting

The systematic working out of critical ideas took place in Germany in the nineteenth century, beginning with the work of Leonhard Bertholdt, C. von Lengerke, and Heinrich Ewald. Johann Gottfried Eichhorn and Johannes Meinhold advanced the possibility that the narratives, which make no overt reference to the Antiochene crisis, are older than the visions. The critical view met resistance in Germany from conservative scholars such as E. W. Hengstenberg, H. A. C. Hävernick, and C. F. Keil, and in Britain from E. B. Pusey, who saw the debate as the test-case in the conflict between criticism and faith. The commentaries of F. W. Farrar and S. R. Driver (following up his *Introduction to the OT*) were important in securing acceptance of the critical view in England.

The approaches that characterized nineteenth-century study continued in the twentieth. Karl Marti, R. H. Charles, and H. H. Rowley argued for the second-century BC origin of the whole book, following A. F. von Gall, while Gustav Hölscher, M. Haller, James Montgomery, Martin Noth, and H. L. Ginsberg developed the view of Eichhorn. They came to varying conclusions regarding the precise date of the pre-second-century material, and beyond the two main stages of composition, they see stages of development within the visions, as material is edited and updated. R. Dick Wilson, Charles Boutflower, E. J. Young, Joyce Baldwin, D. J. Wiseman and others, developed the conservative response. Discoveries regarding Nabonidus and Belshazzar have been taken both to justify a conservative view of the narratives’ historicity and to undermine it.

Research into Canaanite myth suggested some of the background to motifs in the visions, and the modern period has also seen an explosive growth in the study of apocalyptic. After the nineteenth-century discovery of texts such as *1 Enoch*, many were edited and published at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially through the work of Charles. Apocalyptic seemed rather alien, and it came to be seen as reflecting Persian influence and thus as alien even to Israelite religion. In theology, the approaches of Karl Barth and Rudolph Bultmann encouraged the neglect of apocalyptic for some years, through a powerful twentieth-century exposition of Daniel is that of Barth’s associate Walter Lüthi in German-speaking Switzerland in the 1930s. Earlier in that same telling decade there appeared a more artistic utilization of Daniel, like those of the nineteenth century but in musical form. As Handel’s oratorio *Belshazzar* used Daniel to issue a warning to Britain in its ascendancy in the eighteenth century, William Walton’s *Belshazzar’s* *Feast* takes up that theme in the 1930s.[[193]](#footnote-193)

The work of Ernst Käsemann and Wolfhart Pannenberg brought an end to the period during which apocalyptic could be ignored or dismissed in theological discussion. Meanwhile Otto Plöger’s *Theokratie* *und Eschatologie* began a new phase of critical study in which scholars sought to trace the development of different religious groups and their ideologies in the Second Temple period, and to identify which of these lay behind Daniel.[[194]](#footnote-194) Scholarship in the United States attempted a more broadly sociological approach to apocalyptic, and sought to clarify what precisely we mean by that term.[[195]](#footnote-195)

At the same time, “Daniel was read for centuries as a guide to political history and messianic chronology,”[[196]](#footnote-196) and outside the world of Western critical scholarship this approach continued to be dominant, along with an interest in the stories’ significance as an encouragement to live a life of faithfulness to God. It was in such a connection that the scientist William Whitla took on the editing of Newton’s work on Daniel after the fall of the Turkish empire.[[197]](#footnote-197) Professors with earned doctorates have continued to write books on “preaching Christ from Daniel,”[[198]](#footnote-198) to identify the four empires with Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, to see specific prophecies as relating to events long after Daniel’s day, and to take the death of Christ to signify the last of Daniel’s seventy weeks.[[199]](#footnote-199) Interpreters have continued to see prophecies fulfilled in events in their time: for instance, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war fulfilled both 8:14, coming 2,300 years after Alexander, and 12:12, coming 1,335 years after the establishment of the Caliphate.[[200]](#footnote-200) As had happened in previous centuries, in due course interpretations based on current and expected events sometimes required to be reconsidered.[[201]](#footnote-201) Yet other interpreters continued to believe that many aspects of Daniel’s visions are still to be fulfilled.[[202]](#footnote-202) Such approaches to Daniel gained more attention with the approach of the end of the second millennium. On the basis of figures in Daniel and elsewhere, in 1992 Henry Camping declared that Jesus would return in 1994; when he did not do so, Camping inferred that God had changed his mind as he once did about the fall of Nineveh.[[203]](#footnote-203) On the other hand, within Seventh Day Adventism the traditional historicist approach is under pressure in some circles.[[204]](#footnote-204)

## The Impasse

It has been said that “no serious commentator would now question Porphyry's demonstration that the work belongs in the 160s under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and that up to and including that point the prophecies in it are pseudo prophecies, relating and giving meaning to events which had already occurred.” [[205]](#footnote-205) The word *serious* in this declaration denotes someone whose approach the writer agrees with. With hindsight, one can see that the study of Daniel reached an impasse in the twentieth century. While critical scholarly study worked with the conviction that the book came into being in the second century BC and spoke directly to that context, and took for granted that questions about the book’s historicity could be ignored,[[206]](#footnote-206) more than 99% of the book’s readers continued to work with the conviction that it came into being in the sixth century and also speaks directly to later contexts, including their own. The impasse applied to Jewish readers as well as to Christian readers.[[207]](#footnote-207) Effectively, nothing changed during the twentieth century.

One factor contributing to the impasse is the nature of the critical approach as etic rather than emic—that is, it focuses on questions about the historical development of the text and its place in the development of Jewish thought, out of interests and a framework of thinking that come from a different culture than those of the text itself. Further, during the twentieth century the study of the book largely took the form of a conversation between scholars that reached no clear results or consensus beyond the key convictions that had emerged in the nineteenth century, that the stories are legends and that the visions come from the second century. In contrast, other kinds of readers identified with the concern of the text to enable readers to see what God was doing and was going to do in their lives, and on how they were to live. Ironically, the approach of such readers also had etic as well as emic aspects, ones that were the converse of the critical approach, in that such readers largely ignored the way God was speaking to his people through the text in its original context.

One can then further see a twofold significance in the commissioning of the Word Commentary on Daniel and other books in the 1970s, and an ironic relationship between the two aspects of its significance. On one hand it represented a new level of confidence on the part of broadly conservative or evangelical scholarship; the volumes were commissioned from scholars who were believed to be broadly orthodox but who broadly accepted critical approaches to the scriptures, in something like the stance of scholars from a century previous such as the authors of BDB, Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs.[[208]](#footnote-208) On the other hand, coincidentally the commissioning of the commentaries came at the time of the “postmodern turn” in Western thinking, which itself linked with a broader impasse concerning the interpretation of texts, and which also affected biblical studies.

Over the past thirty years, biblical scholars have thus applied to Daniel a number of approaches to interpretation from the wider intellectual world—as indeed had happened with the development of historical-critical methods themselves.[[209]](#footnote-209) It was in half-conscious awareness of the postmodern turn that the first edition of this commentary included a study of the interpretation of Daniel over the centuries In place of the traditional type of “Introduction,” of which this present introduction is an expansion. While historical and critical commentaries have continued to appear over these thirty years,[[210]](#footnote-210) it is significant that a two-volume collection of mostly-English essays on Daniel published in 2002 was subtitled “Composition *and Reception*,”[[211]](#footnote-211) while three mostly-German volumes on Daniel’s reception-history and influence have appeared.[[212]](#footnote-212) Other commentaries have reflected this broadening of focus.[[213]](#footnote-213). An interest in reception history is one feature of postmodern interpretation in the Humanities.

## Daniel in the Twenty-first Century

How then is Daniel read in a twenty-first century context?[[214]](#footnote-214) The approaches that I here summarize that can both open up aspects of the text’s intrinsic meaning (they aid exegesis) and encourage interaction between the text and our context.

1. The introduction to the first edition of the commentary also made the comment that developing interest in literary approaches to OT narrative was overdue for application to Daniel, and it included some such interpretation, of “new critical” kind.[[215]](#footnote-215) It was soon followed by study through the lenses of structuralism,[[216]](#footnote-216) deconstruction[[217]](#footnote-217) and Menippean satire.[[218]](#footnote-218) Literary approaches provide different ways into the study of old questions such as the significance of the book’s bilingual nature.[[219]](#footnote-219)
2. Intertextuality has become a major aspect of OT study. Intertextuality has two main meanings. It can be an approach to discovering the direct interrelationships between texts—in Daniel’s case, its internal relationships and its relationship with (e.g.) the Joseph story and Isa 40—66. Intertextuality is then another way of conceptualizing a traditional focus of interpretation. Or it can issue from an interpreter’s juxtaposition of texts that (as far as we know) were not directly related. In the first sense “the book of Daniel may well be the most intertextually determined and complex one among the books of the Hebrew Bible.”[[220]](#footnote-220)
3. Postcolonial and other political, sociological, and cultural readings can be both ways of discerning the text’s meaning in its context[[221]](#footnote-221) and ways of generating an interaction between a modern context and an ancient text; these approaches, too, suggest another approach to Daniel’s bilingual nature.[[222]](#footnote-222) It has been argued that “it’s impossible to understand Daniel unless one understands the perspective of a colonized person.”[[223]](#footnote-223) And long before the word *postcolonial* existed, people in Korea during Japanese occupation particularly valued the book of Daniel, and their overlords banned it.[[224]](#footnote-224) Daniel has particularly attracted interpreters who appreciated its implied exhortation to resistance but not to violence.[[225]](#footnote-225)
4. There are many children’s versions of the story of Daniel and the lions’ den, and children are urged to “Dare to be a Daniel,” though arguably “what Daniel represents is the possibility of being threatened with being devoured and yet safe.”[[226]](#footnote-226)
5. Gender Studies have looked at Daniel from a feminist perspective and then in terms of more recent study of masculinity,[[227]](#footnote-227) while psychological interpretation looks at Daniel as a person whose emotions are prominent in the book.[[228]](#footnote-228) Yet further, Daniel more than some books encourages readers to think beyond the human.[[229]](#footnote-229)
6. A major significance of “theological interpretation” of the OT is that it seeks to respond to the limitations of historical-critical approaches, which see Daniel as “a collection of imaginative tales and visions that reflect the fears and hopes of beleaguered Jews in the Hellenistic period”;[[230]](#footnote-230) most readers of Daniel study it because it is part of the scriptures of Judaism and of the church, and think that it reflects more than such descriptions imply. The increase in our historical insight into Daniel in the modern period has not been accompanied by a proportionate increase in our theological insight into the book.[[231]](#footnote-231) Once again, then, theological interpretation can be a way into the text’s meaning.[[232]](#footnote-232) On the other hand, it can be a way of seeing significance in the text that the author would not have seen, if (for instance) the book’s center is identified as the ascension of Christ and Daniel is “read through this lens of an ascension Christology.”[[233]](#footnote-233)

## Back to the Future with the Qumran Community

Alongside the burgeoning of postmodern approaches to interpretation, the other major development in the study of Daniel over the past thirty years looks quite different but is ideologically related. It concerns textual criticism.

Ironically (given the nature of the book of Daniel), both developments might have been predicted, but only with hindsight. In the modern period, the philosophy of textual criticism seemed self-evident. Its aim was to get back to the original text of the scriptures. But what we mean by the original text is less clear. For instance, in 4:35 [32] BHK and BHS declare that the second occurrence of the phrase “and the inhabitants of earth” is an addition, and the NEB translation omits it. On what basis can we say that the phrase is an addition to the original text? What is this original text?

The Hebrew-Aramaic book of Daniel is one of the few books in the Bible of which we can say with some precision and confidence when and where it came into being: in Jerusalem in the mid-160s BC in the midst of the persecution of Jewish people there in the time of Antochus IV. One can therefore also attach some meaning to the idea of the original text of Daniel. Someone or a group of people put the book together at that point. It is possible to envisage there being an original copy. And because of the substantial (if partial) vindication of its promises when Antiochus was thrown out, it seems to have speedily gained the community’s recognition as deserving to belong to its collection of scriptures along with the Torah, Isaiah, and so on. Yet this fact makes the variety of Daniel material from Qumran and the existence of its several Greek translations all the more striking. The discovery of the Qumran scrolls in fact played a key role in raising new questions about the aims and principles of textual criticism, questions which have grown in sharpness as the Daniel scrolls in particular have been published.

*Biblia Hebraica* is a presentation of the text of MT whose first three editions, in the first half of the twentieth century, were edited by Rudolf Kittel and others; hence the abbreviation BHK. The fourth edition was developed and published in the second half of the twentieth century by the German Bible Society in Stuttgart—hence *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* or BHS. In the early twenty-first century, volumes in a fifth edition, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* or BHQ, began to appear; there is not yet any date for the Daniel volume. The margins of BHK offer very many suggestions for revision of the text to take it back to its hypothetical origin form. The margins of BHScontain fewer such suggestions. Volumes of *BHQ* that have appeared are even more reticent with such suggestions, as are the volumes edited by Barthélemy**,** *Critique textuelle de l’AT*, and the volumes of the Hebrew University Bible project (*HUB*). At the same time, the Society of Biblical Literature is publishing the volumes in the Oxford Hebrew Bible Project, a series containing an eclectic, critically reconstructed text rather than MT.[[234]](#footnote-234) Further, various scholars are engaged in producing editions and translations of versions such as G, Vg, and Syr, and commentaries on these versions, which treat them as of interest in their own right and not merely as aids to the reconstruction of “the original Hebrew text.”

Given that L was copied over a millennium later than the book came into being, it can be only a starting point for study of the text. Over the centuries the book was likely affected by both accidental and intentional changes. We may be able to identify some of these by comparing L with older copies of Daniel such as the Cairo manuscript and the Qumran manuscripts. We can also study copies of translations that are older than L, the most important for this purpose being the Greek, Syriac, and Latin, to see if we can infer the Hebrew version utilized by them. Yet some differences between these translations and MT, and between variant Hebrew manuscripts and MT, themselves reflect interpretive activity. They may not indicate that the translations are mediating to us an earlier text . The trend of contemporary textual criticism is to recognize that biblical books were preserved in a number of textual traditions (e.g., in different geographical areas). A reading suggested by one of the ancient translations that seems to us preferable to the one provided by MT may not actually be nearer to what the author of Daniel wrote. Where MT is more pleonastic than G (e.g., 6:20 [21]; 8:1, 2, 3), or less elegant or syntactically uneven (e.g., 1:5, 20), or expansive in a way that could suggest glossing (e.g., 7:1, 11), or where it repeats phrases with variation rather than identically (e.g., 4:12 [9]), these features need not imply that MT is not original.

I am generally more inclined to trust the work of the Jewish community and the rabbis who preserved the text of the scriptures than to trust my own capacity to get back behind their work to a more original text. While my eclectic text might sometimes be closer to the hypothetical original, at other points it would likely be further away. I have no confidence that on the whole the end result would be an improvement. Only rarely, then, do I assume a Hebrew/Aramaic text different from MT.[[235]](#footnote-235)

## Further Questions that Emerge

The history of the interpretation of Daniel thus raises issues that we will underlie our chapter by chapter study; we will return to some of them in the *Conclusion*.

The history of the interpretation of Daniel suggests that it is hazardous to claim that the book directly refers to events of one’s own day, or to the key events on which one’s own faith is based. Interpreters who refer Daniel’s visions directly to Jesus or to twentieth or twenty-first century events may be right, but earlier centuries of interpreters of various faiths have related these visions to events of their own faith and their own day by the same interpretive techniques that such twentieth century or twenty-first century Christian interpreters use, and it seems wise to allow for the possibility that the interpretations of the latter will also be falsified in due course. My presupposition for the commentary is that the divinely-inspired forward projections in Daniel were designed to bring a message that was meaningful to people in the Second Temple period, and I shall seek to interpret the seer’s visions in light of material in the book itself and in light of the history of the period as we know it.

The implication is not that interpreters who have related these visions to their own day were simply wrong.[[236]](#footnote-236) Their sense that these visions were significant for a time long after Daniel’s was quite valid. How they speak to days long after their own, and what theological insight they offer, I shall seek to consider in the *Explanation* sections of the commentary.

Further, what assumptions should we bring to our study regarding the nature of the stories and the origin of the visions? Critical scholarship has sometimes overtly, sometimes covertly approached the visions with the *a priori* conviction that they cannot be actual prophecies of events to take place long after the seer’s day, because prophecy of that kind is impossible.[[237]](#footnote-237) Conversely, conservative scholarship has sometimes overtly, sometimes covertly approached these visions with the *a priori* conviction that they must be actual prophecies because quasi-predictions issued pseudonymously could not have been inspired by God. Both these sets of convictions seem to me mistaken. I assume that the God of Israel is capable of knowing future events and thus of revealing them, capable of inspiring both actual prophecy and quasi-prediction, and capable of inspiring his servants to speak in their own name, or anonymously, or—in certain circumstances—pseudonymously. It was excusable for Pusey[[238]](#footnote-238) to think that pseudonymity makes the author a liar and must be incompatible with being divinely inspired. It is less excusable now we know that in the ancient world, and in the Hellenistic age in particular, pseudonymity was a common practice used for a variety of reasons—some unethical, some unobjectionable—for poetry, letters, testaments, philosophy, and prophecies, so that it was by no means confined to apocalypses.[[239]](#footnote-239) That pseudonymity is a rarer literary device in our culture, especially in religious contexts, should not allow us to infer that God could not use it in another culture. Whether he actually chose to do so is to be determined not *a priori* but from study of the text. I shall consider these questions in the *Form* sections of the commentary.

Critical scholarship has also been inclined to presuppose that rescuing people from lions and fiery furnaces doesn’t happen, while conservative scholarship has approached the stories with the *a priori* conviction that they must be pure history, because fiction or a mixture of fact and fiction could not have been inspired by God. Again, both types of conviction seem to me to be mistaken. God has the capacity to engage in such acts of rescue, and God is capable of inspiring people to write both history and fiction.

Actually, whether the stories are history or fiction, whether the visions are actual prophecy or quasi-prediction, whether they were written by Daniel or by someone else, and whether in the sixth century BC, the second, or somewhere in between, makes surprisingly little difference to the book’s exegesis. One understands the book on the basis of what it says; there are points where its meaning is unclear, but not because of uncertainty over the alternatives just listed. Whether or not we can divide the actual seer and his visionary namesake, I assume that the wise approach is to take him on his own terms and immerse ourselves in the visionary experience as he describes it.[[240]](#footnote-240)

# Four Young Exiles Gain Insight and Prestige without Losing Holiness (1:1–21)

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## Translation

1*In the third year of the reign of Yehoyaqim king of Yehudah, Nebukadne’ṣṣar*a *king of Babel came*b *to Yerušalaim and blockaded it,* 2*and the Lord*a *gave Yehoyaqim king of Yehudah into his hand.*b *Some of*c *the articles*d *from the house of God he broughte to the land of Šin’ar to the house of his god;*f *the articles*g *he brought to his god’s treasury.*

3*The king said to Ašpenaz,*a *his chief of staff,*b *to bring*c *some of the Yisra’elites,*d e*some of the royal family and some of the people of rank,*e 4*young men*a *without any shortcoming,*b *good in appearance, discerning in all aspects of expertise, knowledge, and insight, and capable of taking a placec in the king’s palace, and to teach them*d e*the language and literature of the Kasdites.*e 5*The king assigned them a daily allowance*a *from the king’s supplies*b *and from the wine which he drank. They were to be trained*c *for three years, and some of them*d *would take their place before the king.* 6*Among them were*a *some Yehudites, Daniyye’l, Ḥananyah, Miša’el and ‘Azaryah. 7But the head of staff determined on names for them. He determined*a *on* b*Belṭeša’ṣṣar for Daniyye’l, Šadrak for Ḥananyah, Mešak for Miša’el, and ‘Abed Nego for ‘Azaryah.*b

8*But Daniyye’l determined in his mind*a *that he would not contaminate himself with the king’s supplies or with the wine which he drank. He asked the head of staff that he might not have to contaminate himself,* 9*and God gave*a *the head of staff*b *commitment and compassion*b *towards Daniyye’l.* 10*But the head of staff said to Daniyye’l, “I’m afraid of my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink, in case*a *he sees your faces looking grim*b *compared with the other young men of your group,*c *and you forfeit*d *my head to the king.”*

11*So Daniyye’l said to the guardian*a *whom the head of the palace staff had assigned to Daniyye’l, Ḥananyah, Miša’el, and ‘Azaryah,* 12*”Please* *test your servants over ten days. They should give us vegetarian food*a *to eat and water to drink,* 13*and our appearance and that of the young men who eat the king’s supplies will be visible to you: deal with your servants in accordance with what you see.”*a I4*He heard them on this point and tested them over ten days.* 15*At the end of ten days their appearance looked better and their bodies better-built than all*a *the young men who had been eating the king’s supplies.* 16*So the guardian continued to take off*a *their supplies and the wine they were to drink and to give*a *them vegetarian food.*

17*To these same four young men God gave knowledge and discernment*a *in all kinds of literature and expertise, while Daniyyel in particular gained insight into all kinds of visions and dreams.* 18*At the end of the period which the king had said to bring them in, the head of staff brought them before Nebukadne’ṣṣar.* 19*The king spoke with them, and there proved to be*a *not one of them like Daniyye’l, Ḥananyah, Miša’el, and ‘Azaryah. So they took their place before the king,*b 20*and on every matter requiring insightful expertise*a *that the king asked them about, he found them ten times superior to all the diviners (the chanters)*b *in all his realm.c*

21*Daniyye’l was there*a *until the first year of King Koreš.*b

## Notes

1.a. The name is spelled in various ways in Daniel and elsewhere in the OT (see BDB). The most significant variant is נבוכדראצר (*Nebukadre’ṣṣar*), which predominates in Jeremiah and Ezekiel and is closer to Akk. *nabu-kudurru-uṣur* (with its own variants), a prayer or confession “Nabu protect(s) the eldest son.” *Kudurru* also refers to the boundary stone which marks land grants (see Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 206–87; Saggs, *The Greatness that Was Babylon*, plate 21A), a possible alternative meaning here. The switch in the name’s Heb. spelling can be explained philologically (Berger, “Der Kyros-Zylinder,” 227–30), but van Selms (“The Name Nebuchadnezzar,” 223–27) suggests that Nebukadne’ṣṣar corresponds to *Nabu-ku̇danu-uṣur*, “Nabu protect(s) the *mule*,” a corruption devised among opposition groups in Babylon which would naturally appeal to foreigners such as Judahites (cf. the malicious corruption of names in v 7). The suggestion that the name is spelled thus to give it the same numerical value as ס אפיפנ ס וכו טי אנ (Antiochus Epiphanes) (Cornill, “Die siebzig Jahrwochen Daniels,” 31) depends on פ = 70, whereas פ = 80 (see Goldingay, “Nebuchadnezzar = Antiochus Epiphanes?”).

1.b. בא: at this point the story adopts a Jerusalem perspective, but the verb recurs in v 2 with Babylon as the destination.

2.a. אדני (except in some medieval mss), not יהוה “Yahweh”: see *Comment*. If the expression could be understood as “my lord” as an alternative to “the Lord of all” (see e.g., *DCH*; contrast *IBHS* 7.4.3ef; O. Eissfeldt in *TWAT*), then here the contrast with “his god” might suggest “my Lord.”

2.b. The strong expression בידו . . . ויתן “he gave . . . into his hand” suggests a defeat rather than a submission (Driver); so in 2 Chr 36:17, whence it comes.

2.c. מקצת (“part of the extremity”; BDB, 892b, 500b, GKC 20m; G, Vg, Syr). “The costliest of” (Ehrlich) is difficult to parallel with קצת or קצה, though “all of” (Meek, “Translation Problems in the OT,” 45–47; Haag, *Daniel*, 23) is possible (BDB, 892a). Pillaging of the temple was not completed until 587, as the OT narrative which Daniel is following recognizes, but perhaps Daniel is conflating the accounts.

2.d. כלים can cover furniture, utensils, and equipment generally (cf. the account in Jer 52:17–23) as well as “vessels” (EVV).

2.e. Taking ויביאם as *waw* apodosis following its extraposed object (Charles, cf. GKC 111h, 143d, so also the Mosul ed. of Syr according to Kallarakkal, 156–57); the construction recurs in the Heb. of Daniel (1:10, 20). EVV imply that Nebuchadnezzar put both articles and king in his temple, which is odd. In 2 Chr 36:6–7, which Dan is following, הביא “he brought” refers only to the temple articles; G, Vg, make that explicit here by using a neuter pronoun.

2.f. אלהיו בית, without preposition. Thus Jeffery has “to Shinar, the house of his god.” Hos 8:1; 9:3-4, 15 might parallel the idea of the country as the god’s house, but that idea is unnatural here, given the allusions to temples. OG lacks the phrase, but for אלהיו אוצר בית “his god’s treasury” it has ἐν τῷ εἰδωλείῳ αὐτοῦ, which may cover both phrases; it hardly implies that OG’s original lacked the first (against BHS). Syr has both expressions but makes a similar theological judgment to OG’s by referring to the “god” as an “idol” (cf. Taylor, *Peshitṭa*, 41).On Daniel’s combining syntactical inelegance (Driver) with careful choice of expressions, see *Structure*. Words such as אלהיו are often ambiguous in number; JB renders “gods.” See n. 3:25.b, n. 4:8.c.

2.g. In emphatic position before the verb (cf. n. 2.e). The clause explains more specifically where the vessels were put; the *waw* is explicative (see n. 6:28.a).

3.a. אשפנז: apparently in origin a Persian word which could suggest “guest-master” or the like (cf. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 2-3). But it is followed by another word that denotes a member of the king’s staff (though it might be an explanatory addition) and it lacks an article or suffix (contrast the other loan word in v 11 as well as the other words for members of the king’s staff in the chapter), which suggests that G, Th, Vg, Syr are right to take it as a term that has been turned into a proper name (see Lacocque); it is known as a name elsewhere (cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 134). On OG Αbιεσδρι see Montgomery.

3.b. סריס comes from Akk. *ša-reši* “he who is the head”. It can mean “eunuch” (cf. G, Vg; many oriental palace staff were eunuchs), but it need not, and as a term for royal officials, it can apply to members of the Israelite/Judahite court, though it is esp. used for foreign officials.

3.c. להביא, as in v 2. V 2 describes the bringing of the vessels, v 3 that of the young men (Keil); cf. the reference in 5:13. EVV give הביא here a different meaning, referring to taking within Babylon, not taking to Babylon.

3.d. ישראל בני. NEB “Israelite exiles” apparently follows Th τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας Ισραηλ—surely a gloss from the similar expression in, e.g., 2:25 (Young).

3.e-e. The sense suggests this phrase qualifies ישראל בני rather than adding extra groups (against Stone, “A Note on Daniel i. 3.”). Some medieval mss omit *waw*—explicative (see n. 6:28.a); hardly “both” (against GKC 154a). Sym and Syr took the unusual OP word ם י מ ת ר פ (“people of rank”) to denote the Parthians (Th simply transliterates it).

4.a. ילדים covers males from birth to marriage.

4.b. מאום, as in Job 31:7. In both places it is surely equivalent to מום (so Q and many medieval mss), not מאום “something [against them]” (against Ehrlich). Each word can denote a moral, not just a physical defect; both connotations may be allowed here (with Ehrlich). Torrey (“Stray Notes,” 229) takes it as a mixed form.

4.c. Lit. “standing” (i.e., as servants).

4.d. Taking וללמדם as dependent on ויאמר “said” (v 3), in parallel to להביא “to bring”; though one might ignore MT accents and see וללמדם as dependent on כח “capability,” in parallel to לעמד “of taking a place”—hence “and of being taught” (cf. GKC 115e and note). But see n. 5.c.

4.e-e. Two constructs dependent on one absolute, perhaps as a stereotyped phrase (DG 36, remark 2) and/or as constituting a unit (JM 129a, note 5); against MT, OG, and GKC 120a.

5.a. ביומו יום דבר, “the thing of a day in its day.”

5.b. Whereas a Cairo Geniza ms has פתבג, L hyphenates the word, suggesting a link between the Persian word and BH פת “morsel.” Syriac *ptbg* came to suggest rich food, but this is misleading here (against RSV).

5.c. ולגדלם (“educate,” with OG, rather than “nurture,” with Th, Vg, Syr), apparently another verb implicitly dependent on ויאמר in v 3. Segal (*Dreams, Riddles, and Visions*) makes the syntactical breakdown in v 5 his starting point for an analysis of the chapter’s redaction (cf. Redditt, *Daniel*, 42-48).

5.d. Giving מקצת the same sense as in v 2 and referring its suffix to that of לגדלם “to train them”; cf. OG, Ps-Saadia, NEB (though NEB takes it to mean “all of them” both times: see n. 2.d.). Th, Vg, Syr take it to mean “at the end of them” (the three years), giving מקצת the meaning it has in vv 15, 18; but the suffix is m, whereas שנים “years” is f (though see GKC 135o).

6.a. ויהי followed by pl. subject (GKC 145o). A sebir (marginal note) has ויהיו (cf. OG, Vg).

7.a. Whereas MT repeats וישם, Syr has *qr˒* rather than repeating *šmy*, and G, Vg omit the verb to make the sentence smoother; but see *Structure*.

7.b-b. The names are difficult. בלטשאצר (with variants), Akk. *?balaṭsu-uṣur*, “protect his life,” presupposes a divine name, presumably Bel (cf. MT’s vocalization; see *Comment* on v 2). ‘Abed Nego is a corruption of ‘*abed nabu*, “servant of Nabu.” For suggestions regarding Shadrak and Meshak, see Barr; Lacocque; Montgomery; Berger, “Der Kyros-Zylinder,” 224–25; Zadok, “On Five Iranian Names in the OT.” The difficulties suggest deliberate corruption to heighten the paganism of foreign theophoric names which replace the Israelite theophoric ones.

8.a. ו ב ל על . . .וישם: לב denotes the heart anatomically, but the mind psychologically (as the seat of mental activity and decision making) more often than the emotions (cf. JPSV “resolved”).

9.a. וישם could have been used again (cf. vv 7, 8), but instead the language follows 1 Kgs 8:50; Ps 106:46.

9.b-b. On these words, see 9:3–23 *Comment* (b). חסד, here without the notion of moral obligation common in both secular and religious contexts in the OT, is effectively a synonym for חן “grace” (cf. Vg), though חסד is more a friendship/community/political word, חן more a family word (Sakenfeld, *Hesed*, 163–64; Glueck, *Ḥesed*, 66; Stoebe, “Die Bedeutung des Wortes *ḥäsäd* im AT,” 247). Mercy (EVV; cf. Th, Vg) is too narrow a translation of רחמים, which suggests the feelings appropriate to brothers or sisters from the same womb or to a mother in relation to the children of her womb (רחם).

10.a. למה (usually “why”), see BDB, 554a, and cf. G.

10.b. זעף commonly suggests anger (2 Chr 26:19), sometimes worry (Gen 40:6); here presumably Ashpenaz refers to their looking “out of sorts” (JPSV). On the basis of a posited Arabic cognate, Kopf (“Arabische Etymologien,” 254) suggests “emaciated.”

10.c. גיל (only here in BH) lit. means “circle”; it may refer to the circuits of the planets and thus to people born “under the same stars” and consequently of the same “age” (EVV): cf. *DTT* on גיל and גלגל.

10.d. Cf. Bevan; חוב (only here in BH) means “be guilty, answerable, indebted” and thus in the piel, as here, “convict, sentence” (*DTT*). Cf. Th, Vg; OG “endanger” renders loosely.

11.a. מלצר, perhaps ultimately Akk., from a root *nṣr* equivalent to BH נצר; cf. Syr *mnṣr*. OG Αβιεσδρι (cf. v 3) assumes Daniel is still speaking to the same person; Th, Vg also take the word as a name.

12.a. זרעים (“seeds”) would cover vegetables, grain, and non-meat products generally. V 16 has זרענים, as in some medieval mss here; 1QDana has זרעים in v 16.

13.a. תראה; OG θέλῃς (cf. NEB mg “as you see fit”) is a possible nuance of ראה in later Hebrew (*DTT*), but here the context suggests the more usual meaning.

15.a. Some medieval mss, Th, and perhaps OG omit כל, but this hardly outweighs MT, Syr, Vg.

16.a. For the frequentative translation, cf. Judg 16:21; Neh 1:4 (Bentzen; *TTH* 135); it seems less likely to be an isolated example of the periphrastic verb construction with regular past meaning (against DG113[f], remark 2). א ש נ, the ordinary word for “lift” or “carry” hints at the plausible idea that he was happily appropriating the unwanted food supplies so as to do with them as he wished (Newsom); cf. G’s use of the middle verb ἀναιρούμενος and Saadia’s “would take for himself.”

17.a. Taking inf. absolute השכל to function as a noun parallel to מדע (*IBHS* 35.3.3b; cf. G, Vg, Syr; Jer 3:15; Job 34:35) rather than as a replacement for finite verb (against Lacocque).

19.a. נמצא: EVV “was found,” but niphal is commonly used for “be present/appear/prove to be” (cf. 11:19; 12:1). מצא recurs in v 20.

19.b. Vv 19b–20 are consequent/subsequent to vv 18–19a, not a restatement of them.

20.a. בינה חכמת is too unusual to be a corruption—against BHS. G, Vg, Syr (cf. 4QDana) are surely translating loosely, like EVV.

20.b. On the two terms, see on 2:2. The two asyndetic foreign words interpret each other (Plöger), as happens in 5:15.

20.c. OG (as printed in Rahlf’s ed.) has an extra sentence: “And the king honored them and appointed them as rulers and showed them as wise beyond all his people in matters in his entire country and in his reign.” Pap. 967 has a shorter version (cf. NETS). Hamm (*Der Septuaginta-Text des Buches Daniel*) sees it as a gloss, though such a sentence might have been lost by homoioteleuton (Collins, *Daniel*) and there is room for a short sentence in a space in 4QDana where part of the scroll is lost.

21.a. ויהי; the absolute use of the verb היה reads oddly in Heb. as in English, though היה “be” can mean “live” (cf. חיה: see 1 Sam 1:28 [Charles]) or “exist” (see Lev 25:29 [Bartelmus, היה, 188]). Here it picks up the wording of 2 Chr 36:20b and probably refers back to v 19b (Plöger). Cf. Jer 1:3, where אליו is presupposed from v 2. There is no need to add שם “there” (NEB; cf. Brockington) (cf. Ruth 1:3).

21.b. המלך כורש is the more usual Aram. order (e.g., 3:1–5), but it recurs in the Heb. in 8:1. See n. 2:28.a.

## Form/Structure/Setting

### Form

Dan 1 is a short story about Daniel and his friends, the first of a seri es of short stories that dominate Dan 1—6. It’s been said that a short story is one that can be read in an hour but remembered for a lifetime; this description also especially fits chaps. 3, 5, and 6. The stories about Daniel and his friends overlap formally with more substantial short stories such as Ruth, Jonah, Esther, Tobit, and Judith, and the Joseph story within Genesis. A short story characteristically tells of just an incident or a series of related incidents in the life of one person or a group. While it has a simple plot and one central theme, it may tell of extraordinary and not just everyday events; short stories raise eyebrows. The short stories in Daniel use hyperbole to portray both imperial court and Judahite piety. Daniel is satirical; and satire is (among other things) comic, inventive, fantastic, both crude and lofty, oxymoronic, socially utopian—and concerned for ultimate questions.[[241]](#footnote-241) A “training manual view of the social setting of Daniel alone does not justify the book’s vast popularity” which is reflected in the plural forms of the Daniel tradition.[[242]](#footnote-242) The stories use humor in order to critique, on the basis of convictions that are deeply serious. And they do so in order to bolster boldness of trust in Yahweh. Such stories portray an alternative world before their listeners’ ears and ask whether they are prepared to risk living in their alternative world. “The imaginative use of humor and satire reflects a creative manipulation of the social reality of life in the royal court to resist king and empire” by ridiculing them,[[243]](#footnote-243) though in this first story the humor is understated and the satire is gentle. Much of the humor in Daniel involves irony.[[244]](#footnote-244)

“This colorful collection of miracle stories about Daniel conveys a sharply ambivalent picture of the exilic period.”[[245]](#footnote-245) The stories suggest a vision for the possibility of Judahites not only surviving but being successful in the royal court, which suggests the phenomenon analyzed in postcolonial discourse as hybridity.[[246]](#footnote-246) On one hand, Judahites resist the power of the empire and dismiss the claims of its learning; on the other, they also aspire to share in its power and engage with its learning. The empire itself is caught in a converse tension. It has defeated Judah, but it is involved in compromise with its prey (as also emerges in Ezra in a different way).[[247]](#footnote-247)

Classically, stories are said to follow a structure comprising introduction, complication, rising action, crisis, climax, and resolution. In another classical sense, the stories in Daniel are comedies. The expression “apocalyptic as comedy”[[248]](#footnote-248) applied to Daniel is a little paradoxical, in that the visions are less comedic than the stories; the upturn at the end is more muted. Apocalypse as tragedy might be more appropriate.[[249]](#footnote-249) But the stories are indeed comedies in the sense of being tales in which everything threatens to collapse into the absurd, but the powerful are put in their place and things come out right in the end.

In a traditional culture, stories are told out loud, and repetition is a characteristic feature in them; it appears in a subtle way in Dan 1 and a less subtle way in chaps. 3 and 6. There is some overlap between short stories and novellas or novels, but Daniel as a whole or Dan 1—6 is not long enough or cohesive enough to be designated as a novella or novel, and viewing Dan 1—6 as a series of linked short stories is more illuminating. But like a novel, a short story seeks to be entertaining, and even if it is a story about an actual person, it may not worry about true-to-life plausibility or about getting its historical references right. Like a novel, the stories in Daniel are “prose writings that involve a new sort of reading experience, the creation of invented worlds that are nevertheless like our own.”[[250]](#footnote-250) They parallel other serious short stories or novellas or novels in aiming to get people to think in a certain way about God and people, and the reception of the book of Daniel into the scriptures reflects a positive response to this invitation.

In traditional form-critical terms, the stories in Dan 1–6 combine features of midrash, court tale, and legend. To oversimplify, chap. 1 constitutes a legend (vv 8–16) in the context of a court tale (vv 3–7, 17–20) set in a framework of midrash (vv 1–2, 21). The legend, the story of a holy man, exists to exalt its hero and its hero’s God in its hearers’ thinking; it thus encourages them to take heed of subsequent stories of Daniel and to emulate the hero’s faithfulness, confident of his God’s power and support. The story of “the Jew in the court of the foreign king”[[251]](#footnote-251) entertains by its romantic story of the flourishing of young exiles at a foreign court (cf. Joseph, Esther, Tobit, Ahiqar); it, too, also offers encouragement as it invites the hearer to identify with these exiles. It contains hints of the two forms of court tale to be exemplified in chaps. 2; 4–5 and chaps. 3; 6 respectively, the court contest tale/interpretation story and the court conflict tale/deliverance story.[[252]](#footnote-252) In keeping with the nature of the stories, they do not seek to allow their heroes’ characters to emerge in their own right; we discover only those facts that relate to the concerns of court tale/legend. In stressing God’s involvement in their triumph (v 17), chap. 1 also manifests the characteristic feature of an aretalogy, a story about someone devout or supernatural.[[253]](#footnote-253) While the chapter does not start from the desire to clarify or actualize specific scriptures, it may be seen as situational midrash in that it reuses earlier scriptural material in order to establish links between the scriptures themselves and both the extra-scriptural content of the story and the post-scriptural setting of its hearers; these hearers are thus invited to link their story onto scriptures’ story and to look at their experience in its context.

Midrash, court tale, and legend are not three separate units. Neither midrash nor court tale stands on its own; even the legend, which might most likely contain pre-existent traditional material, now appears inextricably set in its courtly context. Indeed, the formal distinction between the three is not a sharp one. Both court tale and legend manifest the hyperbole of romance: they describe young men of exemplary appearance and wisdom (vv 4, 17), though of unstated genealogy (v 6), who manifest unparalleled health on an ascetic diet (v 15), unparalleled success in their education (v 19), and unparalleled usefulness in their service in the palace (v 20). The court tale is midrashic or intertextual in the sense that it is shaped by earlier scriptural material, especially the story of Joseph, another young man transported to an alien land who proved the superiority of Israelite insight over that of pagans, not least as a dreamer and as a dream interpreter. In language, vv 4, 15, and 17 parallel Gen 41 (see *Comment*).[[254]](#footnote-254) The “romantic themes”[[255]](#footnote-255) of beating pagans at their own game and, in the legend, of the friendliness of the court official, already appear in earlier scriptural “romance” (e.g., Gen 39:21; 41; see also Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel in 1 Esd 3–4, Judith). A Daniel appears in Ezek 14:12–23; 28:3[[256]](#footnote-256) in the exilic period, held before people as a model of a lone insistence on righteousness and of the wisdom to understand secrets—a model such as the stories will describe Daniel to be. The names of all four men appear elsewhere in the scriptures, especially in the Second Temple community (e.g., among its leadership in Neh 8; 10). There are less clear links between Daniel and the Ugaritic Dan’el[[257]](#footnote-257) and the angel Daniel in *1 Enoch*. The description of the four young men takes up the royal ideal of 1 and 2 Samuel, Isaiah’s prophecy of the exile (Isa 39:7), and aspects of the account in Jer 39 of the fall of Jerusalem. The legend’s concern, defilement, is also a scriptural theme. The treatment here has close resemblances of motif to Ezek 4:9–17, though the passages lack verbal parallels: there, too, in a similar context at the beginning of the exile in Babylon, Ezekiel adopts as his diet a loaf of grains and vegetables, and water. He, too, is under pressure to eat food that is ritually defiling—in his case, through the way he is to cook it. He, too, declares his determination to maintain the purity he has always sought. He, too, discovers that the God who put him into a situation where defilement was hard to avoid provides a way of maintaining purity for people who seek one rather than give in to the pressures that come (ultimately or immediately) from God himself. Ezekiel’s loaf of grain and vegetables seems a closer parallel to Dan 1 than the refugees’ diet of wild plants in 2 Macc 5:27.

In modern usage a short story is commonly a work of fiction, or it may be based on fact. With stories from traditional cultures it may be impossible to know whether they are pure fiction. My working assumption is that they are more likely to be based on fact, but if so, it is then impossible to know where fact ends and fiction starts. The word *legend* can be used to denote fictional or semi-fictional stories about a historical person (or such stories about someone else that have become attached to a better-known historical person), and on this definition one could call the Daniel stories legends. Like moviegoers who watch movies “based on fact,” people listening to stories about Daniel and his friends will not have focused on the question of where fact ends and fiction begins. Like Jesus telling parables, the storyteller will have wanted people to listen to the story in the conviction that it has truth about God and them to convey, whatever its relationship to historical happenings.

Likewise, terms such as midrash, court tale, and legend need not imply that the story is unhistorical. Forms can be used in ways that do not correspond to their origin, and a historical account could use forms that are more characteristic of less factual narrative. Yet the form of this story hardly suggests one that “purports to be serious history.”[[258]](#footnote-258) It contrasts with that of Kings or Ezra-Nehemiah or 1 Maccabees, whose form is closer to what one might call historiography. Chapters such as 2 Kgs 24–25 more obviously narrate hard facts that are open to being related to other known historical facts, they refer to sources, they focus on events rather than on conversations, they are shaped more like chronicles by a sequence of incidents rather than by a plot, and they lack allusion to the miraculous. Dan 1 and the subsequent stories are harder to relate to known history, make no reference to sources, let conversations carry the burden of the story, are emplotted tales rather than chronicle, and emphasize the miraculous.

The exile of young members of the nobility, their provision from the palace, their serving there, and their renaming are historical enough. That exiles were under pressure to assimilate and that some resisted this pressure at particular points is plausible enough. That some successfully took remarkable risks in order to remain faithful to their religion, and that some proved far more discerning advisers than Babylonian scholars, is not implausible. The form of the story, however, suggests that it would not insist on confining itself to historical material, if less factual material helped to achieve its concern to hold attention in an entertaining way and to edify. The distinctive and original elements in the story come in vv 8–16, which may then constitute traditional material that has become the core of an introduction to the book as a whole, to the stories in particular, and specifically to the Nebuchadnezzar chapters.[[259]](#footnote-259)

It has been suggested that the chapter was translated from Aramaic,[[260]](#footnote-260) but possible Aramaisms such as the words for “knowledge” (עדמ) and for “in case” (למה) occur in other Hebrew documents.

### Structure

Dan 1 forms a chiastically-shaped narrative composed of three double panels, the central pair being themselves subdivided chiastically. The story’s plot tension builds through the first three panels, which occupy the opening two-thirds of the chapter (vv 1–14). It is (largely) resolved by the latter three panels in the closing third (vv 15–21). Diagrammatically:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Panels* | *Verses* |  |  |
| 1A | 1–2 | *Tension* | Babylonians defeat Israel. | |
| 2A | 3–7 |  | Young men are taken for training. | |
| 3(i)A | 8 |  | Daniel wants to avoid defilement | |
| 3(ii)A | 9–14 |  | and takes on a test. | |
| 3(ii)B | 15 | *Resolution* | Daniel is triumphant in the test | |
| 3(i)B | 16 |  | and avoids defilement. | |
| 2B | 17–20 |  | Young men are triumphant in the training. | |
| 1B | 21 |  | Daniel sees out the Babylonians. | |
|  |  |  |  | |

The story is dominated by the decision-making and activity of its human participants, but each double panel refers once to God’s activity, each time using the verb נתן “give/make.” Like statements about human feelings and motivation in stories (as here in v 8), such allusions take the hearer behind the action, declining for a moment to leave it to speak for itself. They affirm that God’s giving lies behind three events that are surprising, for different reasons: Nebuchadnezzar’s success in his siege of Jerusalem, Daniel’s success in his negotiation with the palace, and the young men’s success in their training. (It is noteworthy that no such affirmation is made regarding their remarkable success in the dietary test.)

Thus near the center of panel 1A, the phrase בידו אדני ויתן (“the Lord gave into his power,” v 2) stands out from the otherwise movement-dominated context and from its this-worldly tone, encouraging the reader to bring another framework of interpretation to the events the scene relates. The phrase plays an important role in setting up the tension that will be (partially) resolved by panel 1B (v 21). It differs from the subsequent allusions to God’s activity in that it constitutes a statement about events in its own right: there is no non-theological description of the fall of Jerusalem, only this theological one. In contrast, the other two such allusions (vv 9, 17) are parenthetic background statements interpreting phenomena that are also described in non-theological terms (vv 10–16, 4/18–20); the story would be quite complete as a story without these comments. The allusion to God’s activity in panel 2 differs from the other two in its occurring in the “resolution” part of the story, panel 2B; the other allusions occur in the “tension” part of the story, in panels 1A and 3A, and they thus constitute anticipations or hints of eventual resolution. Panel 2A contains no hint of this kind, though v 4 gives hints in its own way. The phrase נתן להם האלהים (“God gave them,” v 17) thus overtly expresses in panel 2B the possible implication of the verse in panel 2A. In panel 3A האלהים ויתן (“God gave/made,” v 9) indicates that the possibility of Daniel’s remaining undefiled is based on God’s grace as well as on Daniel’s determination (v 8), though it does not indicate how either may come to fruition (indeed v 10 all but undoes the hope encouraged by v 9). It differs from the other two occurrences of the phrase because נתן here has a slightly different meaning, closer to those of ים ש or שית (“put,” “set”) than to those of יהב or חלק (“give,” “allocate”). The three references to God’s activity contribute to a series of developments and reversals of movement in Dan 1 as a whole, as the agents and subjects of the verbs change: Nebuchadnezzar . . . (v 1), the Lord . . . (v 2); so the king and the head of staff . . . (vv 2–7), but Daniel . . . (v 8), and God . . . (v 9) [relating to what precedes and to what follows]; again, the head of staff . . . (v 10), so Daniel and the guardian . . . (vv 11–16), and God . . . (v 17). . . . God’s giving thus plays a key role in the story’s unfolding, and “what started off as an invasion of Yahweh’s god-space actually became a clever strategy to invade Marduk’s own territory.”[[261]](#footnote-261)

Panel 1A begins by setting alongside each other the autonomous rulers of two independent realms, *Yehoyaqim king of Yehudah* and *Nebukadne’ṣṣar* *king of Babel*. Really, Jehoiaqim was the puppet king of a puppet state, and that historical fact coheres with the way the kings are no sooner named than the subordination of Jehoiaqim to Nebuchadnezzar, to God, and to the narrator becomes clear. The two verses reflect the straightforward Hebrew narrative style of books such as Kings and Chronicles. Their fulsome repetitiveness (*Yehoyaqim king of Yehudah… Nebukadne’ṣṣar* *king of Babel*… *Yehoyaqim king of Yehudah*) derives from that style, but in this context its effect is to underline the momentous implications of the clash between imperial power and people of God. Two kings and their reigns, widely separated by their geography and by their location in God’s purpose, are brought into harsh juxtaposition, Nebuchadnezzar moving aggressively west and then returning triumphantly east with his plunder. Fifteen times he is referred to as king.[[262]](#footnote-262)

The movement and violence of the action is conveyed by also making Nebuchadnezzar the subject of the four verbs בוא, צור, and הביא (twice) (he came, he blockaded, he brought); בוא and הביא stand at the center of each of the verses and hold the unit together. Jehoiaqim, Judah, Jerusalem, and the temple articles appear only in the opening dating phrase and then as the direct or indirect object of the five verbs in the two verses. They are passive objects in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, of the narrator—and of God, for he is the subject of the middle of the five verbs. The tension introduced by the reference to the Lord’s giving up Jehoiaqim is heightened by the further references to deity in v 2. The scandal of what is happening is conveyed by juxtaposing the phrase האלהים בית “the house of God” both with the preceding reference to the Lord’s giving over, and with the following fulsome descriptions of the destiny of the temple articles, שנער “Shinar,” אלהיו בית “his god’s house,” and אלהיו אוצר בית “his god’s treasure house.” In making its points, Daniel is characteristically careful in its choice of words and phrases, which often involves fulsomeness and repetition rather than syntactical elegance.

Panel 2A (vv 3–7) takes up from panel 1A by reusing the verb הביא (“he brought”) once more: there is one further geographical movement to record. With the transition to the court tale the style becomes simpler (e.g., “the king” or “Nebuchadnezzar,” not both). It turns out that the repetition of the ponderous “Jehoiaqim, king of Judah” in v 2 constituted a curtain call. Now only one king appears, and panel 2A can assume it’s clear who “the king” is (vv 3, 4, 5 three times). The portrait of the Israelites as the helpless victims of enemy power is again underlined by the syntax. Nebuchadnezzar and his lieutenant are the subject of a further series of forceful verbs, with the Israelites as their object: הביא (v 3), למד (v 4), מנה (v 5—indirect object), גדל (v 5), שים (v 7—indirect object): bring them, teach them, allocate them, train them, name them.

Some of the inelegance in the verses’ syntax (v 4b and the loose relationship of the two clauses in v 5b to their sentences) issues because, though formally reported speech, vv 3–5 come alive in such a way that we almost hear the king’s actual words, catching the irony that he is heard prescribing qualities from the exiles’ own scriptures for the young men he plans to reeducate. The pressure of their being swept into an alien environment is also suggested by the appearance of a series of Akkadian and Persian terms and names: Ashpenaz (OP), chief of staff (ultimately Akkadian), people of rank (OP), Kasdite, supplies (OP), and the four men’s own new names. In the context of these foreign-sounding expressions, v 4a stands out for its accumulation of phraseology from OT tradition, especially the string of terms relating to learning as the scriptures speak of it. Their significance lies not so much in their individual meaning (otherwise the root ידע “know” would hardly appear three times) as in their cumulative effect set against the foreign terms; heaping up words of related meaning in this way is a further device in Daniel (cf. 2:2). The pen-portrait of the Israelites (vv 3b–4a) set in the context of clauses that put great pressure on them (vv 3a, 4b–7) heightens the tension of the story suggested by panel 1A, yet also hints that things will turn out all right.

The dual theme of panel 3A is stated by the repeated key verbs גאל “defile” (twice in v 8, at the beginning of panel 3[i]A) and נסה “test” (twice nearer the close of panel 3[ii]A, at the beginning and end of the speech in vv 12–13). But first, panel 3A, like panel 2A, links with the preceding panel by repeating a verb, וישם “he determined.” It is not the custom of Hebrew narrative to mark an important transition by means of a clearly adversative conjunction; *waw* generally does both for “and” and for “but.” So no disjunction is advertised by the *waw*. Then the verb to which it is linked simply repeats the one that had appeared twice in the previous verse; again, no disjunction is overtly indicated. It transpires, however, that the subject of the verb has changed, and so has its meaning. The reappearance of the verb with a different nuance is the more effective after its repetition within v 7 itself (cf. the three appearances of הביא “bring” in vv 2–3; also subsequent pointed repetitions of words, often in different contexts or with different nuances, in 2:13, 16, 18 [בעא, “seek/ask”]; 2:16, 24 [ללע, “go”; 2:17, 24 [אזל, “go”]). With v 8, for the first time in the book an Israelite becomes the subject of a main verb. Daniel seizes the initiative from the Babylonians, and the story begins the reversal of movement that characterizes chap. 1 and the book as a whole. “Determined on names” (v 7) was not the usual way to refer to naming, but the repeated use of this expression has prepared the way for a third use of the verb with a rather different sense, by antanaclasis.[[263]](#footnote-263) Daniel is still the object of the verb נתן, God being the subject and the Babylonians the indirect object (v 9, cf. v 2), but there is nothing aggressive or threatening about this giving/making. The initiative of God has Daniel as the grammatical object, but it is Ashpenaz who is now the object of manipulation by Daniel, by the narrator, and by God.

The earlier scenes have been all action and have moved quickly. The central scene slows the action down and builds up the suspense, reporting on motivation, reflection, and feelings as well as action (vv 8, 9, 10), and relating conversations rather than reporting speech indirectly (vv 10–13). The test and the associated move from Ashpenaz to the guardian also slow the action down. Whereas the rest of Dan 1 gives priority to plot rather than to characterization, here it suits the plot to allow Daniel and Ashpenaz to come alive, as we hear of their conflicting inner feelings expressed in their outward exchange. The story becomes not merely a lead-in to chaps. 2–7 but a story in its own right.[[264]](#footnote-264)

Although the story slows down, much is happening in these few verses. Daniel’s determined action contrasts with that of Ashpenaz (v 8), and God’s involvement (v 9) suggests that the story is on the way to a quick resolution. Yet the development it relates turns out to have been a false dawn, and the story now threatens to collapse; suspense is heightened (v 10). In turn, the threat dissolves as Daniel survives the test of v 10 by offering the test described in vv 11–14. The official’s goodwill has hinted that a resolution should be possible, and Daniel’s proposal of a test period takes up this hint. Daniel’s accepting the risk involved in such a test is impressively (under)stated in v 13b. Brave words modestly expressed are a feature of the trial stories in Daniel (cf. 3:17–18; also 6:10 [11] and the total absence of words on Daniel’s part in 6:10–17 [11-18]); they contrast with the generally explicit and expansive style of dialogue and prayers.

The shorter closing panels of the denouement, vv 15–21, substantially resolve the tension set up by the longer opening ones. Each takes up motifs from the corresponding opening panel; little that is formally new is introduced. Thus vv 15–16 naturally follow on from vv 8–14: v 15 takes up the language of vv 13–14 (at the end of the ten days, their appearance, look, the young men who eat the king’s supplies), or reverses it (*good* for *grim*), or goes beyond it (their bodies look better-built), while v 16 follows on from v 15 but takes up the language of vv 8–12 (the guardian, their supplies and the wine they were to drink, give them vegetarian food) or goes beyond it (continued to take off). We were prepared for the test to be successful, but panel 3ii comes to a climax in v 15 with the test achieving more than we expected. Perhaps panel 3i has the same implication: v 16 may refer to the guardian’s imposing the vegetarian diet on the other young men! (but see n. 16.a). The resolution in panel 3B (vv 15–16) is thus simpler and shorter than the statement in panel 3A (vv 8–14); the heart of the story lies in Daniel’s determination to avoid defilement, and his bold handling of his masters.

The resolution in panel 2B (vv 17–20), in contrast, is almost as long as the statement in panel 2A (vv 3–7); it dominates vv 15–21 as a whole. It doesn’t follow directly from vv 15–16 but begins resumptively (v 17) by recalling us to vv 3–7 in an asyndetic noun phrase (“Now those four young men: God gave them . . .”). This reference to God’s involvement, held back from its “natural” place in v 4, emphasizes the importance of panel 2B. V 17 is not explicit on whether it refers to God’s original gift of insight, which lay behind v 4, to his gift evidenced in the result of their training, or to both; its concern is to clarify a different point, namely that God (not Nebuchadnezzar or Babylon) is the source of insight, whenever it comes.

After this opening, vv 18–19a work, like vv 15–16, by taking phrases from corresponding earlier verses (at the end, the king said, bring, the chief/head of the palace staff, before the king/Nebuchadnezzar) (v 18), and by using terms that go beyond these expressions, to show that the four did not merely survive their training but triumphed in it (v 19a). In turn vv 19b–20, like v 16, go on from immediate event to further consequences. Once more these consequences are stated first in terms taking up words from panel 2A (v 19b), then in terms utilizing new expressions which indicate that results again exceeded expectations (v 20). Yet again, careful choice of expression is combined with syntactical inelegance: בינה חכמת “insightful learning” is an odd construct phrase, האשפים החרטמים “the diviners, the chanters” is asyndetic.

Panel 3D (v 21) in turn briefly closes off (in part) the questions raised in panel 3A by alluding to the moment when people and temple articles would be able to return to Jerusalem (see 2 Chr 36:20–23; Ezra 1:7–11). Thus the chapter opens with Nebuchadnezzar but closes with Cyrus, opens with the beginning of the exile but closes with the beginning of the return, and shows how Daniel links the two.

### Setting

The story brackets the tough realities of the fall of Jerusalem and the life of exile.[[265]](#footnote-265) Its motifs and concerns point towards a setting when exile has become dispersion, where Judahite and foreigner could live together, and where the question of service in a foreign court could be significant (cf. Nehemiah). “Emotionally, Ezekiel never left Palestine,” but this story is told by and for people who have had to do so.[[266]](#footnote-266) Admittedly, one cannot read the positive aspect to its portrayal too unequivocally. It is also a setting where the tension between that possibility and the demands of Judahite faith would be a pressing religious question.[[267]](#footnote-267)

The story would speak to the aspirations and concerns of people in the eastern dispersion with ability and drive who would have been leaders back in Judah, who might hope to succeed in their foreign environment but were aware of their calling to remain faithful to their Judahite identity.[[268]](#footnote-268) For the most part the Judahites who were exiled to Babylon were not ordinary people; “the peasants had been left behind in Judah.”[[269]](#footnote-269) They were members of the royal family and the palace staff, priests, and prophets, even though in this foreign environment “these are the dreams of ‘little people’ about how they can win back some power and influence their own and others' destinies.”[[270]](#footnote-270) So the challenges in the book concern the prospects and pressures of people who belong to leadership groups rather than ordinary people.[[271]](#footnote-271) Nevertheless the fact that the stories are about life at court need not mean they were simply composed by or for people at court, and their non-realistic and hyperbolic form may make it less likely. The stories have often been enjoyed by ordinary people from a distance, and have functioned to bolster their trust in their God, their faithfulness to God, and their hope in God. It’s easy to imagine that they were also designed to that end.[[272]](#footnote-272)

The closing verse presupposes the Persian period and the chapter makes key use of Persian words. It was evidently composed not before the Persian period. There are no specific pointers to the Greek period, but neither can this be excluded;[[273]](#footnote-273) Persian culture continued to be significant then, and the period saw a revival of cuneiform learning in Babylon.[[274]](#footnote-274) While the acceptance of pagan names does not clash with a second-century date, as this practice was not controversial even then, and the concern with assimilation to pagan practices and with dietary defilement could fit that period,[[275]](#footnote-275) it does so no better than other times from the exile onward, and there are no concrete pointers to a second-century date. The openness to serving in the pagan court, to learning from pagan culture, and to finding favor with the imperial authorities, and the lack of reference to persecution, do not suggest a story written with second-century Jerusalem in mind. “The issue is not persecution but the search for a viable life-style amid competing political and religious claims”; further, the stories in Daniel concern themselves with the problems of the individual, whereas the visions focus on the corporate experience and crisis.[[276]](#footnote-276)

The story has a setting in the actual book of Daniel; indeed, it provides the setting for it, almost constituting an anticipatory midrash on it.[[277]](#footnote-277) It introduces the three characters who will appear through the stories, Daniel and his friends, the king, and God. It is hardly necessary to determine who is the central character. It may be useful to see them as fulfilling the roles of protagonist, antagonist, and helper. While each of the stories is self-contained and can be read on its own, unlike the Joseph story whose episodes belong more integrally in the context of the whole, the stories link in various ways.[[278]](#footnote-278) There is some forward movement in chaps. 1—4 and in chaps. 1—6, and some spiral movement in chaps. 2—7.

Panel 1 sets the book in the context of the seventy years of exile covered by the sequence of stories and visions, from the Babylonian kings via Darius the Mede to Cyrus the Persian.[[279]](#footnote-279) Throughout the period of the empires, the people of God lives in a tricky threeway relationship, with God and with the imperial power. That relationship works harmoniously in Dan 1, but succeeding chapters will portray it involving tension and conflict, but also reconciliation. It introduces Shinar, the home of idolatry (Zech 5; cf. chap. 3) and the location of the proud owner of Babel (Gen 11; cf. chap. 4), explains how articles from the Jerusalem temple came to be available for Belshazzar’s idolatrous revelry (chap. 5), and lays the foundation for considering when Jeremiah’s promise of Jerusalem’s restoration would be fulfilled (chap. 9). For the self-understanding of what is often called the postexilic period, the experience of exile continued to shape the questions that faith had to address. Daniel thus begins from the moment when that exile began, and in anticipation looks to the moment when the seventy years “ended.” The whole period is set within the sovereignty of God.[[280]](#footnote-280)

Panel 2 explains how the central figures in the book came to be serving in the palace of Babylon, sometimes using Babylonian names, sometimes Israelite ones, associated with the Babylonian advisers but possessing insight far more impressive than theirs, and how Daniel in particular gained his expertise in visions and dreams. As men of discernment (משכילים, v 4, cf. v 17), they embody the insight that will characterize the discerning teachers of the time of final pressure (11:33, 35; 12:3, 10), though there the participle משכילים will have become a quasi-noun to describe a group of teachers within the community rather than one quasi-adjective among a number of descriptions. Panel 2 holds the four young men together yet gives Daniel special prominence, and thus answers questions raised by the way they function largely separately in later stories. Like panel 1B (v 21), panel 2B (vv 17–20) looks beyond the occasion of the immediately following stories: v 17 applies to the book as a whole, vv 18–19a describes the end of their training, vv 19b–20 refers to their position at court through the rest of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.

As panel 3 contains the material that makes chap. 1 a story in its own right, it relates less explicitly to the other stories in the book, though Daniel’s insistence on avoiding defilement while serving in the pagan court answers a question possibly raised by chaps. 2, 4, and 5, while his willingness to stand up to the test in order to maintain his faithfulness introduces the theme of chaps. 3 and 6. The story’s central question, then, is “How could these four famous young men have gained such success in the pagan court, without being tainted by it?” And the chapter as a whole endorses the lifestyle of the smart royal courtier[[281]](#footnote-281) yet assures us that Daniel and his friends in exile gained success in a way that avoided losing holiness. They proved that holiness was the source of health, and that God was the source of discernment and the power behind history.

## Comment

**1–2** Virtually every word parallels earlier material: see esp. 2 Chr 36:6–7; Jer 20:4–5; 39:1; 46:2; also 2 Chr 35:19 (for מלכות, “reign,” a favorite word in Chronicles and Daniel); Gen 12:1–9 and Zech 5:5–11 (for Shinar).[[282]](#footnote-282) Daniel replaces the name *Yahweh* in Jeremiah and Chronicles by אדני “the Lord” and האלהים “God.” The replacement may issue from reverence, but the effect is also to undermine any hint that Yahweh is merely Israel’s national God and the temple is merely Israel’s national shrine, just as Babylon has its gods and shrines. Rather, the titles “the Lord” and “God” with their absolute implications belong only to Yahweh; the exile happened by the act of this sovereign God who is also Israel’s God, not Nebuchadnezzar’s.[[283]](#footnote-283)

Babylonian records (“The Babylonian Chronicles”)[[284]](#footnote-284) indicate that Jehoiaqim’s reign saw several aggressive visits to Syria/Palestine by Nebuchadnezzar.[[285]](#footnote-285) Neither biblical nor extrabiblical sources require that Jehoiaqim was himself taken to Babylon, and extrabiblical sources do not refer to a siege of Jerusalem in his time. Nebuchadnezzar is perhaps called king proleptically in v 1, as in Jer 46:2. The invasion is presumably the one referred to in Jer 25, Jeremiah’s “seventy years” prophecy which will be take up in Dan 9, though the date given there is Jehoiaqim’s fourth year. The one-year difference arises with other OT dates through the use of different methods of reckoning,[[286]](#footnote-286) whereby the years of a king’s reign can be counted from the new year before his accession, from the accession itself, or from the next new year; the fall of Jerusalem can thus be dated in Nebuchadnezzar’s eighteenth year (3:1 OG; 4:4 [1] OG; Jer 52:29) or in his nineteenth (2 Kgs 25:8; Jer 52:12). Here, however, the difference may mean that the date is not intended as a precise one (and vv 1–2 may be conflating accounts of the subjugations of Jerusalem and the exiles of Judahites). Danielic dates cluster in the first three years of a king’s reign,[[287]](#footnote-287) and perhaps affirm God’s Lordship at key transition points in history, with “first” or “third” being simply concrete ways of saying “at the beginning” or “not long after the beginning.”[[288]](#footnote-288) A date can make a more than merely historical point.[[289]](#footnote-289) One one hand, the OG dates just mentioned will invite the reader to recall that the image-maker of chap. 3, subjected to God’s judgment in chap. 4, is the man who destroyed and pillaged the temple in 587,[[290]](#footnote-290) while on the other, MT’s chronological note opens the book with the beginning of Jeremiah’s seventy years.[[291]](#footnote-291) Their literal end comes at the chapter’s close (v 21; cf. 2 Chr 36:20–23), but in another sense they continue through the period the book as a whole is concerned with (cf. chap. 9). MT’s note also sets the four young men among the first of the exiles, the elite, the good figs of Jer 24.[[292]](#footnote-292)

For the temple “articles” (v 2), see 2 Chr 36:7, 10, 18, and lists related to 587 in Jer 52:17–23 and to 537 in Ezra 1:9–11. The reference to them, coming at the beginning of the book, is the first indicator of a concern with the temple and its worship that runs through both stories and visions in Daniel. This is going to be “a book about the conflict between true worship of the true God, represented by the Temple vessels, and false worship of a false god, represented by Nebuchadnezzar’s temple and god.”[[293]](#footnote-293) Many of the articles were made of precious metals (cf. Dan 5:2–3) and would be worthwhile plunder; thus the Babylonian Chronicle refers to tribute. They are also of religious significance, being the Jerusalem temple’s nearest thing to images. Removing them is therefore a sign of the victory of Nebuchadnezzar and his god over the Israelite king and his god. Wars were fought in a god’s name and plunder consequently belonged to him. The temple articles are his spoil. They are taboo and are put into the “treasury” that belongs to a temple for this purpose: see 2 Chr 5:1, referring back to 1 Chr 18:11 (also Josh 6:19, 24), and more specifically 2 Chr 36:18; Isa 39:2, 4; 45:3; though according to 2 Chr 36:7, Nebuchadnezzar took the articles to his היכל (“palace”?). Temples were fortresses, treasuries, and museums as well as sanctuaries.[[294]](#footnote-294)

*Shinar* as a term for Babylonia, the southeastern part of modern Iraq, is an archaism in the OT (e.g., Gen 10:10; 11:2; 14:1, 9; then only Josh 7:21; Isa 11:11; Zech 5:11) and outside it (corresponding to Šanhara in second-millennium cuneiform texts.[[295]](#footnote-295) In the OT, the name especially suggests a place of false religion, self-will, and self-aggrandizement (Gen 11:1–9; Zech 5:11). “His god” is probably Marduk/Bel (cf. 4:8 [5]; Bel and the Snake; Jer 50:2; 51:44), less likely Nabu (cf. “Nebuchadnezzar”). Both gods appear in Isa 46:1, but Nebuchadnezzar’s inscriptions refer most to Marduk, Nabu being his father’s god.

**3–5** Taking young members of the leadership class to Babylon might have various objects: to bring home Judah’s vassal status in relation to Babylon (not to Egypt, whom Judah had courted), to discourage it from rebelling, to Babylon-ize its future leadership, to add to the manpower of temple and palace. Educating them in Babylonian learning and giving them a place in the court presumably has the latter aims in mind;[[296]](#footnote-296) the effective contribution they will offer in the court, however, turns out to go beyond what Nebuchadnezzar would be expecting.

While the OT suggests that the Judahites taken to Babylonia were the significant people such as members of the administration, priests, and prophets, nevertheless Judahites in Babylonia were not well off.[[297]](#footnote-297) They were a little like graduates from Asian countries coming to the United States and finding that their qualifications were not recognized. For most people, then, the stories might express how they wish things could be.

The young men are to be Israelites*:* the qualification “some of the royal family” requires them to be genealogically Judahite (cf. v 6), so *Israelite* is being used in the theological sense, to mean “members of Yahweh’s people” (as in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah). They are “the flower of Jewish youth.”[[298]](#footnote-298) As their royal background should imply, they are to be such as will have already received some education to prepare them for political life.

Four substantially synonymous terms are used to describe what this education should have given them (v 4): השכיל “give attention to,” “have insight,” “teach”; חכם “be smart,” “be insightful,” “understand”; ידע “know,” “acknowledge,” “be skilled”; and בין “observe,” “discern,” “perceive.” In Daniel the second of these roots, the OT’s most common term for smartness (“wisdom”), comes only in chaps. 1–6.[[299]](#footnote-299) The description recalls that of Joseph in Gen 41:33, 39. In combination, the four terms convey an impression of young men well-versed in the practical learning embodied in a book such as Proverbs. While such learning is not overtly directed to the education of palace and court, it would naturally be the special province of the king and others responsible for state affairs, and it is embodied above all in the royal figure of Solomon. In the Mesopotamian court, one may compare the role of Ahiqar as counselor, and his Proverbs-like teaching.[[300]](#footnote-300) The terms are also later brought into connection with supernaturally endowed, revelatory discernment, and in this context education in the learning of the Kasdites presumably refers not merely to the language of Babylon, a dialect of Akkadian (though they would also need that knowledge),[[301]](#footnote-301) but also to the script and contents of the cuneiform texts preserved among the Kasdite scholars which formed the basis of their work as court counselors (cf. the recurrence of ספר “literature” in v 17).[[302]](#footnote-302)

The Kasdites or Kaldites (the switch from *ś* to *l* sometimes happens in Akkadian) were a people from southern Babylonia to whom Nebuchadnezzar’s father Nabopolassar belonged. They were the ruling caste in Babylonia in the sixth century. In the OT, however, “Kasdites” is the regular word for the people of Babylonia in general, though it was not used with this meaning by the Babylonians themselves. In Daniel, it also refers specifically to the Babylonian scholars, though again the word was not used with this meaning by the Babylonians; outside the OT, it first appears in Herodotus, *Histories* 1:181–83. Given the OT’s idiosyncratic use of the term, it might easily have been used in this way among Judahites even in the sixth century, as well as in the Persian period (cf. v 21). Strabo 16.1.6 (first century BC) uses the term both to refer to the scholars and to an ethnic group, its original sense. There is no reason to infer from usage such as Daniel’s and Strabo’s that the scholars were Kasdite/Kaldite by race.[[303]](#footnote-303)

The Babylonian scholars combined many of the functions fulfilled by counselors, prophets, and priests in Israel, though they are to be distinguished from ministers who were more especially concerned with the temple and its worship. They were the guardians of the sacred traditional lore developed and preserved in Mesopotamia over centuries, covering natural history, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, myth, and chronicle. Much of this learning had a practical purpose, being designed to be applied to life by means of astrology, oneirology, hepatoscopy and the study of other organs, rites of purification, sacrifice, incantation, exorcism and other forms of divination.

The practice of divination presupposes that supernatural forces sometimes reveal events to come or reveal the significance of events that do happen—either on their own initiative or in response to human questioning—in the way they arrange natural phenomena such as the stars or the weather or the form or behavior of different creatures. Such phenomena can thus constitute warnings of coming events, which one can take steps to avoid by apotropaic rites. Or they can offer explanations of illnesses or other experiences, from which the subject can escape by such means as purification rites, exorcism, incantation, and prayer. The library Asshurbanipal assembled in the seventh century is dominated by divinatory texts that record phenomena of various kinds and the events they had presaged, and by linguistic texts that enabled Akkadian-speaking scholars to use such texts written in the traditional Sumerian; many further texts consist in incantations, prayers, and conjurations for exorcism and protection. Many date from centuries before Asshurbanipal; others continued to be written and collected through the Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic periods. By applying their learning in such ways to questions affecting king and nation, the scholars fulfilled their role as the king’s advisers and protectors whom he would consult before taking any action. The stories in Dan 2; 4; and 5 have this activity as their background (cf. also Isa 44:25; 47:13; Esth 1:13), while Dan 1:3–4 may reflect an awareness of the requirements of descent, physical wholeness, and training that they had to fulfill.[[304]](#footnote-304)

The palace where the youing men would serve included “the throne room in which the king received ambassadors and other visitors, the large courtyard in front of it, and a special hall, perhaps used for official banquets. . . . Living quarters for the king and his entourage, as well as storage rooms, were built around these principal areas.” Into it “poured the tribute of subjugated and even of distant peoples, the yield of royal estates, and the products of royal workshops. From its storehouses had to be fed and clad, according to their status, the members of the royal family, the administrative officials of country and palace, the personnel of the royal household, the standing army and a host of serfs, slaves, and others who depended on the palace for their living.” A list of the personnel of Nebuchadnezzar’s court pictures him “surrounded by the administrators of his palace and of his realm, by bureaucrats and vanquished kings who lived at his court.”[[305]](#footnote-305) Regarding provision for exiled foreigners from the palace, the Babylonian provision records mention Jehoiakin, other Judahites, and other foreign nationals.[[306]](#footnote-306) Second Kings 25:29–30 also uses the phrase “a daily allowance”; and other passages speak in related terms (see Gen 43:34; 2 Sam 11:8; Dan 11:26).

**6–7** The Hebrew names are all known from a variety of OT contexts (see *Form*). They are not distinctively priestly and the four young men have no specifically priestly traits;[[307]](#footnote-307) the portrayal in vv 3–5 is royal. Each name lacks a patronymic (like the names in Neh 8 and 10) and each is theophoric: Daniyye’l, “God is my judge”; Ḥananyah, “Yah has been gracious”; Miša’el, “Who is what God is?”; *‘*Azaryah, “Yah has helped.” Giving (new) names as a sign of (new) ownership and thus (new) destiny[[308]](#footnote-308) was common court practice: cf. Joseph/Zaphnat-paneah, Eliaqim/ Jehoiaqim, Mattaniah/Zedekiah, Hadassah/Esther, Joshua/Jason (2 Macc 4:7). Zerubbabel’s and Mordecai’s Hebrew names are not even mentioned in the OT; the use of a foreign name could be quite acceptable, and chap. 3 uses only the three young man’s Babylonian names. There is thus a contrast between the giving of a theophoric name to replace a neutral one (Jacob-Israel, Hoshea-Joshua)[[309]](#footnote-309) and the replacing of an Israelite theophoric name by one of alien significance (see n. 7.b-b). The three friends’ two sets of names appear together only here. As the Babylonian names come on their own in chap. 3 (also 2:49), in the apparently older material, the Hebrew names come on their own in 1:11, 19; 2:17.

**8** Since Daniel and the other three are not the only exiles undergoing the training (see v 6, “*Among* them were . . .”), Daniel’s decision presumably involves standing firm when other Israelites do not; the youths with whom they are compared in vv 10–16, 19 are likewise presumably Israelites as well as Babylonians and other foreigners. Daniel’s concern about defilement corresponds to a characteristic feature of Leviticus and Ezekiel, though it is a motif also present elsewhere in the OT. He uses the verb גאל, a mostly Second Temple word, but one having a similar range of meanings to the more common חלל (Dan 11:31) and טמא.

Underlying references to defilement is the assumption that some objects and activities are proper to some groups but not to others (e.g., to the nations but not to Israel, or to laypeople but not to priests). The distinctiveness of the smaller group is safeguarded by its avoiding these objects and activities. Holiness/cleanness/defilement are thus theological or ritual categories, though they can also be applied to moral and religious activities because murder or worshiping other gods, as well as contact with a corpse or eating pork, defiles a person or a people and threatens their identity. For Israelites, living in a foreign country is an inherently defiling experience (cf. Hos 9:3–4; Amos 7:17) because the country belongs to other deities and its people worship them.

Various considerations might lead Judahites in exile or dispersion specifically to fear defilement through what they ate.[[310]](#footnote-310)

(a) The palace’s food and drink would likely come from the temple after being offered to the deity, as in Israel it would have been offered to Yahweh: cf. 5:3–4; Bel and the Snake; also Exod 34:15; 1 Cor 8–10; Acts 15:20, 29; Rev 2:14, 20. But this problem would arise with vegetarian food, which Daniel accepts: compare the offering of flour as well as meat and wine in Bel and the Snake 3. This consideration thus leads elsewhere to unease about all pagan food (Jdt 10:5; 12:2; Additions to Esther 14:17; Tobit 1:10–11). Daniel does not refuse to eat everyything from the royal table; in this sense he is no more scrupulous than Jehoiakin, who apparently accepts the king’s provision without the scriptural text suggesting disapproval (2 Kgs 25:29-30).[[311]](#footnote-311)

(b) The palace would not observe rules in the Torah about which animals can be eaten and how they are to be killed and cooked: see Lev 11; Deut 12:23–25; compare the fear expressed in Ezek 4:9–17 (esp. v 14), in the exile; 1 Macc 1:47, 62–63; 2 Macc 6:18–7:42, during the Antiochene persecution (cf. 4 Macc 5; Acts 15:20, 29). But the reference to wine as well as meat suggests this concern is not the focus. To suggest that Daniel exemplifies “the most minute attention to the Divine Law”[[312]](#footnote-312) reads into Daniel a law-centered piety of which there is no evidence in the context to which Daniel belongs. If Daniel is concerned about “the Law” (the term does not appear here), it is only in the broad sense of Israel’s religion.

(c) Meat and wine is festival food, and abstaining from it is a sign of mourning or penitence;it would be appropriate in exile: cf. 10:3; Isa 22:13; *T. Reuben* 1.10; *T. Judah* 15.4. Further, meat and wine suggest food fit for nobility, whereas the four young men ask for peasant food. But this understanding would not account for Daniel’s reference to defilement.

(d) Abstention from meat and wine was an ascetic practice among various groups, including the Essenes and the ḥasidim.[[313]](#footnote-313) One reason for such abstention is preparation for a divine revelation (2 Esd 9:24; 12:51).[[314]](#footnote-314) Yet no such ascetic significance is attached to Daniel’s self-denial here; contrast 10:2–3, where he takes on a similar diet in the course of seeking a word from God (see also 9:3).[[315]](#footnote-315) Daniel is not refraining from something good in order to seek God, but refraining from something incompatible with commitment to God; he is not seeking an inner freedom, but an outward distinctiveness.

(e) Accepting the king’s provisions would indicate dependence on him, entry into a covenant-style relationship with him, becoming his courtiers, and accepting a commitment to supporting him as he supported them (cf. 11:26).[[316]](#footnote-316) “Control of food… is symbolic of power.”[[317]](#footnote-317) But it is not clear why this should be spoken of as defilement; and anyway, the young men *do* accept a position as the king’s courtiers.

(f) The Mishnah infers from Lev 11:37–38 that grain does not become unclean through contact with meat as long as the grain is kept dry (*Makshirin* 1:1; *Uqtsin* 3:1; with Danby’s notes). But it is not clear that Lev 11:37–38 refers to grain for eating or that Daniel alludes to that understanding of it.

(g) Pagan food and drink may simply epitomize that pagan uncleanness associated with exile (cf. Isa 52:11).

(h) More generally, what we eat and drink, like what we wear and how we speak, commonly constitute an outward expression of our self-identity and commitments. They are particularly significant for groups in exile or under persecution.[[318]](#footnote-318) In this “liminal phase” of their preparation for service in the Babylonian court the Judahites create a strategy to sustain their identity.[[319]](#footnote-319) Daniel’s abstinence symbolizes his avoiding assimilation.

**9–14** The romance and scriptural motif of the hero in exile getting on surprisingly good terms with imperial officials (see *Form*) perhaps contrasted with the usual experience of ordinary people in general and of Judahites in particular, and was thus appreciated as expressing what such people would like to experience.[[320]](#footnote-320) It was really his own head that Daniel was risking.[[321]](#footnote-321)

The reply by the head of staff (v 10) need not constitute a refusal: it raises a problem, but it leaves open the possibility of agreeing to Daniel’s request if the problem can be overcome. Its implication then is, “Yes, if it doesn’t involve me and if it doesn’t make the king ask questions.” [[322]](#footnote-322) Vv 11–15 meet these conditions. Talk of forfeiting one’s head to the king could be metaphorical, like the expression “on your head be it.” But in light of the picture of Nebuchadnezzar in 2:12; 3:19–20, it is entirely reasonable to take the fear literally, as Syr does with its “cut off my head”; compare the Red Queen’s “Off with his head” in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*.

There are few biblical references to or stories about people testing other people (v 11-12). For נסה, there is only 1 Kgs 10:1 = 2 Chr 9:1, though also בחן in the Joseph story (Gen 42:15–16). “Ten days” does not imply that ten is a symbolic number, nor is ten days a common period for a trial.[[323]](#footnote-323) Ten is merely a standard round number (cf. v 18; 7:7; Gen 31:7; Num 14:22; Neh 4:12; Job 19:3; Zech 8:23; *Jubilees* 19.8; *T. Joseph* 2.7; *m. Abot* 5.1–6) and ten days simply suggests a period short enough not to arouse suspicion yet long enough for effects to be seen (cf. Gen 24:55).[[324]](#footnote-324)

**15–16** In *T. Joseph* 3.4 Joseph confesses, “I fasted for those seven years, and seemed to the Egyptians like someone who was living richly, for those who fast for God’s sake receive graciousness of countenance.” The language itself corresponds closely and uniquely to that used to describe the cattle in Gen 41:2, 18!

**17–20** The resumptive opening to v 17 indicates that panel 2B begins here; v 17 does not follow from v 16 as a reward of faithfulness or a fruit of asceticism—indeed the endowments of v 17 may have been given earlier. One would have assumed that in v 4 the terms for knowledge, discernment, expertise, and insight referred to something rational, experiential, and administrative. Thus the term for expertise, conventionally translated “wisdom,” commonly denotes “a matrix of qualities including aptitude, technical skill, intuitive good sense, and experience—demonstrated, for instance, in navigating a ship in open waters or crafting fine art from metal, wood, or precious stones.”[[325]](#footnote-325) But expertise and insight now suggest supernaturally revealed understanding, and in this connection they will be key terms in following chapters. The ideals of court and school are thus brought into contact with a characterization of Daniel as a man of revelatory insight or “mantic wisdom.”[[326]](#footnote-326) The story hardly sees visions and dreams as a lower gift than prophecy;[[327]](#footnote-327) its stress lies on the excellence of what Daniel is given, which parallels the experience of Joseph and other heroes, and corresponds to the demands of the contexts in which Daniel has to function.[[328]](#footnote-328) One might also compare the description of a prophet in Num 12:6. If anything, the story implies that dream interpretation is the highest of the gifts.[[329]](#footnote-329) Jesus will in due course note that no one but God’s Insight has sent the prophets; prophecy can be understood as insight, insight as prophecy.[[330]](#footnote-330)

**21** The reference to Cyrus’ first year may indicate that chap. 1 originally introduced not more than chaps. 1–9 (see 10:1; cf. Jer 1:1–3 in relation to less than the whole of Jeremiah). But the inference is hazardous, since the concern of panel 1 is to reach from one end to the other of Babylonian dominance. It compares with 2 Chr 36:20–23; Ezra 1, with their reference to the temple articles being returned at this date. Daniel’s subsequent continuing at court after this year is neither implied[[331]](#footnote-331) nor precluded (for the עד “until” cf. Ps 110:1; 112:8).[[332]](#footnote-332) The story’s concern is rather to assure its hearers that Daniel (and the temple articles)[[333]](#footnote-333) lived safely through their long exile: and so may its hearers live through theirs (chap. 9). It thus parallels the encouraging conclusions to other chapters.

## Explanation

**1–2** The destiny of independent Judah was determined in the reign of Josiah: theologically, when he could not root out the paganism of Judah’s religious life; politically, when he could not bolster ailing Assyria’s hegemony in Mesopotamia. Assyria was replaced by the Kasdite dynasty in Babylon, under Nebopolassar (625–605) and his great son Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562), who sealed the fate of Assyria (and Judah) by his victory at Karkemish, just before his father’s death, and just after Josiah’s.[[334]](#footnote-334)

The reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoiaqim, Jehoiakin, and Zedekiah are thus a story of defeat, humiliation, submission, and exile at the hands of Egypt and Babylon. The city that Israel called “the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole world” (Ps 48:2 [3]) is blockaded, assaulted, defeated, raped, and pillaged, by alien, pagan hands and feet. The sanctuary that David and Solomon had dreamed of and built, and that Yahweh had undertaken to treat as his home, is desecrated and torn apart. Its furnishings are transported if they can be carried (destroyed, if they cannot), and taken to grace and to glorify the shrines of pagan gods hundreds of miles away in a city that prophets had declared was ripe for judgment, and whose name stands for human achievement, glory, power, and pride. The royal line which had reigned in Jerusalem for 400 years, back almost to the time of the first Nebuchadnezzar six dynasties ago in Babylon, that line to which God had committed himself in perpetuity, has become a series of puppet kings to be bullied, maneuvered, and moved about by one whose name will also henceforth stand for worldly achievement, glory, power, and might (so that pretenders after the Babylonian throne will adopt it). To all appearances, the God of Jerusalem has been defeated by the gods of Babylon. Removing the possessions of the Jerusalem temple and taking them to a temple in Babylon encourages this impression. Yahweh’s personal “god-space” has been successfully invaded. He was unable to protect it.[[335]](#footnote-335)

So “our story begins at the end of another story.”[[336]](#footnote-336) Daniel begins with dates in terms of an Israelite king, but henceforth the dates will relate to the reigns of a Babylonian or Persian king. “The paradigm of traditional Judean life has been shifted, and there is no immediate hope or promise that it will return.”[[337]](#footnote-337) “It was the end of an era and the beginning of a new one.”[[338]](#footnote-338) Even though the exile involved a relatively small number of people, it was thus “a shattering of religious identity and spiritual hope.”[[339]](#footnote-339) This event, potentially as devastating for Judah’s self-understanding as it is for its bricks and mortar, challenges its people of faith to a deep and wide-ranging quest after its significance and after reactions appropriate to it. The responses affirmed within the OT agree that the fall of Jerusalem is not actually to be explained by Yahweh’s impotence or inactivity. Nor, as many people today might assume, was it merely the chance outworking of political (and personality) factors. It was the deliberate act of Israel’s own God.

While it was Nebuchadnezzar’s idea to come to Jerusalem, it was Yahweh’s idea to give it up to him. Nebuchadnezzzar was the ax, but Yahweh was the one wielding it (Isa. 10:15).[[340]](#footnote-340) Contrary to the impression one might have derived from v 1, “Daniel’s God was not asleep but in full command of the situation—he is ‘the Lord.’”[[341]](#footnote-341) A “cosmic deployment” was involved in what happened to Judah.[[342]](#footnote-342) “It was like some ghastly time-warp, as if God had put history in reverse and taken Israel right back before Abraham was even heard of, back to the land which God had called Abraham to *leave*.”[[343]](#footnote-343) The book of Daniel thus opens on “a despondent note.” Not only has Jerusalem fallen; it was Yahweh who made it happen. “It is the end of a world.”[[344]](#footnote-344) Can Yahweh be worshipped any more?

What, then, is the significance of his action? Often in the OT the fall of Jerusalem is seen as Yahweh’s holy and jealous response to the apostasy, neglect, disorder, and complacency of Israel’s life. Yet Dan 1 makes no reference to the sins of preexilic generations, perhaps because it presupposes a postexilic perspective (v 21), perhaps because that apostasy hardly explains the presence in Babylon of godly young men such as Daniel and his friends. These young men in exile, and the later generations to which the book speaks as people experiencing an exile far longer than originally envisaged (9:2, 24), acknowledge the waywardness they share with the rest of Israel (9:3–19), but this waywardness is not appealed to here as the explanation for the exile. That event is given no explanation except in terms of the hand of God (v 2). A mysterious initiative on God’s part lies behind the extraordinary sequence of events comprised by Nebuchadnezzar’s expedition, his blockade of Jerusalem, Jehoiaqim’s defeat, the plundering of the temple, and the glorifying of Babylonian idols. Nebuchadnezzar is set over against Jehoiaqim, but more pointedly “the Lord” or “my Lord”[[345]](#footnote-345) is set over against “his god.” It looked as if “his god” had defeated “my Lord.” But Jehioaqim and Nebuchadnezzar’s god fade from the story. Only the Lord and Nebuchadnezzar henceforth feature. And the Lord is the real power, the one who keeps “giving,” even though Nebuchadnezzar never realizes it.

For Judahites in Babylon, this explanation was vague and it could be puzzling, but as a place to rest, it could be secure. Their story looks as if it has come adrift from the story of the people of God, but it has not really done so. They are still within the sphere of his activity, even though it does not look like it. They are not mere pawns on a political and geographical chessboard. To be in the hand of Nebuchadnezzar is not to be out of the control of God. The story of God’s acts in history has not come to an end. The presence of the Jerusalem temple vessels in Babylon (safe in a temple treasury there!) may itself even offer quiet testimony to the fact that God is still at work, his purpose intact, even though it is now being pursued in a surprising way in a surprising place.[[346]](#footnote-346) This fact about God is an important context for the experiences Daniel and his friends are to have on arriving in Babylon, and over future years. It is what makes it possible to tell the story at all. The articles from the Jerusalem temple are put into the shrine of the Babylonian gods as if the latter had won them. Actually the God of Israel had given them to Nebuchadnezzar; this God is in control.

The affirmation of God’s involvement raises questions as well as answering them. Of course the Lord has the right and power to do as he wishes with what belongs to him. Yet handing over king and belongings to an alien overlord is a puzzling action. What are articles from the house of God (the only real God—the noun has no suffix or qualifier to relativize it) doing in the house of a Babylonian god? The scandal is underlined by the ancient versions referring to it as Nebuchadnezzar’s idol-house. What happens here is quite different from what happened on an earlier occasion when symbols of Yahweh’s presence were taken into exile (1 Sam 5–6; 2 Sam 6:6; cf. the warnings of Exod 19:21; Num 4:15, 20). The incident has opened up questions that will need answers before the story is over.

**3–7** When Nebuchadnezzar came to Syria/Palestine and went back to Babylon, he took with him not only things but people. A group of young Israelites, for the moment silent, faceless, nameless, helpless objects for manipulating by the Babylonian state, are to be taken, taught, provided for, trained, and renamed in this alien environment. Trundled off to a foreign land, they are placed in the charge of a foreign official with a foreign name, are called by foreign titles, and are allocated a foreign education, foreign diet, and foreign names for themselves, to prepare them to serve in a foreign court. Being propelled into exile is an experience of alienness, incomprehension, and abhorrence. In such circumstances, the commitment of faith might triumph, or at least survive, but it might wilt.

Nebuchadnezzar’s renaming of Eliaqim as Jehoiaqim makes his name explicitly Yahwistic but presupposes that the main point about renaming is that it is an expression of authority. The king owned the king and he owns the young men; they are his servants.[[347]](#footnote-347) Nebuchadnezzar might have expected that the despondency caused by the fall of Jerusalem and their loss of their status and prospects there would give way to positive anticipation concerning their own prospects, and the situation and the implicit attitude of the four young men is indeed quite different from that suggested by Psalm 137.[[348]](#footnote-348) But the general icture of the king’s action “unveils the colonizing strategy of the colonizer (Nebuchadnezzar) on the colonized (Israelites).”[[349]](#footnote-349) Deportation, education in the dominant culture and language, imposing names, and diet are the tools of empire.[[350]](#footnote-350) Though their provision of food might be better than that of siege conditions in Jerusalem, “we have therefore no cause to praise him for generosity.”[[351]](#footnote-351) “The triumphant imperial government offers scholarships to the brightest and the best among the vanquished,” but “the scholarships are reserved for those who are most likely to benefit the government directly.”[[352]](#footnote-352) And “indoctrination” is the means of achieving this end.[[353]](#footnote-353) “The entire cultural heritage of the Kaldeans” was to form part of the privileged young men’s education so that they would be useful to Nebuchadnezzar.[[354]](#footnote-354)

Yet in these events might lie seeds of hope, a hope encouraged by stimuli towards recollection of earlier events and earlier scriptures, which speak of life under alien pressures. Not long after an Assyrian chief of staff went to Jerusalem, Isaiah told Hezekiah that his own sons would end up as eunuchs/members of the palace staff in Babylon (Isa 36:2; 39:5-7), and that prophecy is now fulfilled.[[355]](#footnote-355) It was a word of judgment, but the context of God’s judgment is at least a context of meaning rather than one of meaningless disorder. A century after Hezekiah, when Jerusalem fell, a Babylonian chief of staff was among those who released Jeremiah from jail after the capture of Jerusalem (Jer 39:13); acting on Nebuchadnezzar’s behalf, Ashpenaz ensures that the fate of the royal family on that occasion (Jer 39:5–6) is not their fate here. Further, long ago at the beginning of Israel’s story a handsome young man was taken off against his will into a foreign country and put into the charge of a leading member of the palace staff; Joseph proved himself a man of insight and discernment and took his place in the royal court without compromising his faith—and he, too, had received a foreign name (Gen 39:1–6; 41:39–46).

The story that began by raising questions about faith thus goes on to raise questions about ambition, or about life at court in a pagan culture. H. R. Niebuhr analyzed five views of the relationship between Christ and culture.[[356]](#footnote-356) At two extremes are the attitudes that either totally oppose these or assimilate them. Other attitudes see Christ as the fulfillment of the ideals that culture perceives but does not achieve, or see Christ and culture as making legitimate demands that stand in tension with one another, or see Christ as bringing the conversion of culture. The relationship between faith and culture is a question running through the OT. In different contexts the people of God acknowledges other cultural patterns without being significantly affected by them, or confronts other cultural patterns that seem destructive and threatening, or lets them influence it, both to its enrichment and to its debasement. The exile is a fruit of that debasement, and it naturally gives strength to a purist movement that emphasizes the distinctive features of Israel’s culture such as the sabbath, food laws, circumcision, and other topics stressed by Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

Such a purist movement would speak with particular force in Babylon itself, where extra pressures drive Israel into assimilation to a pagan culture. Those pressures are overtly placed on the young exiles among the royalty and the nobility, who are educated in Babylonian religio-political lore in order that they may join the king’s staff. That education means sharing in the life (specifically the food) of the palace, and receiving names that suggest the service of foreign gods rather than the God of Israel. The provision of education, food, and names places them under powerful cultural forces. Nebuchadnezzar is attempting to turn the next generation of Israel (in the persons of its royal leaders) into good Babylonians.

Nebuchadnezzar wants Israelites, members of a nation he had defeated and intends to keep under control; members of the royalty and the nobility, able to exercise an influence on Judah in general, by their presence or by their absence; young men, with more potential and less prejudice; flawless and handsome men to grace his court; men whose capability, learning, knowledge, and discernment are already proved. But he is thus insisting on young men who belong to God’s chosen people and to the royal clan to which the Lord committed himself in perpetuity. Handsome and lacking shortcomings, they resemble David’s one-time heir apparent, Absalom (2 Sam 14:25). Learned, knowledgeable, and discerning, they resemble David himself (1 Sam 16:12, 18; 18:5, 14–15) and the son who actually succeeded him and became the paradigm of learning and disocernment in Israel (1 Kgs 5:9–14 [4:29–34]). They possess the attributes as well as the background of royalty. Nebuchadnezzar has thus chosen the best men, but also the worst, to seek to reeducate into men of the (Babylonian) world.

To both Israelites and Babylonians, politics, learning, and religious commitment were interwoven; the notion of value-free insight had not been conceived. While both their traditions include many observations on successful living and morality that lack overt reference to God, such observations presuppose a context in the faith of their respective religions. The Israelites were thus to be educated in the learning of the caste of priest-counselors who served the Babylonian god into whose temple the trophies from the Lord’s temple had been placed. Babylonian diviners would pray to their gods before practicing their craft: they were concerned to discover what the gods were revealing. Worldly learning had many insights, but it was a potential threat to Israelite faith because of its relationship with Babylonian religion. Israelite learning was a threat to Nebuchadnezzar’s policy for court development, for a parallel reason. Nebuchadnezzar was looking for natural intelligence that could be developed by and adapted to his nation’s learning. But the foundation of Israelite insight is the worship of Israel’s God. If the Israelite princes and people of rank are particularly wise, learned, and discerning, that marks them out as also particularly committed to him.

At the same time, the description places them in a tradition that had been accustomed to manifesting a discriminating openness to the learning of other peoples. A smart person knows how to learn from the insight of other peoples without being overcome by it. The story’s stance in relation to Babylonian expertise is thus different from that of Isa 40–55 (see esp. 47:9–13 for terms used in Daniel, though Daniel makes strikingly little specific reference to astrology). The stories do not portray a religious conflict between two purportedly divine revelations. Their contrast is between Israel’s divine insight and the merely human insight of Babylon. Babylon is thus as radically belittled as it is in Isa 40–55.

The wise person also knows the power of laughter. The possibility that the outward renaming of the four Israelite young men might lead to their inner backsliding is undermined by the way their new names are reported. Belteshazzar, Shadrak, Meshak, and Abed Nego are all grotesque, silly names, which make fun of the gods whom they are supposed to honor. Like Zerubbabel and Mordecai, the four can use their foreign names without worrying about them, perhaps on the same basis that Paul can eat meat sacrificed to idols—because the idol is really nothing.

**8** By military defeat, geographical displacement, and cultural flooding the Babylonians have sought to manipulate the Israelites, as humanly helpless (though not Godless or witless) victims of their will. Ashpenaz has just now been deciding on names for Daniel and his friends; but now Daniel does some deciding for himself. We wonder what will happen to Israelite youth and insight when it is thrust into exile and taught Kasdite. Will a group of mere youths be able to endure Nebuchadnezzar’s test?[[357]](#footnote-357) We hoped that the qualities of those young men would mean that things would turn out all right; now Daniel gives us the first concrete indication that it will be so, showing himself to be a worthy member of this elite.[[358]](#footnote-358) The young exiles cease to be faceless ciphers and helpless victims. Daniel seizes the initiative from the Babylonians. “Daniel and his friends studied the Babylonian curriculum and served in the Babylonian court. Yet Daniel did so while implicitly critiquing a culture that supported a government committed to conquest and colonization.”[[359]](#footnote-359)

Daniel has no genealogy, and nothing explains his emergence at this point. Moses emerges from self-caused obscurity because Yahweh takes an initiative; Daniel emerges from nowhere because he takes an initiative. He does so because he (alone) is prepared to say his “sturdy ‘no.’”[[360]](#footnote-360) In Daniel’s “magnificent refusal” on the basis of the conviction that “the food was fit for a king, but… not fit for a servant of the King of kings” lay “his own sharp focus, his own clear identity.”[[361]](#footnote-361) He recognizes the problem of the clash between what the Lord expects and what the lord expects (vv 2, 10).[[362]](#footnote-362) Daniel does not attempt to avoid being dependent on Nebuchadnezzar, but he does set terms for his dependence.

So at Babylonian food he draws the line. Questions about ambition lead to questions about purity. Daniel recognizes that there are moments when an issue in the life of the people of God requires one to take what Lutheranism would later call a confessional stand (a *status confessionis*),maybe on something that doesn’t look inherently important but that one recognizes is a make or break issue.[[363]](#footnote-363) Accepting the palace provisions involves a compromise of faith in a way that accepting a share in its life, its work, its education, and its names do not. Believers in other contexts or in other cultures might have identified their sticking point elsewhere. In the context of the exile, when Isa 40–55 is scathing about Babylonian religion, Babylonian food is too trivial for the prophecy to mention. Perhaps part of the point is that a line should be drawn somewhere. Total assimilation is to be avoided. Food, in particular, is determinative of identity; it is part of being “embodied.” We are what we eat: the English call the French “frogs,” the French call the English “roast beefs.” It is common for an expatriate community to maintain its distinctiveness partly by maintaining its distinctive diet. Israel’s rules about food presuppose that food is determinative of identity; part of their point is to preserve the distinctiveness of Israel over against other peoples.[[364]](#footnote-364) The difficulty in discerning precisely what was defiling about the Babylonians’ food may indicate that it was nothing more sharply conceptualized than that it was Babylonian. And in the context of the story, the significance of Daniel’s refusal lies in where it leads—the test, and the triumph (the first of three triumphs).

Already in this introductory chapter, then, a question the stories raise is how to express identity faithfully and to engage with the affairs of empire,[[365]](#footnote-365) and here discipleship expresses itself by insisting on maintaining the difference between clean and unclean food as the way the faithful will mark themselves out (to themselves and to others, and before God) as belonging to a special people and committed to a specific Lord. Works such as Leviticus and Esther take the same stance, though Esther compromises more.[[366]](#footnote-366) Also suggestive is Num 22–25, which juxtaposes the futility of pagan divination (22–24) and the danger of idolatrous feasting (25), and Rev 2:14, 20 takes up those chapters and reaffirms the association. 1 Cor 8–10 similarly insists that faithfulness involves being wary of idolatry and of anything that looks like idolatry, while also being wary of taking too seriously beings that are really no-gods. Most importantly, however, faithfulness involves being concerned for our neighbors’ edification, and if they do not share our freedom, not to insist on exercising it in a misleading way (cf. Rom 14). In Mark 7 discipleship expresses itself by repudiating the distinction between clean and unclean food; in this way the faithful will demonstrate that the source of moral defilement lies elsewhere. Acts 10 takes the same stance on a different basis: God is now abolishing the distinction between clean and unclean which symbolizes and reinforces that distinction between Israel and other peoples, because the gospel first preached to Jews is now to be preached to gentiles also.

The gospel word that Daniel proves is 1 Cor 10:13 rather than Acts 10. He emphasizes an aspect of Judaism that may seem unimportant and passing; yet it was the means whereby the Jews maintained their identity, and it was God’s means of ensuring that they did so. There is a freedom with which Christ sets us free, but that freedom is not the one claimed by the Hellenizing Jews who eventually abandoned those emphases of Judaism.[[367]](#footnote-367) We are reassured that the Daniel who lives at court, stands by the side of the king, and serves the empire, is one who has taken his stand and kept himself pure; and we are challenged about our own willingness on one hand to accept an involvement in the world, but on the other hand to recognize that there are points at which we have to draw a line. We are called to be citizens of two worlds, neither surrendering one citizenship by assimilation nor surrendering the other by forming a ghetto. There will be other ways in which (for instance) Western Christians, who live in a “toxic culture” which stands at odds with their faith,[[368]](#footnote-368) have to discern where they must say “no.”

**9–14** So Daniel takes his stand. For him to avoid the risk of defilement, however, is for Ashpenaz to take on the risk of his head, if his royal master spots from their appearance that the four young men have not been eating the king’s good food. Yet Ashpenaz is favorably disposed towards Daniel and sympathetic to his position, and does not turn his request down. (“The book of Daniel is all about imperial politics.”[[369]](#footnote-369) The writer and most readers of this commentary are not Daniel. They may be Nebuchadnezzar. Their best hope may be to be Ashpenaz.[[370]](#footnote-370))

Daniel’s demonstration of his commitments is matched by God’s own. In the story, it begins to look as if things will turn out all right because of who God is, as well as because of who Daniel is. The story has manipulated Nebuchadnezzar all through. He thought he was in charge and understood things but he wasn’t and he didn’t. “As far as the king knows, his orders have been totally followed and completely obeyed,” but unbeknown to him, “Daniel and his three friends negotiate with the king’s servants to change the terms of their subjugation.”[[371]](#footnote-371)

For a gentile court-official to be so accommodating was a sufficiently remarkable and unusual experience to require explanation. Through the centuries the faithful have had to take their stand knowing that it might well mean loss, perhaps suffering and martyrdom. Whatever is meant by God honoring those who honor him (1 Sam 2:30), it is not that he always grants safety and protection to them. Yet sometimes he does grant it, and their faith then sees the hand of God at work. So it had been once for Joseph, and for the Israelites on the eve of the exodus, and so Solomon prayed it would be in exile (Gen 39:21, cf. *T. Joseph* 2.3; Exod 12:36; 1 Kgs 8:50; also Gen 43:14; Ps 106:46). God can inspire quite unexpected attitudes in friends or foes.[[372]](#footnote-372) So biblical precedent and prayer are once more being followed and fulfilled. Those who have to hold together the claims of the world and the claims of the faith are encouraged to remember that God has been known to make it possible for people to live in this world in accordance with the faith’s claims. “With the חֶסֶד of God who delivers and protects with power, the narrator presents, once again, the powerlessness of the colonizer in face of the power of the God of חֶסֶד.”[[373]](#footnote-373)

Daniel’s purity is not yet secure, however, and sympathy cannot be translated into support until it can be shown that Ashpenaz himself is not about to be endangered. Perhaps Daniel will after all be driven into compromise, or into despair? Divine aid (v 9) does not mean there is no need for the exercise of human responsibility and initiative (v 11): rather it opens the way to it.[[374]](#footnote-374)

Daniel proposes a period of testing to demonstrate that the vegetarian diet he seeks, free from the risk of uncleanness, can be as healthy as the official provision. What gave Daniel the idea and what he expected to emerge from it we are not told. The bold and bald wager, even fixing the terminus ad quem, is out of his mouth before there can be talk of thinking it over or seeking God’s guidance.[[375]](#footnote-375) Before the Israelites reached Canaan, God tested them by depriving them of regular provision, to show them that people do not live on bread alone but by the word that God speaks (Deut 8:2–3; 29:6 [5]). After Israel has left Canaan, Daniel submits to a similar test (and in a sense tests God in the process) to prove the same point.[[376]](#footnote-376) The person who can do so is the one who has already discovered how to live with both plenty and poverty (Phil 4:12).[[377]](#footnote-377)

**15–16** All the questions have now been opened up: questions about how to believe in a God who lets Jerusalem fall, about what will happen to young men educated in the learning of a foreign court, about whether they can avoid defilement and satisfy their overlords that there is nothing to be lost by allowing them to do so. Now the answers that have been hinted become more overt.

First, the test is successful; indeed, the four Judahites look better after ten days of vegetarian food than the young men who eat the royal provisions. While it may be that vegetarian food is better for you or that God has intervened to prove that people flourish at his word and not merely because of what they eat, the story does not tell us why or how this remarkable event took place. It only declares that it did. So the young men are permanently excused from the royal provision, and their purity is assured for the future. It is possible to be faithful in a pagan court.

**17–20** Indeed, it is possible to be successful there. The OT is not inherently opposed to divination (and associated purificatory, exorcistic, and apotropaic rites), though dreams and casting lots are almost its only forms of approved divination, and they appear rarely; the OT knows that Yahweh has more distinctive, more direct means of communicating with his people (Deut 18:15). Yet Daniel earns the title “prophet” from later generations as a result of demonstrating his capacity to divine on the basis of visions and dreams (4QFlorilegium 2.3; Matt 24:15; cf. Num 12:6). The scriptures’ attacks on divination are attacks on the divination of alien religions (Deut 18:9–14; Isa 47). God, the true God of Israel, is the source of the young men’s insight and of Daniel’s achievements in the Babylonians’ own areas of expertise. There is no positive theology of pagan or secular learning here, but rather the assurance that it can be triumphed over. If there were two main attitudes to foreign insight in the Second Temple period, Daniel belongs ultimately with the more exclusive, not the more open.[[378]](#footnote-378) By allowing the young men to be open to alien learning, but by then portraying their learning as superior, Daniel makes the same points as Isa 47, perhaps more strongly. It asserts that there is insight about life, history, and politics (the affairs the young men will be concerned with) that only God endows. God is the giver in connection with their destiny, even when it does not appear so (v 2), the giver in connection with their relationships, even when these are most threatening (v 9), and the giver in connection with their character and abilities, even when these are under most pressure (v 17). His involvement thus relativizes military power, political power, and the power of human insight. [[379]](#footnote-379) “‘God gave’—that is the Gospel of this chapter,”[[380]](#footnote-380) and thus “arguably the most significant theological claim of this chapter.”[[381]](#footnote-381)

So it is hardly surprising that the young men’s counsel turns out to be not merely comparable with but ten times better than that of the king’s other advisers—even if this claim seems a bold one, whether in a Babylonian, a Persian, or a Greek context. If the God of Israel is God, it is to be expected that he will enable his people to offer better counsel than those who seek their insight from other sources. The God whom Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to eliminate (vv 1–7) is triumphing. The Israelite kingly family has been taken into the service of the Babylonian king but it has found itself in a position of leadership in Babylon, not through military or political achievement but through showing itself discerning.[[382]](#footnote-382) The young men are in a position to bind together conventional wisdom and insight that comes from faith in God.[[383]](#footnote-383)

**21** Nor is this triumph a single belated event or one relevant only to the lives of individuals. We started on the broad canvas of a defeat by Nebuchadnezzar, a plundering of the temple, and an exiling of the flower of Israel’s manhood, which threaten to break off the story of God, his purpose with Israel, and their relationship with him. But Daniel lived through the seventy years of submission to Babylon prophesied by Jeremiah, on to “the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia,” who encouraged Judahite exiles to return with the temple articles to rebuild the temple (2 Chr 36:22–23). Daniel is still in Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar, who had imposed Babylonian authority over Israel, gives way to Cyrus, who terminates it. It’s not exactly the end of the exile, according to chap. 9.[[384]](#footnote-384) But people hearing this story might well have recalled that the first year of Cyrus was the moment when Nebuchadnezzar’s action was reversed, when Cyrus commissioned Judahites in Babylon to go back homa and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem—he also being the means of fulfilling Yahweh’s intentions (Isa 44:24—45:7; 2 Chr 36:22-23).[[385]](#footnote-385)

Daniel offers no answer to the question “Why are we here in exile?” It was simply God’s will. It can be accepted, partly because it is not without end. A beginning in “the third year of Jehoiaqim” can be acknowledged and recorded because it contains the seed of an end in “the first year of King Cyrus,” not by forces immanent in history but by those immanent in the word of God that decides both beginning and end. “Nebuchadnezzar” spells invasion, siege, defeat, plundering, exile. “Cyrus” spells the end of each of these. “Nebuchadnezzar” brings the day of Yahweh’s abandoning his people to darkness and wrath, a historical experience and at the same time a pointer to ultimate Darkness and Wrath. “Cyrus” suggests deliverance and freedom, restoration and rebuilding, the joy of going home. It, too, is a historical experience yet at the same time a pointer to the deliverance freedom, restoration, and joy of the End (cf. Isa 44:24–45:7). While the fact that the exile does not go on for ever and that Daniel sees it out does not provide an intellectual answer to why it happens, it does provide some practical help for living in exile. On the basis of it, those who wait for Yahweh can find new strength (Isa 40:31). Their faith can survive and grow.

The genius and the limitation of a story of this kind is its concrete nature. As it may be impossible to move from an “is” to an “ought,” it may be impossible to move from a narrative statement to a general statement, from “Yahweh enabled Daniel to triumph” to “Yahweh will enable us to the triumph.” But a concrete story describes what Yahweh has neen known to do, and it opens up the possibility that he might do it again, or might do something analogous.

# The God of the Heavens Reveals the King’s Dream to Daniel and the Empire’s Destiny to Nebuchadnezzar (2:1–49)

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## Translation

1In the seconda year of *Nebukadne’ṣṣar*’s reign, *Nebukadne’ṣṣar* had dreams,b and his spirit was troubled. But sleep came over him.c 2So the king said to summon the diviners, the chanters, the charmers, and the *Kasditesa* to explain to the king what he had dreamed, and they came and took their places before the king. 3The king said to them, “I have had a dream and my spirit is troubled to know what I dreamed.” 4The *Kasdites* spoke to the king (in Aramaic):a “Longb live the king! Tell your servants the dream, and we will explain the interpretation.”c 5The king respondeda *to* the *Kasdites*, “The thing is determinedb *by me:* if you cannot let me know the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limbc and your houses will be turned into rubble.d 6But if you can tell me the dream and its interpretation, you will acquire from me gifts, a reward, and great honor. Nowa tell me the dream and its interpretation.”

7They responded a second time, “Let the king tella his servants the dream, and we will explain the interpretation to him.” 8The king responded, “I know very well that you are buying the time,a becauseb you have seenc that I have made a firm decision 9athat if you cannot let me know what I have dreamed, there is a specific edict for you.a You have arranged with each otherb to make a lying, base response before me, hoping the situation may change. Nowc tell me the dream, and I will know you can explain its interpretation to me.” 10The *Kasdites* responded before the king, “There is no one on earth who could explain the thing that the king asks. Hencea no great king or rulerb has ever asked such a thing of any diviner or chanter or *Kasdite*. 11The thing which the king is asking is so formidable, there is no one else who can explain it before the king but the gods, and their home is not among mere human beings.”a 12At this the king got angry, indeed quite furious, and said that all the experts in Babel were to be put to death.

13So the edict went out that the experts were to be killed,a and search was made for Daniyye’l and his friends so that they could be killed. 14Then Daniyye’l replied with shrewd judgmenta to Aryok,b the royal chief of police,c who had gone out to kill the experts in Babel. 15He responded to Aryok, “Royal marshal,a why has this severeb decree come from the king?” cAryok explained the thing to Daniyye’l, 16and Daniyye’l went anda asked the king to give him a period of time and he would tell the king the interpretation. 17Daniyye’l came home and let his friends Ḥananyah, Miša’el, and ‘Azaryah know about the thing, 18for them to ask for compassiona from the God of the heavens regarding this mystery, so that Daniyye’l and his friends might not perish, with the rest of the experts in Babel.

19The mystery was revealed to Daniyye’l in a vision during the night. Daniyye’l blessed the God of the heavens. 20Daniyye’l averred,a

bMay the name of Godb

bec blessed from eternity to eternity;d

Because expertise and mighte

are his.

21He is the one who changes times and eras;a

he removes kings and establishes kings.

He gives their expertise to the experts

and their knowledge to those who possess insight.

22He is the one who reveals

things deeply hidden;

He knows what lies in darkness,

and light sojournsa with him.

*23*You, God of my ancestors,

I confessa and praise.b

Because you have given me

expertise and might.c

You have let me know now what we asked of you;

you have let us know the thing that the king asked.d

24Thus Daniyye’l went toa Aryok, whom the king had delegated to kill the experts in Babel. He camea and said to him, “Do not killb the experts in Babel. Take me before the king, and I will explain the interpretation to the king.” 25With urgencya Aryok tookb Daniyye’l before the king and said to him, “I have found someone among the Judahite exiles who can let your majesty know the interpretation.” 26The king averred to Daniyye’l (whose name was *Belṭešaṣṣar*), “Are you reallya able to let me know the dream that I had, and its interpretation?” 27Daniyye’l responded before the king, “No experts, chanters, diviners or exorcistsa can explain to your majesty the mystery about which your majesty asks. 28Yet there is a God in the heavens who reveals mysteries, and he has let King *Nebukadne’ṣṣar*aknow what is going to happen at the end of the era.

This is your dream, the visionb that came into your headc as you lay in bed. 29You, your majesty, as you lay in bed: *your* thoughts*a**came upb o*f what is to happen in the future,c and the revealer of mysteries let you know what is to happen. 30This mystery has been revealed to me, not by means of an expertise that I possess that is greater than any other person’s, but in order for the interpretation to be made known to your majesty, so that you may know your inner thoughts.a

31”Your majesty, you were looking, and there before you was a largea statue. This statue was big, with an extraordinary brightness, standing in front of you, an awesome sight. 32This statue: its head was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its stomach and sides of bronze,a 33its legsa of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of pottery.b 34You were looking asa a rock broke awayb without being touched. It struck the statue on its feet made of iron and pottery, and shattered them. 35Then all at oncea the iron, pottery, bronze, silver, and gold shattered.b They became like chaff from threshing-placesc in summer, and the wind carried them off. No placed could be found for them. But the rock which had struck the statue became a great crag which filled the whole world.

36”That was the dream. Now wea will state its interpretation before the king. 37Your majesty, king among kings, you to whom the God of the heavens has given kingship, sovereignty, power, and honor, 38aand wherever they live, has given human beings,a creatures of the wild, and birds in the sky into your control and made you ruler over them all: you yourself areb the head made of gold. 39In your place another regime will stand, inferior to yours, and another, third regime of bronze, which will rule the whole world. 40aBut there will be a fourth regime as strong as iron—because iron shatters and smashes anything.b cLike iron crushing things,c it will shatter and crush dall these.d 41But in that you saw the feet and toesa made partly of clayb pottery and partly of iron, it will be a splitc regime, though it will have some of the firmnessd of iron. In that you saw iron united with the earthene pottery, 42aand the toes ofa the feet part of them iron and part of them pottery, to some extentb the regime will be strong, but in part it will be fragile. 43In that you saw the iron united with clay pottery, ahuman beings will unite,a but they will not hold together, just asb iron does not unite with pottery.

44And in the time of those kings the God of the heavens will cause a regime to stand which will not be destroyeda through the ages, nor will kingly authorityb pass to any other people. It will finally shatter all those regimes but will itself stand through the ages, 45insofar as you saw that a rock broke away from the crag without being touched, and shattered the airon, bronze, pottery, silver, and gold.”a

“God Almightyb has let your majesty know what is to happen in the future. The dream is true. Its interpretation is trustworthy.”

46Then King *Nebukadne’ṣṣar* fell on his face, prostrate,a before Daniyye’l. He said that an offering and fragrant oblationsb were to be presented to him. 47The king averred to Daniyye’l, “Of a truth your God is aGod among gods, Master among kings, and Revealer of mysteries,a since you have been able to reveal this mystery.” 48The king elevated Daniyye’l. He gave him many great gifts and would have madea him governor over the entire province of Babel and chief officer over all the experts in Babel; 49but Daniyye’l asked the king to appointa Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego over the administration of the province of Babel, Daniyye’l being at the king’s court.b

## Notes

1.a. One ms of OG has “twelfth”; chap. 2 does not then backtrack on chap. 1.

1.b. The pl. hardly indicates that he had a number of dreams (cf. the double dream in Gen 41), since what follows refers to a single dream; rather it is pl. of extension, suggesting the parts of the one dream (cf. GKC 124). V 28 has s., then pl. for “visions” (cf. 4:5 [2]; 7:1). Thus the reference is to the one dream discussed by vv 2–49.

1.c. Cf. Aq for this translation of על נהיתה. G, Sym, Vg translate “went from,” assimilating to 6:18 [19], which has the same Aramaic-style word order and also has על (cf. Driver, *JSS* 9:349). But there the verb is ד ד נ. Here the verb is niphal of היה, perhaps with intensive meaning (Ogden, VT 21:466), which fits 12:1 but not 8:27, where the most plausible explanation is to connect the verb with היה “fall”; and one might do the same here and in 12:1 (Rashi). See Gen 41:4–5 for the motif of going back to sleep after being wakened by a dream.

2.a. “Of the Kasdites” (OG) makes sense—that is, this fourth term designates the three groups as a whole, as in v 5 (cf. Koch). But MT simply links all four terms with *waw* and offers no hint that the text should be understood in OG’s way.

4.a. Although this part of v 4 is missing in 1QDana, the size of the gap suggests that “in Aramaic” was part of the text (cf. Snell, “Why Is There Aramaic in the Bible,” 36; Ulrich, *Biblical Qumran Scrolls*, 756; Mastin, “The Reading of 1QDana at Daniel ii 4”).

4.b. ם ל ו ע/עלם signifies the furthest possible time, here in the pl. of extension (GKC 124b; cf. colloquial English “for ages”). A standard hyperbole from courtly style, it appears on the lips of the nobles at Nabopolassar’s consecration (Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 3). See further n. 20.d below.

4.c. ר ש פ comes in the OT only in Dan 2–7 and Eccl 8:1; cf. BH פתרון, only in Gen 40–41. The root denotes loosening, resolving, or explaining, esp. by divination or supernatural revelation, with specific reference to what is presaged by something enigmatic (see *AHw* on *pišru*; Oppenheim, “Interpretation of Dreams,” 217–25; Horgan, *Pesharim*, 230–37; Rabinowitz, “‘Pesher/pittaron’”). For the connection with loosing, cf. 5:12. Thus arguably “‘meaning’ or ‘interpretation’ is an inadequate translation” (Lucas, *Daniel*, 63). For א פשר some medieval mss have פשרה, the alternative emphatic form; others have פשרהּ (“its interpretation”). MT, G, Vg, Syr show such variation through Dan 2; I follow L (and K rather than Q) throughout.

5.a. MT points ענה as a participle, but the more common pl.ענו is unambiguously perfect, and perhaps ענה should be taken as perfect too.

5.b. Or “[hereby] proclaimed” (cf. Th, Vg; OG lacks the phrase). On אזדא see Rundgren, “An Aramaic Loanword”; Happ/Schmid, “Zu ἀσγάνδης”; *HALOT*.

5.c. An OP idiom, according to Makujina**,** “Dismemberment in Dan 2:5 and 3:29.”

5.d. נולי. “Forfeit” (cf. G, Vg) or “dunghill” (cf. *DTT*, 887) may ultimately be guesses, but something extreme is required to match being torn limb from limb.

6 .a. להן is an adversative (cf. Th πλήν). It does not mean “therefore” (Vg) in BA or BH (see Driver, “Problems in Aramaic and Hebrew Texts,” 64–66; contrast Eitan, “Some Philological Observations,” 13-15). Cf. 2:9; 4:27 [24].

7.a. The Kasdites move from imperative to jussive; OG repeats the imperative from v 4.

8.a. The meaning is less clear than the familiar English ‘buying time’ suggests. Like BH תע,ן ד ע denotes not time in general but a specific time—a time during which to concoct an answer to the conundrum or a time when they will come back with this answer (cf. vv 9, 16).

8.b. די ל ב ק ל כ: on form and meaning, see BDB, 1110; Wesselius**,** “Language and Style in BA,” 195-204.

8.c. Rather than “you see” (cf. Li, *Verbal System*, 29).

9.a-a. JB “Your intention is not to interpret my dream” apparently presupposes first that הן די is equivalent to BH אם כי (“surely”), then that דתכון means “your purpose” not “the edict which applies to you”: hence lit., “surely you will not make the dream known to me. You have a single purpose….” But דת (OP) elsewhere always means an actual edict (human or divine); cf. vv 13, 15, also the similar phrase in Esth 4:11 (Ehrlich).

9.b. Taking הזמנתון as reflexive (hitpeel or hitpaal) with Q and many medieval mss, which have זדמנתון ה, and with Th, not as ha הַזְמִנְתּוּן with OG, Vg.

9.c. See n. 6.a.

10.a. די ל ב ק ל כ (lit., “because”); see n. 8.b.

10.b. Cf. Th. MT accents and Vg take the phrase as one noun followed by two adjectives (“no king, however great and powerful”), but שליט is a noun in v 15 (cf. 5:29; Gen 42:6). The Assyrian title “Great King” was still used in the Persian period (Koch). KJV takes both רב and שליט as nouns (“no king, lord, nor ruler”), but רב used as an absalote noun would be unique in BA/BH (contrast the construct in v 14).

11.a. בשר, conventionally “flesh,” humanity in its creaturely weakness (cf. Isa 31:3).

13.a. Taking the participle as gerundive (BDB; cf. OG, and see BL 81o). “And the experts were being killed” (cf. Th, Vg) underlines the drama of what follows and fits v 18, though perhaps not v 24, and one might expect a subsequent reference to the killing being halted. Li (*Verbal System*, 71, 72) has “about to be killed).

14.a. וטעם עטא : the second noun can mean “deference” (3:12; 6:13 [14]), but Daniel is not deferential here and more likely the two nouns are near-synonyms, like other pairs in this chapter (cf. G, Vg). “Took counsel with” (Ginsberg, *Handbook*) fits less well in the context.

14.b. Cf. Gen 14:1; Jdt 1:6; perhaps Persian (Grelot, “Ariok”; Zadok, “Five Iranian Names”), though known as a Babylonian name, and cf. Sumerian Eri-aku (servant of the moon [god]) (Jeffery).

14.c. טבחיא, etymologically “slaughtermen” (cf. G, Syr) which is just what they were on this occasion. But elsewhere the word simply means “guards/police” (cf. Vg).

15.a. MT accents link with לאריוך “to Aryok” (cf. Vg), but Th more naturally takes it as opening the actual speech.

15.b. חצף seems to mean “barefaced/hardfaced,” thus “peremptory, uncompromising, arrogant” (cf. 3:22). Commentators look for a more polite translation if they take טעם to mean “deference”; but see n. 14.a.

15.c. אדין (EVV “then”) appears at the beginning of the clause: it is a standard linking particle, used like ו in BH, and hardly requiring translation. באדין (vv 14, 35, 46) is less usual, though hardly a marker for a new section (against Charles); I translate it “then.”

16.a. Montgomery omits ו על “went and,” following Syr, on the grounds that Daniel cannot have gone straight in to the king without being taken in (cf. vv 24, 25). But Taylor attributes Syr’s lack to homoioteleuton (*Peshiṭta*, 68). Perhaps the narrator tells the story briskly here (or presupposes that a person of Daniel’s [later!] stature may not need that mediation?) and then tells it more slowly/dramatically in vv 24, 25. But does v 16 require that he actually saw the king, which would normally involve using the term מלכא קדם “before the king,” as in vv 24, 25? Koch suggests that it was actually Aryok who went in. See also n. 24.a.

18.a. “Mercy” (Th, Vg) and “support” (OG) are too specific translations of ןי מ ח ר; see n. 1:9.b-b.

20.a. KJV “answered and said” presupposes the common meaning of ענה in BH; cf. the combination where the meaning “answer” fits, in vv 5, 7, 8, 10. Muraoka (*Reader*, 43)suggests it indicates “reaction to a situation,” which fits here, but elsewhere (e.g., 3:14, 19) even that understanding seems forced. Rather compare the BH meaning “aver” (and the later Hebrew and Aramaic meaning “begin to speak”); the word simply adds force to אמר “say” (cf. OG; and Koch). Many occurrences of the word in this chapter could be translated either way.

20.b. 4QDanb “the great God”; cf. OG “the great Lord.”

20.c. I.e., “may Yahweh be,” see *Comment*; avoidance of the actual name compares with the preference here and elsewhere for להוא or even לוה (“may . . . be,” an EA-type imperfect) to avoid the form יהוה which is identical with the divine name.

20.d. Or “from age to age”: both meanings of עלם apply here, suggesting furthest possible time, past or future. Either way, the word does not suggest timeless eternity: see v 4 and n. 4.b. While that idea does emerge when עלם is linked with God/his dominion/his deliverance (e.g., 4:34 [31]), even then the connotation of unchangeable certainty is more important than the concept of mere temporal continuance (cf. Long, “Notes on the Biblical Use of ם ל ו ע-עד.” As v 20 also implies, to say that God is eternal is not to make him outside time but to affirm him lord of all time and unlimited by time: see Jenni, “Das Wort ‘ōlām im AT”; cf. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, 69–70, 117 (rev. ed., 73–74, 123–24); Gerleman, “Die sperrende Grenze.”

20.e. Th “insight” looks like a loose translation derived from the parallelism with “expertise,” not an indication that ה ר ו ב ג means “strength of insight”; see n. 23.c.

21.a. For זמניא, EVV “seasons” could give the wrong impression; there is no great difference from עדניא “times.”

22.a. To translate the passive more literally, “is settled” (see BDB; cf. *DTT* 1629-30).

23.a. ידה/ידא can have sin as well as God (and human beings) as its object (see Comment [h] on 9:3–23); “confess” (cf. G, Vg) brings out its meaning in these different connections better than EVV “give thanks.”

23.b. שבח, too, is not an essentially religious word; it means “recognize the value of” (cf. *DTT*).

23.c. Whereas OG had “majesty” for ה ר ו ב ג in v 20, here it has “intelligence,” which produces the kind of hendiadys Daniel is fond of. But on the basis of the usual meaning of ה ר ו ב ג, “expertise and might” in vv 20 and 23 is a bracket around vv 21–22.

23.d. Lit., “the king’s thing.”

24.a. “Went to” is על על; 4QDana and some medieval mss omit “went,” while G, Vg omit “came” (לאז). Both verbs are picked up from vv 16, 17 and the omissions (the first being haplog.) as likely indicate simplification of an expansive style than a shorter original.

24.b. תהובד ל א: perhaps “stop killing.”

25.a. Or “with excitement” (cf. *DTT*; NEB has “in trepidation”): בהל suggests strong feelings, not just speed.

25.b. הנעל: perhaps formed by analogy with the antonym הנפק (5:2) (so Bergman, “Han‘el”).

26.a. איתי followed by participle is emphatic/confirmative (*EWS*, 81).

27.a. גזרין: see Comment on v 2.

28.a. The unusual word order מלכא נבוכדנצר (contrast, e.g., 3:1–9) seems to be a Hebraism (so Mastin, “Appositional Kingship in Daniel”); see n. 1:21.b.

28.b. וחזוי חלמך: explicative waw; on s. and pl. see n. 1.a.

28.c. The OT usually associates mental activity with the heart, not the head (cf. n. 30.a; n. 1:8.a; Jer 23:16), and the reference may be to the head as containing the eyes. But Glasson (“Visions of Thy Head”) finds here the influence of Greek thinking, which did regard the head as the seat of consciousness and thought.

29.a. BHS and JPSV have the s. רעיונך (cf. 5:10) but BHS notes that the original hand of L had pl.

ך י נ ו י ע ר (cf. 4QDanb and some medieval mss).

29.b. סלק “come up,” uniquely in BA; see *DTT*, also BH עלה (BDB, 749a).

29.c. The clause is epexegetic to ך י נ ו י ע ר “your thoughts” (Montgomery), not indirect object of סלק (Th).

30.a. לבבך רעיוני “the thoughts of your heart”: see n. 28.c. The sentence is slightly elliptical; Daniel’s point is that he has the revelation not because of his wisdom but because of the divine purpose to make it known to the king.

31.a. Th lacks “large,” but it may be abbreviating because of difficulty in construing the awkward and repetitive sentence (cf. Syr’s paraphrase) which reflects the vision’s unutterable nature.

32.a. Or copper; but the alloy bronze is stronger and thus more commonly used, not least for images (see Koch).

33.a. שק (BH שוק) denotes the leg as a whole (cf. *DTT*; OG σκέλη), though excluding the hip, which belongs to the bronze section. Th κνῆμαι, Vg *tibiae* imply the lower leg only (shin/calf): so BDB, 1003, but its references do not necessitate this meaning for human beings and they exclude it for animals.

33.b. חסף: not “clay” (the raw material; cf. טינא, v 41) but decorative tiling or potsherds (Th ὀστράκινον), tatty decoration when strength of structure is really needed. Contrast the description of Bei as clay inside, bronze outside (Bel and the Snake7).

34.a. די עד often means “as” not “until” in the visions (also 6:24 [25]) (BL 79i). On the similar phrases in vv 31 and 34 see Li**,** “The Function of the Active Participle in the Aramaic of Daniel,” 91.

34.b. G, Vg add מטור “from a crag”; cf. v 45. But interpretations often contain more detail than the original vision: cf. vv 33, 41–42 (n. 41.a, n. 42.a-a); 7:7–8, 19–21. Eissfeldt (“Die Menetekel-Inschrift,” 112–13) compares with the scriptural interpretation in 1QpHab, e.g., 12.1, 7, as well as the omen interpretation in Dan 5:25–28.

35.a. כחדה suggests suddenness more than simultaneity; cf. BH [ו] יחד (e.g., Isa 43:17; 45:16) more than כאחד (e.g., Ezra 3:9; Isa 65:25).

35.b. I take דקו as intransitive active, though it could be passive, or impersonal active (“they shattered the iron . . .”), still to be translated by the passive (*HALOT*). The word is pointed as from דוק, not דקק; both occur (*DTT*).

35.c. 4QDana, G, Vg, Syr have s.

35.d. *HALOT* suggests “trace,” but “place” (Th, Vg) fits regular usage of אתר, fits the context (v 35b: there was no room left for them), and fits the allusion in Rev 20:11 (Charles; Jones, *Ideas of History in the Book of Daniel,* 257).

36.a. While the pl. might denote deference/meekness (cf. v 30), or less plausibly reference to the divine council or use of the “royal we,” the incidental but deliberate emphasis on including the friends in vv 17–18, 23, 49 suggests the same significance here.

38.a-a. MT accents suggest “and wherever human beings live, he has given . . .” (cf. Vg); but more likely human beings are mentioned as among those Nebuchadnezzar rules (cf. G, though there is no need on the basis of G to omit ו “and” (against JB).

38.b. הוא אנתה : see GKC 141gh.

40.a. Vv 40 and 41 are repetitive, and many ancient and modern versions have shorter texts; see the following notes. The structure of the sentences, too, can be understood in varying ways, and in v 41 I have not followed that of MT (for which see RV); cf. n. 45.a-a.

40.b. כלא. Not “wholly,” against Montgomery, “Adverbial *kúlla*”; see Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramaean*, 205–17.

40.c-c. G, Syr, Vg omit.

40.d-d. With MT I take אלין כל as object of the preceding verb. Th, Syr omit אלין (OG ἡ γῆ being surely explicative of אלין, not grounds for emendation—against NEB). Kaufmann (*Religion of Israel* 4:582) follows Th, Syr on the grounds that MT nonsensically has the feet breaking the statue: but here surely the interpretation influences the vision and refers to the literal fact of the fourth regime destroying its predecessor(s).

41.a. OG omits; but see n. 34.b.

41.b. פחר can mean “potter” (cf. Vg) or “clay” (cf. OG); the latter fits better. Adding the word emphasizes the weakness of the material. McAllister(“Clay in Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream”) notes links between vv 41-43 and Gen 1—2 (cf. also Doukhan**,**“Allusions à la création dans le livre de Daniel”).

41.c. פיגה could suggest “divided” (EVV) into smaller regimes, as happened to the Greek empire (Ginsberg). But it could equally suggest internally divided (*DTT*) or composite, and therefore vulnerable, which fits the context here better (Montgomery).

41.d. נצבתא usually means “seed/planting” (cf. G, Vg, *DTT*); the nuance of firmness perhaps deries from the notion of a plant’s rootedness (Newsom, *Daniel*, 63).

41.e. טינא, “wet clay” or “mud” (*DTT*); cf. EVV “miry.”

42.a-a. JB omits, though here OG includes it (contrast n. 41.a).

42.b. קצת מן: perhaps “as a whole” (Meek: see n. 1:2.c).

43.a-a. The phrase could refer to a combining of two races generally, but it more naturally denotes intermarriage (cf. Ezra 9:2; Ps 106:35).

43.b. Probably די [היך =] האך, not as MT כדי הא; a strong form of כדי (= BH ר ש א). See BDB.

44.a. חבל can mean “be corrupted,” but this hardly fits the context; for the parallelism cf. 6:26 [27]; 7:14.

44.b. “Its royal authority” (Th, Vg) would require final הּ and repointing, not ה—which is, however, unusual as emphatic state ending (Lattey, “Sovereignty and Realm”).

45.a-a. The order is odd (contrast vv 32–33, 35), but G’s “pottery, iron, bronze . . .” is surely secondary. Possibly the original omitted “pottery” or it was lost at an early stage and then (re)inserted variously. This phrase is the end of a sentence begun in v 44b (cf. G); MT punctuation makes poor sense.

45.b. An overtranslation of רב אלה, but using this expression enables one to avoid using either the definite article (G, cf. Syr, NRSV) when אלה is absolute, or the indefinite (RSV), which might be misleading (cf. Keil).

46.a. The translation takes סגד to refer to a physical action, repeating the content of the previous phrase; it is used in the papyri of prostration before a man (see H. D. Preuss in *TWAT* on חוה). But Kreuzer (“Zur Bedeutung und Etymologie von *hištaḥawāh/yštḥwy*”) thinks both expressions signify “do homage” without implying a physical gesture.

46.b. ניחחין, used in the OT only of offerings to God (e.g., Gen 8:21). OG’s not modifying this expression of Nebuchadnezzar’s homage is perhaps surprising (cf. Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel*, 187-90). But see the *Comment*.

47.a-a. Again the second term in each construct chain is absolute, not emphatic; cf. n. 45.b.

48.a. V 49 suggests that והשלטה expresses a possible, not an actual act (cf. in BH Exod 9:15; 1 Sam 13:13; GKC 106p).

49.a. Lit., “asked the king, and he appointed”: see BL 106e.

49.b. Lit, “gate”—i.e., originally where the king’s servants awaited his call (Esth 2:19, 21; 3:2–3), though the term came to denote the chancellery. See Rüger, “Das Tor des Königs.”

## Form/Structure/Setting

### Form

See chap. 1 *Form*. Chap. 2 also combines features of court tale, legend, aretalogy, and midrash, blending these into a formally more compact whole than chap. 1. The story shares a basic structure and some verbal formulae with traditional tales that tell “the success story of the wise courtier,” including Ahiqar and Gen 41. With these, it has in common motifs which appear in other court tales in the OT and apocrypha (Esther, Tobit, 1 Esd 3–4) and elsewhere:[[386]](#footnote-386) the interrupted sleep, the puzzled king, the ineffectual experts, the angry tyrant, the imperiled hero, the victorious outsider appearing last, the king open to insight and change, the victor rewarded.[[387]](#footnote-387) Thus it also shares the satirical tone and aim of chap. 1.[[388]](#footnote-388) Its aim is presumably not to imply that any Judahite can expect to beat the authorities at their own game, but rather to assure Judahites hearing the story that the God of the heavens is lord over the regimes that seem to control his people’s destinty.

As elsewhere in Daniel, Tobit, and 1 Esd 3–4, such motifs are reworked when the court tale is taken into a religious context; in this sense, it becomes a legend. Daniel is a model of Israelite wisdom (v 14) and a model of Israelite piety, in his prayer (v 18), his vision (v 19), his praise (vv 19–23), his witness (vv 27–28), his self-effacement (v 30), and his conviction (v 45); the fruit of his work is not merely rewards and promotion (v 48) but obeisance and recognition of his God (vv 46–47).

In turn this last motif reflects the fact that in Dan 2 “the God of Daniel is the central figure and not the courtier”;[[389]](#footnote-389) contrast Josephus *Antiquities* 10.10.3 [10.200] where it is out of regard for Daniel’s wisdom that God reveals the dream to him.[[390]](#footnote-390) When the situation looks hopeless, it is God’s intervention that redeems it. God’s revealing things to Daniel, confronting the experts’ assertion that deity’s home is not among humanity (vv 11, 23, 28–29, 45, 47), gives Dan 2 the features of an aretalogy.[[391]](#footnote-391) Daniel’s praise and his revelation emphasize God’s sovereignty in events (vv 20–21, 37–45) and reinforce this feature; indeed, court tale, legend, and aretalogy are subordinate to the theme of the king’s recognition of God’s authority over him.[[392]](#footnote-392)

The parallels between the court tale’s structure, plot, motifs, words, and phrases to those in the story of Joseph and the Egyptian ruler in Gen 40–41 are so substantial that Dan 2 has been described as a haggadah or midrash on those chapters.[[393]](#footnote-393) In both stories, a heathen king has his anxiety aroused by dreams. In both, he summons magicians (the word comes only in Gen 41, Exod 8–9, and Dan 1–2) and other experts, but none can offer an interpretation (פתר, the BH equivalent to פשר in Dan, appears in the OT only in Gen 40–41). Both stories refer to the king’s anger with his advisors, which leads them to be entrusted to the attention of his chief of police. Eventually a young Israelite who has been in exile in the king’s custody for two years and who may be able to interpret the dream is discovered and brought hastily before him. In response to the king’s inquiry about his ability as a dream interpreter, he denies possessing such ability in himself; it is God who must give any explanation of the dream. The dream, he declares, concerns future events affecting the king, which the young man explains, adding that the message is certain to come true. As a consequence the king determines to put the young man in a position of honor as prime minister over the whole land.[[394]](#footnote-394)

Dan 2 has points of contact with other OT passages. It has links with Gen 11:1–9[[395]](#footnote-395) and the story’s moral parallels Proverbs’ promises of success and long life to those who fear Yahweh (e.g., 9:10–11; 10:27; 14:27). The opening of the dream interpretation (vv 37–38) reflects Ps 8:6–8 and/or Jer 27:5–7, passages which seem to have been an important stimulus to the content of the vision (see *Comment*). Gold, silver, bronze, and iron are listed together elsewhere (e.g., Josh 6:19, 24; 22:8; Job 28:1–2), though commonly stone and timber are added (e.g., 1 Chr 22:14–16, 29:2; 2 Chr 2:7–14 [6-13]; Isa 60:17; cf. Dan 5:23).

The broadest influence on Dan 2, however, is that of Isa 40–66.[[396]](#footnote-396) “The author of Daniel 2 is clearly preoccupied with the same problems as Deutero-Isaiah .”[[397]](#footnote-397) The chapter’s major theme is the contrast between the helplessness of the Babylonians’ spiritual resources and the power and wisdom of the God of Israel to effect and to interpret history, which is a major theme of Isa 40–48 (e.g., 41:1–7, 21–29; 44:25–26; 47:9–15). Those chapters, too, suggest that silver and gold, bronze and iron, end up useless as clay (40:19; 45:2; 41:25), crushed and blown away like chaff (41:15–16; also 41:12, cf. v 35). They, too, see Israel’s God as Lord even of things hidden in darkness, as Lord of light and darkness (45:3, 7; cf. v 22). They, too, envisage the nations and their kings doing obeisance before the exiles and their God (45:3, 14; 49:23; 60:6–7, 14); in Dan 2 this actually happens (vv 46–47). They, too, promise an ultimate realization of Yahweh’s kingship (44:6; 52:7).

Daniel’s thanksgiving (vv 20–23) parallels those of the Psalms and utilizes their phrases and motifs, though it is composed for its context in Daniel’s experience rather than reflecting existent use in worship. It is an imitation of a thanksgiving, like the wisdom psalms that have a thanksgiving motif.[[398]](#footnote-398) Its literary nature is reflected in the neatness of its structure in bicola.[[399]](#footnote-399) Its content recalls Job (e.g., 1:21; 12:22; 32:8; 38:19) more specifically than the Psalter. It begins with a liturgical blessing of God, like those at the end of the books of the Psalter (esp. 72:18–19). Then the twofold reason for this blessing is briefly stated in the opening formula, in the accustomed fashion. It is expanded in vv 21a and 21b–22 in a series of participles, the two divine characteristics to which the blessing referred being taken up in reverse order. Verse 23a corresponds to v 20, praising the “God of my ancestors” as one who has shared with his servants the two gifts on which vv 20–22 focuses. Verse 23b further narrows the focus to the particular event that prompted this psalm, and thus resolves a formal ambiguity about the psalm. [[400]](#footnote-400) Internally, it has the fundamental feature of a hymn: it focuses on God’s characteristic attributes and actions, rather than on confessing what God has just now done for the speaker. Yet it lacks the hymn’s characteristic imperative call to praise. The blessing formula, and the concentrated acknowledgment of the reasons for praise which follows, are characteristic of that praise which confesses how God’s love and power have been personally applied to the worshiper’s needs (e.g., Gen 24:27; Ps 28:6; 66:20; 68:20, 36 [19, 35]; also Luke 1:68), which is the context the psalm presupposes. The content of the praise (vv 20b–22) relates to the fact that God has answered Daniel’s prayer, and to the content of that answer. The psalm is not a liturgical piece but (in the setting of the story) a confession arising from an experience of God’s action in the midst of life in the world. The relationship between praise and context is made explicit by v 23a. The “psalm” makes for an interesting comparison with Ps 113 (also Ps 66). After declaring in very similar terms “may the name of Yahweh be blessed from now to all ages,” that psalm bases its affirmation in Yahweh’s continuing majesty and condescension to meet his people’s needs (mostly in participles). Here too, the general statement is closely related to a confession of a particular experience.[[401]](#footnote-401)

Although this rather literary narrative reshapes the report of the dream and its interpretation through the delaying of the dream report through the inclusion of the thanksgiving, the report and interpretation have a similar form to those in Gen 40–41 and Dan 4.[[402]](#footnote-402) The introduction to a dream report commonly identifies dreamer, place, time, and the dreamer’s mental state. The dream may be visual (so here) or audio-visual (Dan 4) and may include words addressed to the dreamer (Dan 7). The dreamer’s awed reaction is usually described when dream figures appear and/or when the dream is over. The dreamer expresses the need to have the dream interpreted; its reference may be to the immediate or more distant future of the dreamer or the dreamer’s people. Both the dreams’ content (their concern with God’s control of history as this affects his people’s lives) and their framework (the theme of the revelatory gifts of the Judahite seer) link the dreams with their narrative context in Daniel; they are integral to it and it to them. The form of the account of the dream’s interpretation, also used for the account of the omen in Dan 5, compares with the form of scriptural interpretation in the Qumran literature; successive features of the dream are quoted, identified, and explained.[[403]](#footnote-403) Interpretations commonly contain more or less detail than the original revelation, or fail to correspond to it in some other way; it is not a sign of textual development but of the way interpretations stand on their own. They are not simply the straightforward translation of a coded message but revelation in their own right.[[404]](#footnote-404)

The dream’s contents and its interpretation have a more substantial extrabiblical background.

(a) Dreams, oracles, and prophecies with implications for the future of the state appear in Akkadian texts relating to Zimri-Lim, Esarhaddon, and Asshurbanipal.[[405]](#footnote-405) A number of Akkadian texts offer descriptions in predictive form of the reigns of (unnamed) kings. They are apparently quasi-predictions, at least until their closing sections where they come to express promises from the prophet’s day.[[406]](#footnote-406) Further such quasi-predictions come from Egypt and elsewhere in the Hellenistic period.[[407]](#footnote-407) It has been suggested that a Babylonian political prophecy from the Hellenistic period underlies Dan 2[[408]](#footnote-408)—or that a Judahite prophecy from the sixth century does so.[[409]](#footnote-409)

(b) As royal dreams occur within the OT (e.g., Pharaoh, Solomon), extrabiblical texts refer to the dreams of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon and include detailed accounts of dreams and other communications received by Nabonidus.[[410]](#footnote-410) It has been suggested that Dan 2 reflects factual or folk material concerning Nabonidus, not Nebuchadnezzar.[[411]](#footnote-411) Herodotus tells of dreams attributed to a series of Median and Persian rulers relating to their political or military future, some being interpreted by the dream interpreters (*Histories* 1.107–8, 209–10; 3.30; 7.12–19).

(c) The statue motif recalls colossi at Rhodes, Memphis, and elsewhere, not least in the palace and the temple at Babylon itself; it also appears in other stories (see Herodotus, *Histories* 1.183; Dan 3; Bel).[[412]](#footnote-412) Statues made of a combination of materials are instanced: e.g., statues of Ba’al at Ugarit.[[413]](#footnote-413) Greek philosophy pictured the body-politic, headed by the king, corporately,[[414]](#footnote-414) and Iranian sources picture the world as a huge man.[[415]](#footnote-415)

(d) Metals symbolizing eras appear first in the eighth(?) century Greek poet Hesiod (*Works and Days* 106–201). He divides humanity into five ages, the first three and the fifth being golden, silver, bronze, and iron.[[416]](#footnote-416) This theme also features in Zoroastrian texts, medieval in the form known to us but containing material that may well derive from the Hellenistic period or even that of Zarathustra himself.[[417]](#footnote-417) In Denkard ix 8, the world’s spiritual history is divided into gold, silver, steel, and “mixed iron” ages, which take the world from the age of revelation to the age of apostasy and wickedness. In Bahman Yasht i, Zarathustra dreams of a tree with branches made of these four metals, which Ahuramazda interprets to denote the reigns of a sequence of kings, and later of a tree with branches made of six or seven metals, denoting a longer sequence of rulers. None of these versions of the motif speaks of a final, ultimate age to succeed the iron/mixed iron age.

(e) The periodization of history into a sequence of empires reflects the actual shaping of the political history of the region by a succession of empires, Assyria, Media/Babylon (respectively to the north/east and to the south/west of the old Assyrian empire), Persia, Greece, and Rome. Ancient writers were quite aware of the outline of this history. It appears in Chronicles in the OT as Assyria, Babylon, Persia; in Herodotus, *Histories* 1.95, 130 as Assyria, Media, Persia;[[418]](#footnote-418) and in the Akkadian “Dynastic Prophecy” as Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, which may also picture good and bad reigns alternating.[[419]](#footnote-419) By about 300, in Sibylline Oracles Book 4 this historical outline has become a formal scheme of four empires, Assyria, Media or Babylon, Persia, and Greece, to which Rome is later added.[[420]](#footnote-420) Each scheme can work either to a climax that takes a positive view of the last empire or to a negative climax and the hope of a new empire—though not necessarily a final, ultimate one.[[421]](#footnote-421)

Parallels between such sources and Daniel 2 indicate that they provide some of the background to the dream, and to chaps. 7–12, but Daniel’s distinctiveness is sufficiently clear to locate it one step away from them, through the mediation of other cultures[[422]](#footnote-422) and/or through the author’s creativity[[423]](#footnote-423) and/or through his theological and ethical distinctiveness.[[424]](#footnote-424)

Is Dan 2 iessentially a court tale which also contains a dream report or a dream report for which the court tale is simply a framework? The two features are both prominent, as they are in Gen 41. There, however, they are more integrally related: the insight which is proved by the court contest qualifies Joseph to deal with the crisis revealed by the dream. Dan 2 corresponds to Gen 41 in including both features, but they do not interconnect. The contest and Nebuchadnezzar’s recognition of Daniel are unrelated to the content of the dream; the latter’s importance is independent of its context. The chapter simply has two facets, not wholly integrated, but both original. It is not to be assimilated to narratives in which the content of the dream/vision is less significant, or to dream/visions where the narrative element is merely framework. It has a theme within a theme. It thus parallels other ancient works that combine story and didactic material (especially Ahiqar).

The chapter is almost entirely dialogue, so that it is “a drama,… a story whose plot proceeds mainly through the dialogues between the characters” and which comprises a series of acts and scenes “arranged in such a way as to show the rise of a conflict and how this conflict becomes more articulate until it reaches its highest point, the climax, only to resolve itself,” with the climax coming in v 24 and the resolution following.[[425]](#footnote-425) While the description of the chapter as a drama is illuminating, however, the location of the “climax” only half way through the chapter shows how that description is also incomplete. The “resolution” which occupies the whole of the second half of the chapter is more than the resolution to the drama. As much prominence and significance attaches to the content of the revelation that Daniel is given for the Babylonian king as ataches to the story. Chap. 2 thus encapsulates the nature of the book of Daniel as a whole in which the stories are more than a mere preliminary to the visions and the visions are more than a mere postscript to the stories

### Structure

The opening verse unveils the issue that concerns the chapter as a whole, the significance of a dream of Nebuchadnezzar’s. The first major scene (vv 2–12) then describes an abortive attempt to deal with the matter. A brief narrative opening introduces the Babylonian experts, at the king’s command (v 2). The body of the scene comprises a conversation between the two parties, each speaking three times and becoming more anxious and hysterical (vv 3–11). A brief narrative closure reports a second royal command, which provides the experts with a potentially fatal exit (v 12). Ironic references to the times changing (v 9) and to the impossibility of divining the contents of a dream without divine help (v 11) point to later features of the story (vv 21, 37–45; vv 18–23, 26–30).

The second scene (vv 13–23) promises to deal with the issue that has been left unresolved, though it does not yet do so; it thus raises suspense. Conversation between Daniel and Aryok/the king (vv 14–16) leads to a report of Daniel’s words with his friends and God (vv 17–18) and of God’s response and Daniel’s song of praise (vv 19–23). The length and exalted tone of this last make it the high point of the scene. It prepares the reader for vv 37–45,[[426]](#footnote-426) anticipating the outcome and the dream’s contents, without revealing the nature of the dream at this point. One could remove the the poetic section without disturbing the story’s plot, but not without distrurbing its rhetoric. The scene as a whole takes matters round in a circle (from Aryok to prayer and back), like the opening scene, and further builds the story’s suspense.

Verse 24 thus picks up from vv 13–16; verbal parallels mark the links. Yet the third scene (vv 24–30) further delays the resolution of the opening problem, by requiring Aryok to introduce Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar (which for opposite dramatic reasons was not required in v 16), having Nebuchadnezzar quiz Daniel about his ability, and allowing Daniel to draw attention to the theological background to and implications of the situation (taking up the experts’ words from vv 10, 11). Daniel thus further teases the reader with the dream’s general significance without relating its contents. The slowing down of the story reaches virtual standstill in the chiastic repetitiveness of vv 28–29.

The fourth scene (vv 31–45) consists solely in a speech of Daniel recounting the dream and its prophetic meaning, and asserting the certainty of its fulfillment. In the dream, the focus is on the fearfulness of its subject, a statue, and on its destruction. In the interpretation, which receives twice as much space, the focus is on two specific parts of the statue, one of which relates directly to Nebuchadnezzar, and on what displaces it.

The closing scene (vv 46–49) largely ignores the content of the dream. Nebuchadnezzar reveres Daniel and his God for the resolution of the original issue and puts Daniel in a position of power over the imperilled empire and the discredited experts. (MT offers another analysis of the structure with a chapter break after vv 13, 16, 28, and 45 and a section break after v 24.)[[427]](#footnote-427)

Comparing Dan 2 with Gen 41 brings out some of its important distinctive marks, as well as important features it shares with Gen 41. (a) In Daniel the king requires to be told the contents of the dream as well as its significance. The terms of the contest between the experts and the Israelite hero are thus higher, as are Daniel’s challenge and his achievement greater than Joseph’s. (b) The varieties of experts are listed at length (vv 2, 27) and their helplessness before their challenge is dwelt on at length. (c) Nebuchadnezzar, the angry tyrant, also raises the stakes in the contest, threatening an unpleasant death if the experts cannot fulfill their task, but offering rich rewards if they can. Daniel thus saves their lives and receives rich rewards. (d) Daniel is not a humiliated prisoner, like Joseph, who needed to wash and change before entering the king’s presence, but a man of initiative and shrewd judgment. He marches in to request what the experts were denied, and gets it; he marches back with the solution for the king, and the king’s Lord High Executioner jumps to attention and scurries to lead him in to the king. (e) Daniel is portrayed as a model for spirituality in his attitude of trust, expectancy, and gratitude, expressed in his practice of prayer and praise in the fellowship of his friends. (f) His praise expresses key affirmations about God’s sovereignty over human affairs and his revelation of the secrets of history which God alone knows; these affirmations reappear in Daniel’s introductory words to Nebuchadnezzar. (g) Daniel resists the claims of empire in a way that Joseph does not,[[428]](#footnote-428) and the dream’s revelation about the king and the future are more far-reaching than is the case in the Joseph story with its focus on a pragmatic problem that will need to be addressed in the immediate future. [[429]](#footnote-429) (h) Given that the dream refers not merely to the immediate future within the king’s reign but to the end of the era, the story shifts the locus of God’s saving acts from past to future (even the hearers’ future), more radically than the prophets do; its readers can look to a new act of deliverance for themselves.[[430]](#footnote-430) The dream’s content and message are distinctive. Unlike Joseph, Daniel offers no practical suggestions arising from the dream. (i) As a result of Daniel’s request regarding his friends, Nebuchadnezzar not merely gives Daniel administrative responsibility, like Pharaoh, but makes him head over the experts, allowing him to remain at the court. Instead of giving him state honor, he offers sacrifice to him. Instead of giving him a pagan priest’s daughter in marriage, he acknowledges his God as sovereign and revealer. (j) The characterization of the main figures in the story is effected by means of cartooning so as to polarize them: Nebuchadnezzar in the extremes of his original violence and anxiety and of his later reverence and gratitude, the experts exposed in their pretension and incompetence, Daniel as the model of wisdom and piety.

So Dan 2 does not simply follow the pattern of the Joseph story.[[431]](#footnote-431) It has a more rhetorical and literary, less traditional character. Its distinctive features give Dan 2 a more heightened tone. It is like Gen 41, only more so.[[432]](#footnote-432) This feature, combined with Gen 41’s context on the eve of the exodus and Dan 2’s in the exile when Israel stands in need of a new exodus, means that Joseph could be seen as a type of Daniel. One might even contrast “the Egyptianization of Joseph” and the “hebraicization of Daniel” and ask whether the Daniel story is “a satire on Joseph:” Daniel does everything that Joseph does, but does it more impressively.[[433]](#footnote-433) Some otherwise puzzling features of Dan 2 (e.g., vv 1, 46, 48b) find an explanation in this relationship of correspondence/contrast with Gen 41, rather than in their relationship with the concrete historical actuality of the exile.[[434]](#footnote-434)

Among the chapter’s stylistic features are:

(a) The accumulating of expressions of related meaning: many terms for experts (vv 2, 10, 27), rewards (v 6), rulers (v 10), power (v 37), shattering (v 40), and homage (v 46). The effect is to increase the force of a phrase, emphasizing what manifold opportunity was given to Babylonian insight to prove itself (v 2), how great its opportunity for self-advancement (v 6), how unprecedented Nebuchadnezzar’s challenge to it (v 10), how total its defeat (v 27), how vast Nebuchadnezzar’s power (v 37), how devastating the destructiveness of the fourth regime (v 40), and how complete Nebuchadnezzar’s obeisance (v 46). Further combinations of terms feature in the hymnic parallelism of vv 20–23.

(b) Hendiadys, often with assonance: perverse lies (v 9), furious rage (v 12), shrewd judgment (v 12), deeply hidden (v 22), acknowledge and praise (v 23), visionary dream (v 29), finally shatter (v 44). Such usage stems from BH/BA’s relative preference for nouns and verbs over adjectives and adverbs; it adds emphasis by lengthening phrases.

(c) The alternating of words or forms of similar meaning: four words for “tell” (e.g., vv 2, 4, 5), two for “kill” (e.g., vv 12, 13), three expressions for “pottery” (vv 33, 41), three for “partly” (v 41); two forms of פעם (vv 1, 3), of רעע (v 40), and of ערב (vv 41, 43); also the change in the order of the components in the statue (vv 34, 45). Whereas these alternations seem to be stylistic, for the chapter’s major themes more significant is the recurrence of expressions related to time, especially עלם “age,” זמן “time,” עדן “time” (vv 4, 8, 9, 16, 20, 21, 44); and other expressions in vv 28, 29, 45.

(d) The reuse of words in fresh contexts or with different nuances. The root ן מ ז itself is used both nominally for “time” and verbally for “arrange” (vv 9, 16). על and אזל recur in connection with Daniel’s going to see the king and going home, then returning with his revelation (vv 16–17, 24–25). נפק records first the ordinance’s going out, then the executioner’s going out (vv 13, 14). בעא relates the executioners’ inquiry after Daniel, Daniel’s inquiry of the king, then Daniel and the friends’ inquiry of God (vv 13, 16, 18, 23, also 49). A noticeable feature in vv 1–23 is the nine occurrences of מלה (“word, thing”; cf. BH דבר). The story trades on its range of nuances, by means of which it can make and at the same time deny links through the story, and can keep jolting and slowing up the reader.

A further rhetorical feature is the change within v 4 from Hebrew to Aramaic, a foreign but related tongue which was the international language of the Middle East. For many modern readers, the combination of different languages in one book may seem to require an explanation, such as that the book was written in Aramaic but the opening and closing chapters were translated into Hebrew, or vice versa.[[435]](#footnote-435) If the stories are basically older than the visions, one could imagine a collection of stories in Aramaic being given a frame consisting of visions and an introduction in Hebrew. But the language difference overlaps with rather than being identical with the difference of form, which necessitates a more complicated theory of development.

The combining of languages may not seem a puzzle to other modern readers in a location such as Southern California who are used to shifting easily and fluently between (say) Chinese or Spanish and English. Such readers would be quite able to imagine an author moving from one language to another—for instance, to mark the point when the foreign experts start speaking in their own language (they might actually speak either Aramaic or Akkadian), perhaps in a way that adds authenticity to the material.[[436]](#footnote-436) In a sense the transition thus comes at a natural point, like that in Ezra 4:8. Actually the king would presumably have spoken in the same language as his staff, and in this sense the change does not come at a logical point. It rather marks a change in the implicit point of view with which people are invited to read the chapter. The story now encourages us to be a little like Babylonians. Yet the transition then also implies some irony, not least in the fact that the first Aramaic words are “Long live the king*,”* more literally “May the king live forever,” which is just what the revelation will say is not going to happen.[[437]](#footnote-437)

In addition, Aramic is the vernacular, while Hebrew is the scholarly language. Readers need to be able to move between the two.[[438]](#footnote-438) Further, modern bilingual readers will also be aware of the difference in status between their “natural” or home language (e.g., Chinese or Spanish) and the prevailing language of the broader, dominant culture in the country where they live. The rhetorical effect of using Hebrew is to establish that this book belongs to the Jewish people, tells their story, and relates the activity of their God.[[439]](#footnote-439) “According to Bakhtin, there are two extremely important factors in the prehistory of novelistic discourse, laughter and hetero- or polyglossia”; heteroglossia can suggest “the presence of different ideological voices.” [[440]](#footnote-440) Aramaic is the language of empire. Hebrew is the language of the people of God.The rhetorical effect of seguing into Aramaic is to affirm that the readers live their lives in the world, that their God is the God of the heavens, and that he sees to the working out of their story on the world stage. Whereas using Hebrew reasserts the importance of Yahweh’s distinctive involvement with Israel and his commitment to Israel, using Aramaic symbolizes the Jewish people’s place in the world of the nations. “Language enacts identity” and in Daniel “the language of empire will be used to expose its lies and refute its claims.”[[441]](#footnote-441) So the arrangement whereby Hebrew material provides the framework for the whole points to the subordination of the empire’s speech and power to that of the God of the heavens who is the God of Israel. Bilingualism mixes the “local and sacred idiom” and the “official, international and political language, of profane use,” the “sovereign, sacred, secret laws” which express God’s power and the communication in Aramaic to the “peoples, nations, and languages” to the farthest reaches of the world.[[442]](#footnote-442) Daniel 2—7 becomes, if not “a tract to the nations,”[[443]](#footnote-443) a tract about the nations.

### Setting

Like chap. 1, Dan 2 implies a setting in a dispersion community where Judahites are a religious and ethnic minority. Even if the message speaks to people living in relatively stable times,[[444]](#footnote-444) it sets before them a “dream” of God putting their overlords down. It is oppositional literature.[[445]](#footnote-445)

While the chapter makes little use of the kind of repetition that characterizes more traditional narratives,[[446]](#footnote-446) it does contain some repetitiveness (e.g., vv 28–30) and discontinuity (e.g., over whether Daniel is one of the experts and is well known to the king). These features have encouraged the formulation of a number of theories regarding its redaction, conflation, or expansion (e.g, in vv 13–23, 28–30, 36–45, 48–49), possibly in connection with conforming chap. 2 to the eschatological perspective of the later visions.[[447]](#footnote-447) The common scholarly view is that the four regimes to which the chapter refers are the Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek empires, so that the chapter belongs to the Greek period, with vv 41–43 reflecting its expansion in the third century.[[448]](#footnote-448) But repetitiveness or discontinuity may as likely be the responsibility of an author as a redactor, the *Comment* and *Explanation* below will argue that the vision refers to the destiny of the Babylonian kings not to the sequence of empires. The chapter as we have it it is thus not “eschatological” in the sense that chapter 7—12 are and it contains no specific pointers to a date in the Greek period. The title “Lord of the heavens” would perhaps have been avoided in a story developed in the second century (see *Comment*).

In its place in the book, the chapter introduces the four stories that follow, in that v 49 locates the three friends in the provincial administration for chap. 3, and locates Daniel at court for chaps. 4–5.[[449]](#footnote-449) Chap. 2 holds the friends and Daniel together, though the former play a rather nominal role, whereas subsequently the friends and Daniel will appear only separately. While court tale and vision both lead in to chaps. 3–6, the vision of God’s final reign which replaces human regimes sets those chapters’ concerns in a broader and more far-reaching context from the beginning.[[450]](#footnote-450) It also introduces chaps. 7–12, where Daniel himself dreams of such regimes and subsequently perceives further aspects of history to come.

The chapter’s relationship with Dan 1 is ambiguous. The story gives substance to 1:20, though the king’s failure to consult Daniel and his needing to have him introduced is odd after 1:17–19. The motifs of the successful expert who appears last, and his being spectacularly rewarded at the end, are perhaps allowed to recur notwithstanding the formal tensions between the stories that this produces (but see also *Comment* on v 1).

Many motifs and expressions in chap. 2 parallel subsequent stories: the explaining of a royal dream about the future (chap. 4), the lists of experts (4:7 [4]), their greeting of the king (e.g., 3:9), the requirement to be told both dream and interpretation (5:7, cf. the wording of 4:9 [6]), the issuing of solemn and unalterable royal decisions (6:8 [9]), the threat of dismemberment and destruction of property (3:29), the king’s fury (3:19), the severity of his edict (3:22), Daniel’s coming before the king after the experts have failed (4:8 [5]), Daniel’s going home to pray and give thanks (6:10 [11]), the term *mystery* (4:9 [6]), the identity of the three other faithful Judahites (3:12), God as the one who deposes and sets up kings (4:17 [14]; 5:20], Aryok’s urgency (3:24; 6:19 [20]), Daniel’s description as one of the Judahite exiles when he is introduced to the king (5:13), his Babylonian name (4:8 [5]), the king’s question regarding Daniel’s ability to fulfill both parts of the interpretive task (5:16), the expression “the vision that came into your head as you lay in bed” (4:10 [7]), the statue and its gold (3:1), Nebuchadnezzar’s being given royal authority, sovereignty, power, and honor (4:30 [27]; 5:18), his ruling over the animals of the wild and the birds of the air (4:21-22 [18–19]), the eventual inheriting of sovereignty by a joint empire (5:28), the regime established by God which lasts for ever (4:3 [3:33]), Nebuchadnezzar’s falling prostrate before Daniel (the phrase comes six times in chap. 3), Daniel’s position as head of the experts (4:9 [6]) but having no role in the administration of the affairs of the province of Babylon, for which his friends were responsible (3:12). It might be that these later chapters depend on chap. 2, but it is simpler to assume that chap. 2 was written in light of them, as it reflects other parts of the OT. A fuller way of describing its midrashic aspect, then, is to see it as a rereading of Dan 3–6 in light of Gen 41, Isa 40–66, and other passages; or as a reaffirmation of fundamental themes of Isa 40–66 on the basis of the stories told in chaps. 3–6.[[451]](#footnote-451)

## Comment

**1** On such dates, see on 1:1. This date may suggest the period just after Nebuchadnezzar’s great triumph at Karkemish: the story then cuts the victor down to size.[[452]](#footnote-452) But the date is a surprise after 1:5, 18-20. It “both orientates and disorientates the reader.”[[453]](#footnote-453) While it can be harmonized with chap. 1 by assuming it uses the Babylonian reckoning,[[454]](#footnote-454) it’s not so odd that an episode in a story goes back on the conclusion of the previous episode, and if Dan 2 is doing so, it would cohere with the way Daniel and his friends are not among the experts summoned in v 2. The denouements in 1:18–20 and 2:45–49 might then refer to the same events. On the other hand, our knowing from chap. 1 that the four Judahites are way better interpreters makes us not so surprised when in chap. 2 the best interpreters in Babylon fail, opening up the way for them to succeed. “While Nebuchadnezzar rightfully expects results, the reader intrinsically expects failure from the wise men.”[[455]](#footnote-455) Perhaps anyway the date is a fictional note designed to add to the impression of actuality rather than to convey historical information, so that the question of its relationship to chap. 1 need not be raised.[[456]](#footnote-456)

**2** In OT, NT, and elsewhere in the ancient world, dreams feature both as ordinary human experiences and as means of divine communication. Of the latter kind, some bring a straightforward, verbal message, while others convey the message in symbols that require interpretation. For their interpretation, one could look to further divine revelation, to a diviner’s intuition, or to the collections of oneirological omens that might provide a relevant precedent. Neither Israel nor other cultures give dreams a central place as means of divine communication, but neither do they take a negative attitude to the phenomenon as such (though see Jer 23:9–40; *b. Berakot* 55–57 offers an interesting discussion).[[457]](#footnote-457) Nebuchadnezzar’s summoning of the diviners implies that the royal dream is assumed to be of state significance, not that he is troubled by an ordinary private dream. His assumption parallels the implications of reports of other royal dreams in the Middle East, including Pharaoh’s within the OT (Gen 41). It is the diviners’ responsibility to interpret omens of various kinds for the king and to advise him on how to avert any misfortune threatened by them.[[458]](#footnote-458) Their role in Babylon parallels that of prophets in Israel (e.g., 2 Kgs 23).[[459]](#footnote-459)

*Diviner* is by origin an Egyptian word denoting priests/interpreters skilled in cuneiform. It is used for dream interpreters at the Assyrian court and in the OT for the Egyptian advisers to whom Joseph proved superior; both usages make it appropriate here.[[460]](#footnote-460) *Chanter* (Akk. *âšipu*) is a more common Babylonian term for practitioners who are skilled at interpreting signs in people when they are ill, and (presumably) at conjurations and rituals designed to influence how matters turn out for them.[[461]](#footnote-461) The word may be cognate with BH אסף, “cure” (2 Kgs 5): cf. the names of Asaph, the head of a guild of musicians and prophets, and of the diviner Joseph.[[462]](#footnote-462) The Akkadian word is commonly rendered “exorcist,” in the sense that they know how to deal with demonic activity.[[463]](#footnote-463) *Charmer* (Akk. *kašapu*) is another word for people skilled in charms and incantations; it is a more common OT term, used to denote the not merely pathetic but sinful practitioners of alien conjuration and divination (e.g., Isa 47:9, 12). On *Kasdite*, see the *Comment* on 1:3–5; the term is also used (e.g., v 4) to denote the group of practitioners as a whole, as are the words *experts*, conventionally “wise men” (e.g., v 12) and *diviners* (4:9 [6]). The “experts,” then, are not smart people such as Proverbs speaks of but authorities in esoteric knowledge and mantic arts, people who can resolve enigmas (as sometimes in BH).[[464]](#footnote-464) A further term, גזרין, appears first in 2:27, for whichhe meaning *exorcist* is suggested by its use in 4QPrNab 1.4. But גזר means “cut” and thus “determine”: cf. Symmachus θύτοι, Vg *aruspix*, perhaps implying hepatoscopers. They may be people who can “determine” the future,[[465]](#footnote-465) make “determinations” regarding spirits,[[466]](#footnote-466) or “cut” the way off for evil spirits.[[467]](#footnote-467)

The terms are used randomly and interchangeably. The author was not referring to specific groups and consciously excluding ones that happen not to be mentioned; there was, indeed, no Babylonian group specifically concerned with interpreting dreams. The words are treated as variant synonyms for the Babylonian diviners whose role was central to Babylonian religious and political life; the author uses a number of the terms in combination to convey the impression of the various guilds,[[468]](#footnote-468) in a way that parallels the further collections of exotic foreign terms in chap. 3.

**3–11** Has Nebuchadnezzar forgotten his dream, or has he only a vague idea what it was about (cf. v 29a)?[[469]](#footnote-469) “Forgetting the details of a dream was a disaster, becase one would be unable to perform a ritual to avert its possible evil consequences.”[[470]](#footnote-470) But the verses are ambiguous, which facilitates the motif of the experts’ possible misunderstanding of his expectation. As the dialogue develops, they and the story’s hearers continue in suspense over how much he remembers and how far he is thus capable of telling whether their account of the dream is correct, or how far v 9 is bluff. Parallels with Nabonidus’s conflict with the Babylonian priesthood[[471]](#footnote-471) and with Darius I’s slaughter of diviners (Herodotus, *Histories* 3.68–79) may underlie the story, but the parallels are not close, and there are no Middle Eastern parallels for the threat of execution in the case of failure to work out a dream’s meaning.[[472]](#footnote-472)

In itself a request for time (cf. v 8) would not be unreasonable; consulting dream books and/or turning directly to a deity (as Daniel in due course does) would be a regular recourse in the circumstances. But what the king sees as the experts’ “lying, base response” (v 9), uttered in the hope that the “situation may change” (more literally that the time may change—i.e., that a more propitious day may arrive) refers to the undertaking to provide the interpretation if the king provides the dream. The king sees the experts as seeking to evade a challenge to show whether they have supranormal knowledge by revealing what the dream was, which the king may be able to check. For the king’s rage (v 12) cf. 3:13, 19; Esth 1:12; 7:7; Prov 16:14; 19:12; 20:2; 2 Macc 7:3.

**13-16** Daniel and his friends had apparently not yet attained the renown of which 1:19-20 speaks. Historically, entering the king’s presence (v 16) demands protocol that is ignored here (contrast vv 24–25; Esth 4:11; Herodotus, *Histories* 3.140; Josephus *Antiquities* 10.10.3 [10.198]), perhaps partly to underline the contrast between Daniel’s confidence and the experts’ confusion.[[473]](#footnote-473) The king’s response to Daniel’s request is also unmentioned, however, and v 16 seems to be deliberately brief, hastening on to vv 17–18 (see also n. 16.a).

**17–19a** The title “the God of the heavens” (vv 18-19) appears in Daniel only in chap. 2 (also in Ezra, Nehemiah). It may be a reverential substitute for “Yahweh” (see *Comment* on 1:2 and on vv 20, 23), as “the heavens” becomes a reverential substitute for “God” (cf. Ahiqar 94–95). “The God of the heavens” parallels the expression “God On High” used in Dan 3–7 both in its general meaning and in its resembling gentile titles for God such that Judahites might feel quite appropriate for Yahweh. But avoiding the name Yahweh hardly means that no need was now felt to distinguish Israel’s God from the gods of the Gentiles; it is doubtful if any of the titles for God in Daniel implies a less particularist understanding of God than other parts of the OT.[[474]](#footnote-474) The popularity of this title in the Persian period has been attributed to the influence of Zoroastrianism,[[475]](#footnote-475) and the paucity of other links with the Pentateuch have been attributed to the international context of Daniel, like that of the wisdom tradition.[[476]](#footnote-476) But it is also reminiscent of the Canaanite title *ba‘al šāmēm* (“lord of the heavens”: cf. 5:23, also 4:37 [34]), which—like “On High”—was apparently an epithet of the supreme god El.[[477]](#footnote-477) Worship of the supreme god as “the Lord of the heavens” was widespread throughout OT times, and he was later equated with Zeus. This equation may explain the apparent non-use of the epithet in the Antiochene period, which parallels its non-use before the exile. Here, OG replaces “the God of the heavens” by “the Lord On high,”perhaps because the former title seemed too “heathen-sounding.”[[478]](#footnote-478) In MT the title takes up the experts’ confession that the gods’ dwelling is not among mere humanity (v 11), but it denies that God is therefore inaccessible; God is in the heavens, but he reveals things on earth (v 28).[[479]](#footnote-479)

“Mystery” (רז, OP, v 18) appears in the OT only in Dan 2 and 4:9 [6]. At Qumran it becomes almost a technical term for an enigma that can be interpreted only by God’s revelation, and particularly for God’s hidden purpose at work in history despite its sin (e.g., 1QpHab 7.5, 8, 14; cf. NT μυστήριον; also BH ד וס, though it is a more general word).[[480]](#footnote-480) At this point in the chapter the word requires only thebroader meaning “enigma,” but it will transpire that the dream reveals a mystery in something like that later, more technical sense; the same applies to the verb “reveal.”[[481]](#footnote-481) For such revelatory visions taking place at night (v 19a), cf. especially Zech 1–6 (also 1 Sam 3; Job 4:13; 33:15). Daniel’s “vision” is not a superior means of revelation to Nebuchadnezzar’s “dream”: in v 20 both words are used of Nebuchadnezzar’s experience. But only Daniel has things “revealed” to him (see vv 28–30).

**19b–23** “Blessing” is an expression familiar from worship, expecially when used in the Psalms for human beings blessing God. Yet it also has a life-setting is the everyday world, the realm of human relationships and, as we find it here, the experience of God acting in providence and grace towards his people, to which they respond in praise and thanksgiving. To bless someone is to express in solemn words one’s appreciation, gratitude, honor, recognition, or love; it suggests an acknowledging of communion with the one who is named as the object of blessing in light of what that one has come to mean to you.[[482]](#footnote-482)

“The name of God” (v 20) is a further reverential substitute for “Yahweh” (cf. v 19b), as in later Jewish usage. A person’s name can express something of their character, calling, religious commitment, or personal significance. The name stands for the person. So it is with the name by which a deity is known: God is revealed in his name. To bless the name of God is thus to bless Yahweh himself; but the expression makes it possible to avoid uttering the name and perhaps misusing it (Exod 20:7). “The God of the ancestors” (cf. v 23) is a title for God as he was known to Israel’s forebears before the revelation to Moses (Exod 3:13–16), but it came into increased usage after the exile, especially in Chronicles (1 Chr 5:25; 12:17; 2 Chr 33:12), where it suggests adherence to Israel’s traditional faith rather than recourse to novel or alien alternatives. The title here suggests a recognition that God is acting in faithfulness to the character he has revealed to Israel in the past, though it may also function as yet another reverential substitute for “Yahweh.”

The “insight” of vv 20–23 is again the fruit of supernatural revelation rather than empirical, rational discernment. It is something human beings receive from God rather than achieve; it is equivalent to the knowledge of God’s purposes that prophets gain through being admitted to Yahweh’s council. So “mystery” (vv 18, 19) is “God revealing his wisdom,” and specifically doing so by means of something symbolic and cryptic which then receives interpretation.[[483]](#footnote-483) References to deeply hidden secrets and to light and darkness correspond to other allusions in the OT (Gen 1:4; Deut 29:29 [28]; Isa 45:7; Ps 139; Job 12; 28; 30:16–20) more than to those in the Qumran literature (especially light and darkness in 1QM) or Gnosticism. The content of the revelation (v 21a) relates to God’s lordship in history (cf. “might,” v 20); vv 37–45 will expand on it.

The expression “times and eras” comes only here in the OT.[[484]](#footnote-484) The talk of times and eras is taken further in the Qumran literature and in the periodizing of history in, e.g., *1 Enoch* 91:12–17; 93:1–10 (cf. Dan 9:24–27), as a means of structuring the understanding and presentation of history.[[485]](#footnote-485) In Dan 2 the phrase has more general reference; any structuring of history that it presupposes is the structuring provided by the external course of political events, the fall and rise of dynasties referred to in v 21 and developed in vv 37–45.

**24–30** Daniel apparently implies that the king’s own thoughts (vv 29a, 30b) had turned to the future, and perhaps that he knew his dream related to the future of his empire—which would give him some check on purported reconstructions and interpretations of his dream. That people’s dreams relate to their current preoccupations is a common enough experience; for the motif, cf. Xerxes’ dream (Herodotus, *Histories* 8.12–14). The king was thus not indulging in a pointless test of the experts; he knew he had dreamed about his own future but the dream had “hidden itself” (because of its unwelcome content) as dreams do.

The king’s thoughts concern what will happen “in the future” (דנה י ר ח א “after this,” v 29). Etymologically, “the end of the era” (א י מו י אחרית, literally “the end of the days”; v 28) could also simply mean “the future.” אחרית “end” denotes not a single moment (contrast קץ “end”) but the last part or the aftermath of something (8:19, 23; 10:14; 11:4; 12:8), and א י מ ו י אחרית could thus mean “the last part/aftermath of the [present] days”; cf. Akk. *ana ah-rat ūmū* meaning “in the future”.[[486]](#footnote-486) The fourteen OT occurrences of “at the end of the era/days” (see BDB, 31), however, suggest that in BH/BA the phrase has a more precise meaning. “The days” are a possibly long but not interminable period that will or must elapse before certain predictions, promises, or warnings are fulfilled. The phrase thus refers to the time of fullfillment. This fulfillment may come at the End of the Age, though the phrase itself is not of eschatological significance; it acquires this association only through being used in such contexts (cf. CD 4.4; 1QSa 1.1). In vv 28–29, then, “in the future” denotes the whole period from Nebuchadnezzar onward (cf. v 45), while “at the end of the era” refers more specifically to the events that bring that whole period to a close (cf. v 44).[[487]](#footnote-487)

**31–35** A variety of extrabiblical backgrounds have been posited for the five-part statue (see *Form*). For its materials, the OT background is at least as significant.[[488]](#footnote-488) Gold and silver are standard symbols for what is majestic and precious, in political and religious contexts; bronze and iron are standard symbols for what is strong and hard. The four metals together sum up the variety of valuable natural resources or valuable plunder (Josh 6:19, 24; 22:8; Job 28:1–2). There is no implication of deterioration as we move from head to trunk to hips to legs; nor are these four “the metals of idolatry” (cf. 3:1; 5:2, 23).[[489]](#footnote-489) So far, then, the statue embodies a many-faceted power, splendor, strength, and impressiveness. Clay, however, suggests weakness and transience (Job 4; 19; 13:12), so that pottery is a quite alien element, the antithesis of the political power and strength implied by the four metals (see Isa 41:25 in the context of 40:19; 45:2), threatening the stability of the otherwise uniformly overpowering edifice that towers above it. All that is needed for the edifice to collapse is a chance rockfall to hit the statue at its weak point. The logic-suspending fantasy of dream then appears at its strongest as the awesome statue is not just toppled but in an instant turned into mere wheat husks as they are blown away from the threshing floors exposed to the wind (recalling Isa 41:12–16), while the rock grows into a monumental crag that dominates the whole world (recalling Isa 2:2–3; 11:9).

**36–43** The statue’s four parts signify four regimes. מלכו can denote royal authority (5:18), realm (4:18 [15]), individual reign (6:28 [29]), or empire (7:23). The four מלכותא have usually been interpreted as four empires, but Nebuchadnezzar personally is the head, so it is more natural to refer them to the reigns of four kings over a single empire. The four metals are all part of one body which is then destroyed at a blow by the “rock.”[[490]](#footnote-490) In contrast to the dream, the interpretation gives special attention to the first and last elements in the statue. Nebuchadnezzar’s empire was indeed the most powerful of his day, and it was the one that dominated the people of God for several generations. The description of Nebuchadnezzar combines an anticipation of Dan 4 (esp. vv 10–12, 20–22 [7-9, 17-19]) with a recollection of Jer 27:5–8 // Ps 8. Underlying these passages (and thus less directly Dan 2) are conventions of asserting humanity’s dignity and lordship by attributing to humanity authority over the animal creation. These conventions also underlie Gen 1–2, and perhaps also eastern monarchs’ establishing of game parks for captured wild animals.[[491]](#footnote-491) Verse 38 thus communicates Nebuchadnezzar’s worldwide rule metaphorically, as the description of him as king among kings (cf. Ezek 26:7, and common with reference to Persian and Seleucid kings) does so more straightforwardly. Nebuchadnezzar rules by the gift of God. Even his might, authority, and glory come not from himself but from the God of the heavens, the Lord even of the king among kings (v 47).

Jeremiah speaks of the rule of Nebuchadnezzar’s son and grandson after him, until after seventy years “the time of his country” comes (25:12; 27:7). This perspective thus extends beyond that of Dan 4 (with its reference to a particular context in Nebuchadnezzar’s own lifetime) to God’s activity as Lord of the future history of Nebuchadnezzar’s empire.[[492]](#footnote-492) In recalling Jeremiah’s words and his figure of speech, Daniel adapts them to another figure, four kings suggesting completeness (cf. four quarters of the world, four seasons, and especially the four horns/smiths of Zech 1:18–21 [2:1-4]). Possibly this presentation reflects the historical fact that Nebuchadnezzar was to have more than two successors before the seventy years would elapse.

In Dan 2, the second regime is inferior to the first, the third is equal to it in power, and the fourth is of devastating might but ultimate vulnerability. The sequence thus manifests no consistent pattern of degeneration, as in Hesiod, nor a pattern of contrast between the first three and the last, nor a good-bad-good-bad sequence like that of some Babylonian quasi-predictions (see *Form*). Daniel passes quickly over the second and third regimes, however, in order to focus on the fourth, elaborating on the dream’s brief description (e.g., adding the toes) as he elaborates on the first. The fourth regime has a crushing power (v 40) but an unexpected fragility (vv 41–42: see n. 41.c). It seeks to repair this weakness, but it cannot do so in a lasting way (v 43: the description sounds like a reference to intermarriage). Whereas Daniel thus characterizes the world power in originally positive terms, as impressive and deserving of admiration in its God-given might, in its final manifestation its power has become crushing—though not explicitly wicked—yet strangely vulnerable and needing to be buttressed by desperate and doomed means.

Chap. 2 does not identify the second, third, and fourth regimes. In chap. 7 the motif of four regimes recurs in the context of the setting of chaps. 7–12 in the Greek period, but one should not assume that the motif is used in the same connection in chap. 2. The characterization of the fourth regime in vv 40–43 has been connected with events in the Greek period,[[493]](#footnote-493) but it could as easily apply to the Babylonians or Persians. The hypothesis that the four-empire scheme of chap. 7 developed from one that referred to a sequence of regimes fits with other possibilities regarding the diverse history of three- and four-empire schemes.[[494]](#footnote-494) It does not carry the implication that chap. 2 had the same significance; indeed, it might seem more likely that the opposite was the case.

Historically, Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562) was followed by Amel-Marduk (Ewil-merodak) (562–560), Nergal-šar-uṣur (Neriglissar (560–556), Labaši-Marduk (556), and Nabuna’id (Nabonidus) (556–539), whose son Bel-šar-uṣur (Belshazzar) was regent in Babylon when Cyrus conquered the city.[[495]](#footnote-495) The four reigns might thus be those of four of these kings,[[496]](#footnote-496) or—less plausibly—four Assyrian kings,[[497]](#footnote-497) Persian kings,[[498]](#footnote-498) or Ptolemaic kings.[[499]](#footnote-499) The possibility of these various interpretations raises the question whether the text’s unspecificness makes it inappropriate to attempt to identify the rulers referred to after Nebuchadnezzar, as Jer 27 names no specific descendants but simply has them in prospect.[[500]](#footnote-500) Perhaps even the symbolic number “four” cannot be pressed historically. There are, indeed, hints of five regimes in vv 32–33, 45, and a five-regime scheme might have been brought into conformity with a four-regime one.[[501]](#footnote-501) There is a similar tension within some of the extrabiblical material.

The unspecificity of Dan 2 means that the four regimes can be identified only on grounds external to the chapter. On the basis of other OT material they could be linked with Nebuchadnezzar and three of his Babylonian successors: the rock then is Cyrus, which fits with the role ascribed to him in Isa 41; 45. The downfall of the empire of Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian successors at Cyrus’ hand therefore links with the end of Judah’s exile, which fits with the promises in Jer 25:12; 27:7. But Daniel itself does not describe Cyrus’ arrival as the end of Babylon’s empire or the end of Judah’s exile. Cyrus’ arrival makes no difference to Babylon or to the exiles.[[502]](#footnote-502)

The bext four chapters in the Daniel itself do refer to four regimes. After Nebuchadnezzar (2:37; 5:18) comes Belshazzar (5:28), his “son” (5:2, 11, 14, 18, 22), who is to be “inferior” to him (cf. 5:22–28).[[503]](#footnote-503) From Belshazzar the kingship passes to Darius the Mede (5:31 [6:1], cf. 6:28 [29]); he counts the whole world as within his realm, like Nebuchadnezzar (6:25–26 [26–27]). The fourth king is indeed Cyrus, mentioned only at the close of the stories (6:28 [29]) but well known for his irresistible might (see Isa 44:24—45:7). He was said to have been part-Median, part-Persian and to have married a Persian (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.55–56, 107–9; Xenophon, *Cyropedia* 1.2.1; 8.5.17–20). Dan 9:1 describes him as ruling over the empire of the Kasdim, the implication being that the Medes and Persians bring a new dynasty but one that rules within the history of one empire. The perspective suggested by chap. 1 and subsequent chapters, then, is that the four regimes in chap. 2 span the period from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus.

Daniel thus traces an arc drawn from Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, when the world-powers’ direct hegemony over Israel begins, to that manifestation of the world-empire under which the book’s implied readers live. Indeed, this is the significance of the statue’s message however its parts are identified. The advent of the Persians has not brought the end of world dominion as Jeremiah and Isa 40–55 had promised. The implied readers of Daniel in the Persian period, perhaps disillusioned and depressed like those whom prophecies in Haggai, Zechariah, and Isa 56–66 addressed, are invited to hold onto the conviction that the Babylonian colossus will not stand for ever. It has feet of clay.

**44–45** Jeremiah’s prophecy had not looked beyond the destruction of the Babylonian empire. Daniel’s message pictures the establishment of a different sovereignty.

The rock, the crag into which it grows, and the crag from which it came, might all be symbols for Israel itself, centered on Mount Zion, and might then indicate the hope that it will be used to bring about the fall of the world empires.[[504]](#footnote-504) But the verses do not say that the new regime will be Israel’s (contrast 7:18, 27). More likely the rock destroying the regimes and growing into a crag filling the world stands for God’s own sovereignty and power establishing a lasting regime (cf. the mountain symbolizing and embodying God’s rule, in Isa 2:2–3; Ezek 17:23; Ps 2:6; 48:1-2 [2–3]). The crag from which the rock came (v 45) might be a symbol for God himself in his strength and reliability (Deut 32:18; Ps 18:2 [3]; 31:2-3 [3–4]). The elaboration of the dream in the interpretation draws attention to the new regime’s divine origin.[[505]](#footnote-505) The one who was meant to be a source of strength and protection becomes a mortal danger to those who build their own edifices and refuges (Isa 8:11–15; but one should be wary of allegorizing the picture).

There is no need to infer that all three regimes survive till a moment of simultaneous destruction:[[506]](#footnote-506) again, the visions are not allegories. There is no clear assertion that the fourth regime is brought to an end as a judgment on its sin (contrast chap. 7). It falls because of its inherent fragility.

**46–49** Nebuchadnezzar’s prostrating himself before Daniel does not imply worship, nor does that implication stem from presenting an offering (a gift: e.g., Gen 43:11), or from presenting fragrant oblations, which can be an aspect of the recognition of a king.[[507]](#footnote-507) It might be seen as a way of “demythologizing” deified kings[[508]](#footnote-508) or as a natural way of honoring a benefactor[[509]](#footnote-509) or as a way of honoring the God Daniel represents: cf. Josephus’s story about Alexander and the high priest (*Antiquities* 11.8.5 [11.329–39]).[[510]](#footnote-510) With the last understanding, we may compare the acknowledgment of Israel/Yahweh promised in Isa 45:14; 49:23; 60:14. But the acknowledgment of Daniel is more prominent than that of Yahweh, and more explicit than that of Israel. Thus vv 46–49 belong together: Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges Daniel, who has proved himself as a remarkable source of revelatory wisdom (v 46), acknowledges the God who gave him this wisdom (v 47), and determines to elevate Daniel to the position of political authority for which his insight qualifies him (v 48a) as well as to a position of supreme authority over the leaders of the guilds of experts who provided the king with counsel (v 48b), a post perhaps as difficult to accept as the possible worship of v 46.

## Explanation

**1–2** Nebuchadnezzar as an individual stood in the background in chap. 1; his figure now comes into sharper focus. It is only the second year of his reign. His prospects are high, his achievements already remarkable (see 1:1–2). Yet the beginning of a reign is a dangerous time,[[511]](#footnote-511) and he is ill at ease. He is disturbed by nightmares, and they are not merely (we shall discover) the reflection of a neurotic felt insecurity on the part of a mighty king troubled by inner doubts. They correspond in Nebuchadnezzar’s subjectivity to a real insecurity that attaches to his empire. The king who cannot sleep “is troubled—not by the thousands of people he has forceably displaced or the thousands he has massacred on the battlefield or the wealth he has pillaged from the surrounding nations. He is troubled by his dreams, which is perhaps a way of saying that these issues do trouble the monarch.” Actually he “has good reason to be troubled! His dreams announce to him that his powerful regime teeters on a foundation of clay: ‘Underlying the empires is an insatiable will to destruction; this is why they contain within themselves the seed of their destruction.’”[[512]](#footnote-512)

No doubt his Judahite subjects and their descendants who told and heard the story often felt insecure and dreamed nightmares of their own about their future in dispersion. But Nebuchadnezzar’s nightmares witness to where actual insecurity lies. Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams cannot be ignored. They are signs and omens, significant for his empire’s destiny. Dreams, like prophecies, can be manufactured, and need to be tested (Deut 13; Jer 23:25–32). Yet like vision and prophecy, they can be means of divine revelation. They cannot be evaded; they impose themselves, and they can testify to the transcendence of God revealing himself as sovereign shaper of earthly events (Gen 37–41; 1 Sam 3). They thus become part of the expectation and actuality of what God does at the climax of the ages (Joel 2-28 [3:1]; Matt 1–2; Acts 2:17).[[513]](#footnote-513)

Like any powerful administration, Nebuchadnezzar’s regime has its backup agencies and task forces, with access to vast information resources to enable them to interpret the data Nebuchadnezzar provides and to suggest what measures need to be taken to counteract any threats to the state that the data portend. Dreams were not the most common sources of such data, but they were a familiar enough phenomenon, treated by dreambooks. So Nebuchadnezzar summons various of the guilds of his civil servants. The very variety of the ones he summons underlines the anxiety built into the situation, and the mockery (“that saving humor of the oppressed”)[[514]](#footnote-514) with which Israelites are invited to view the multiplicity of the Babylonians’ toilsome attempts to control their destiny (Isa 47:12–13).[[515]](#footnote-515)

If the implication of the date in v 1 is that Daniel and his friends have not yet graduated into the guilds’ company,[[516]](#footnote-516) it strengthens the story’s point that the education they were being given is not the source of Daniel’s ability to interpret the dream.

**3–9** “Explain my dream to me,” the king demands. “Long live the king,” they begin in reply: there is an irony about the standard courtly greeting, because events are to affirm that the only lasting name and reign is the name and reign of God (vv 20, 44). “Certainly we can explain your dream,” they go on, “Just outline it to us.” They have extensive collections of dream omens to consult if the motifs in the dream are not of obvious significance. But they have missed an ambiguity in the king’s request. It looks as if he may be requiring them to tell him the actual contents of his dream, not just to look up the meaning of its motifs. The requirement is solemnly proclaimed; failure will mean death and the ruin of their families, success will mean rewards and honor. “Before a public audience, the king has challenged the worth of his diviners. If they are able to defend their honor and fulfill their role, they will retain honor and win reward besides. If not, they will be dishonored as those who are unable to respond to a challenge.”[[517]](#footnote-517) They resembles students in a class on hermeneutics who are more interested is passing the exam than in offering good interpretation.[[518]](#footnote-518)

So “the king has a problem with troubling dreams (v 1), but his problem is far less dangerous than that facing the dream interpreters.”[[519]](#footnote-519) The alternatives the king lays out before them highlight the ambiguous prospects attaching to involvement in the Babylonian court.[[520]](#footnote-520) Nebuchadnezzar is a man of brilliance, achievement, vision, and generosity, yet also mistrustful, angry, arbitrary, and violent. The portrait is cartooned, yet consistent with other aspects of Middle Eastern courtly life (see Esther, Herodotus, 1001 Nights). Like political life in the modern world, the power and glory of participation in the affairs of state would be attractive and an object of wistful longing for people like Judahites who were not part of the power structure, but at the same time alien and frightening because of its reputation for contention, betrayal, scandal, humiliation, and moral pressure. “All imperial power must ultimately appeal to: brute force, which is not merely lethal, but *spectacularly* lethal.”[[521]](#footnote-521) Grisly forms of execution are said to have been used in the Middle East, they were used (and not just by kings) in England by Catholics and Protestants, and they are widely used in the twenty-first century.[[522]](#footnote-522) Given that a king has permission to do what he likes,[[523]](#footnote-523) “how foolish, almost mad, are all who want to have very powerful kings.”[[524]](#footnote-524)

Pardonably, we might think, the civil servants can hardly believe their ears. Their profession is to apply the insights of experience and tradition to data that the king gives them. They are men of sensitivity, imagination, and insight, but they need data to work on, as they patiently and politely point out, moving from imperative to the less peremptory jussive (v 7). In their renewed request, however, the king sees evasiveness and a confession of helplessness that points to the possibility that their whole profession is a sham. All they can offer is textbook answers to set questions. Their inability to move beyond these parameters undermines the validity of the answers they provide within them. They are simply seeking to gain a period of time, in the devious hope that the situation may change in some way. Perhaps they will be able to discover an answer to the apparently impossible question, perhaps sources in the palace will discover for them what the king dreamed or whether he knows what he dreamed, perhaps he will forget the matter (or himself be removed?).

Nebuchadnezzar, however, will not let go the possibility of testing whether the experts have access to resources of insight beyond those available to other people. He perhaps takes account of the fact that the ancient world recognized deception as legitimate when one’s honor needed to be established or safeguarded[[525]](#footnote-525) and he requires of them a test that Jesus submitted to (Mark 2:1–12): do something that can be checked, whose testimony may carry over into the area that cannot be checked. If they can divine the contents of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, their understanding of its meaning compels respect. If not, the latter is no more than ordinary human opinion.

Nebuchadnezzar’s talk of their buying a period of time and hoping the times may change picks up a motif that runs through the chapter. The experts vaguely hope that circumstances may alter, and astutely seek to manipulate them, while Nebuchadnezzar sidesteps their maneuver and declares their hope false. Neither side takes into account the God who controls circumstances, though unconsciously they prepare us to meet him.

**10–12** The experts’ third and final attempt to persuade Nebuchadnezzar to be reasonable admits what the king has suspected. After all, he should surely grant, they are only human beings: court counselors, learned experts, expositors of the tradition. The king is treating them as if they were privy to the secrets of the gods. The wistful, sad admission that seeks to excuse them exposes them and judges them. The critique that began by making fun of the toilsome multiplicity of their guilds ends by scorning their futility. It parallels the contempt for the Babylonian experts in Isa 40–55 and the contempt for the Jerusalem prophets in Jeremiah (Isa 44:25; Jer 23:15–32).

Judahite exiles might be tempted to think that Israelite wisdom and Israelite faith in their God as lord of history are looking extremely unimpressive compared with the resources and power of Nebuchadnezzar. Actually, Nebuchadnezzar is helpless. The Babylonians have only earthly techniques that are no heavenly use in the absence of data, and heavenly beings who are no earthly use. The experts’ profession does presuppose that the gods reveal things,[[526]](#footnote-526) but not the kind of thing the king requires in this story. The gods of Babylon are strikingly absent from the story. It is not an account of a conflict between the God of the heavens and the gods of Babylon (or Persia),[[527]](#footnote-527) but one between the thisworldly wisdom of Babylon and the supernatural wisdom of Daniel. In the conversation between king and experts, deity is mentioned only in order to be excluded from consideration (v 11). But Nebuchadnezzar does not accept the principle of Roman law that no one is obligated beyond what he is able to do.[[528]](#footnote-528)

**13–19a** Nebuchadnezzar is a man of extreme emotions and actions: in relation to the advisers at the beginning of the story, he is haunted, fearful, peremptory, tyrannical, violent, suspicious, unreasonable, malevolent, irascible (though all in vain); in relation to Daniel at the end, he is extravagant in his appreciation, his rewarding, and his promotion of Daniel, and in his recognition of Daniel’s God. The Babylonian experts descend from a matter-of-fact confidence, via bluster and disbelief, to a bewildered helplessness that faces the guillotine.

Our attention now moves from these cartoon portraits to a picture in total contrast. “Daniel behaves here with the restraint of self-control in contrast with the aggressive tactics of the Babylonian diviners and the hot-headed rashness of the king (2:12). Daniel acts with prudence and measured care in contrast with the desperate maneuvers of the Babylonians.”[[529]](#footnote-529) He models insight and piety, he is shrewd and astute before Aryok, bold and confident before Nebuchadnezzar, open in fellowship with his friends, believing and urgent in prayer, lofty and profound in praise, decisive and assured when he returns with an explanation of the dream, straight and trenchant in declaring both its origins in God’s revelation and its content regarding Babylon’s future. He once again embodies both the experiential discernment of a statesman and the revelatory insight of a seer (cf. 1:4, 17–20). The so-called experts have shown themselves fools lacking the diplomatic adroitness to handle the king, but Daniel has it; he gets his way where they could not. They were refused time to devise a solution to the conundrum for themselves; he is granted time to seek a revelation from God. They were dismissed for their self-confessed helplessness; he is accepted for his expectation that he can do something. He is not going to be held back by the fact that God is in the heavens and he is on the earth (Eccl 5:2 [1]).[[530]](#footnote-530) He knows that “what is impossible for a human being is possible for God.”[[531]](#footnote-531)

His undertaking to provide an answer recalls the instinctive boldness of his earlier offer of a trial period on a vegetarian diet (1:12). No doubt it presupposes that he will seek God and receive a revelation from him, but initially the emphasis lies on his courageous expectation that he can provide the answer, and on his decisiveness and calm confidence, which contrast with the experts’ incredulous impotence (it’s not clear whether he is hoping to save all the experts or only himself and his friends).

In relation to the Babylonian authorities, Daniel stands alone. In relation to the people of God, however, he stands in fellowship with his three friends. “Disciplined, lucid, strongly given to fasting and prayer,” they form “a kind of ‘base community.’”[[532]](#footnote-532) Here, the importance of this fellowship is that they join with him in laying hold of the divine resources that Daniel needs if his boldness is not to be exposed as foolhardiness. “If this chapter suggests a paradigm for a ‘Jew in the Diaspora,’ it is for a Jew that exploits to the fullest his intellectual abilities, but has the humility to fall on his knees before God.”[[533]](#footnote-533)

Then, “in the midst of a praying, believing fellowship, God gives a vision in the night.”[[534]](#footnote-534) The “mystery” is “revealed” to Daniel. The background of these terms lies in the human experience of keeping and sharing confidence or secrets (see Prov 11:13; 20:19; 25:9; Sirach 8:18; 12:11). This experience is applied to a prophet’s being allowed to share in Yahweh’s secret purpose (Amos 3:7; cf. 1 Sam 3:7; more generally, Deut 29:29 [28]). The theological term revelation, of great significance in recent centuries, has this rather narrow specific biblical background.[[535]](#footnote-535)

Daniel deals in visions and dreams that reveal the secret purpose of God in history. Apparently understanding history is a divine gift, not a human achievement. The Babylonian experts were the guardians and expositors of secret lore, but Daniel has access to the real secrets of politics and history.[[536]](#footnote-536) “Daniel succeeds where they fail not merely because he is better at what they do; he does not do a better job of performing the same task. Rather, Daniel has rejected and thus does not employ the divinatory rites that go under the name of insight in the Babylonian tradition. Instead, he appeals to a different source, to the God of his ancestors (2:23).[[537]](#footnote-537) While the OT can be dismissive of dreams as a means of guidance, its alternative ideological or apologetic ploy is to say that Yahweh (and his servant) alone is the true interpreter of dreams.[[538]](#footnote-538) Daniel is a prophet in all but name (Num 12:6). But he is the recipient of revelation only in order that Nebuchadnezzar can be (v 28). The God who sends sun and rain to the wicked as well as the good does not stand off from the heathen powers that control Israel’s destiny.[[539]](#footnote-539) He reveals his purpose to them through a prophet, as he had once to Israel’s own kings.[[540]](#footnote-540)

**19b–23** While we do praise God every day, “when God confers some wonderful blessing on his servants, they are the more stirred up to praise him,” with a “new song (Ps. 40:3 [4]; Isa 42:9-10).[[541]](#footnote-541) Having shown himself a man of insight and a man of prayer, Daniel also models the response of praise. His praise, and his subsequent confession before the king (vv 27–30), affirm what the dream and its interpretation will later reflect, that the God of the heavens (v 19) who is the God of Israel (v 23) controls “times and eras”—the successive epochs ruled by one king or another, one empire or another. He has control of history, and (thus) has insight into history (vv 20–22). The poetic section of the chapter articulates the main themes of the narrative.[[542]](#footnote-542)

The insight described here is not merely the quality of discernment but the possession of knowledge about history that stems from being the deciding factor in history and issues in being solely able to grant knowledge about history. God’s ability to reveal the secrets of history proves that he does control history. Like Isa 40–55, Daniel does not accept that history is determined by the planetary forces that the Babylonians studied (cf. Isa 40:25–26). History is under the control of God in his freedom. It is thus his secret. It cannot be predicted or divined by means of techniques, as the experts have now acknowledged. It can only be revealed—hence, in part, the motif of prayer and thanksgiving.[[543]](#footnote-543) The civil servants were supposed to know the times (Esth 1:13), but the idea is illusory. The times were fixed by a source to which they had no access. ”No inexorable working out of fate here; God is personally in charge of events.”[[544]](#footnote-544) He controls times and eras, and his name is blessed from age to age. The words for time that appeared earlier in nontheological contexts (vv 4, 8, 9, 16) now affirm that God alone is Lord of times and ages. Nebuchadnezzar, the experts, and also Daniel himself (v 30) are relativized by him. The pretensions of human conjuring, of human power, and of human insight, are exposed. “All the power and wisdom which are in the world are a witness to the power and wisdom of God.” [[545]](#footnote-545)

The light and darkness referred to similarly denote God’s capacity to perceive things when all seesms dark to human beings. But God has a different relationship with light from the one he has with darkness; he stands over against darkness, knowing it from a distance, but light lives with him. There is an antithesis between light and darkness, but not a dualism. “Theologically, what is important in this story is not so much that God gave wisdom to Daniel, but *why* God could do so: the fact that he knows ‘what is in the darkness, and light dwells with him’” (v 22).[[546]](#footnote-546)

Such convictions are characteristic of the OT, though they are expressed here with a marked universality. They may be held to be implicit in the affirmation of Isa 41 that Yahweh alone is bringing about the victories of Cyrus over the Babylonians and that Yahweh alone is (thus) able to offer insight on the significance of these events. Yet those affirmations concern only specific historical events, and Daniel himself will later similarly speak of particular historical events. His testimony here goes behind those specific events to God’s control of and insight into history as a whole. When Amos speaks of God revealing his secret (3:7), he refers to the secret significance of particular events; when Daniel speaks of God revealing his secret, his secret relates to future history viewed as a whole and viewed from its destiny (cf. v 44).[[547]](#footnote-547) Nebuchadnezzar has been wondering about the future (v 29), and as so often the thoughts suggest the dream (as *b. Berakot* 55b notes). God reveals that the wondering relates to events at the end of the era (v 28), to the time when God’s hand, long unseen, becomes visible as he brings about the fulfillment of his promises. The range of Daniel’s vision and his prophetic role extend far beyond anything chap. 1 hinted or chaps. 4–5 parallel. The dream relates not just to a chapter in a man’s life or a moment in an empire’s history but offers a perspective on the future as a whole.[[548]](#footnote-548) In this sense, this apocalypse is one to which an eschatological perspective is integral.

A dramatic effect is achieved by the way Daniel’s worship is recorded. First, the structure of his praise is other than one might have expected. The characteristic movement of a psalm would be from a testimony to God’s specific recent act of grace, via an acknowledgement of God’s characteristic activity as revealer and lord of history, to worship of him for his personal characteristics, which these activities reflect. The reverse movement here gives prominence to the particular experience of God’s power and wisdom that Daniel himself has been given.

A further dramatic effect is achieved by recording this confession here, while reserving the content of the revelation for later. This arrangement also has a theological implication. Daniel is to reveal the destiny of Nebuchadnezzar’s empire, and that revelation will evidence the power and wisdom of the God of the heavens. Most of the time, the people of God have to live without revelations of this kind, yet they are still called to affirm that power and wisdom with Daniel on the basis of a revelation which is in prospect but is yet unseen. We do not see much evidence of the might and wisdom of God in international affairs, but we are called to believe in that wisdom to be revealed.

Daniel begins by talking about God but ends up talking to God (v 23).[[549]](#footnote-549) Specifically, he talks to the God of his ancestors. The expression has varous connotations in the OT, but in this context it links with this move to direct address to the God who is not only high and lifted up but involved with his people.[[550]](#footnote-550)

**24–30** So Daniel returns to offer his interpretation to the king, though first he gives him a theological lecture.[[551]](#footnote-551) There is an ambiguity about his own position. He is someone renamed Belteshazzar (v 26) after the king’s god (4:8 [5]) yet he comes to the king as a Judahite exile (v 25) who has received his revelation from his ancestors’ God (v 23). He is able to reveal the mystery to the king, not because he is a more skilled expert (cf. v 30), but because he is granted access to supernatural sources of information (cf. Gen 41:16). As in Isa 41 and 47, the reason why Babylonian expertise can be scorned is that something that works is now available. The key assertion of the book is not that there is a God in the heavens:[[552]](#footnote-552) everyone believed as much. It is that, contrary to the despairing assumption of the experts (v 11), this God reveals secrets. The experts were right that a divine revelation would be needed to provide what the king asked for, wrong to assume that this was unavailable.

**31–35** The awesomeness of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream-statue derives chiefly from its size. It anticipates the statue in chap. 3; like that statue, it might have represented a god or a man. The various metals suggest a combination of costliness and strength. Yet when our eyes reach the bottom of the statue a bizarre feature appears. “In an appropriately surreal fashion,”[[553]](#footnote-553) a single rock is enough to exploit a fatal weakness that lies not in its head, like Goliath’s,[[554]](#footnote-554) but in its feet. No human action is involved.

**36–45** The statue represents the empire led by Nebuchadnezzar. It is a single statue, a single empire, passed on from one king to another. Daniel’s vision focuses not on Israel’s history, like the prophets, but on world history, and it offers a theology of worldly history, not one confined to salvation history.[[555]](#footnote-555) Yet it does not stand for the whole of history seen as a “single compact phenomenon.”[[556]](#footnote-556) If Daniel knows a scheme that suggests a theology of universal history, such as features in some extrabiblical texts, the vision turns this scheme into a means of interpreting a particular segment of history, that which begins with Nebuchadnezzar.[[557]](#footnote-557) Daniel relates only a “limited apocalyptic history.”[[558]](#footnote-558) Yet picturing an empire headed by Nebuchadnezzar is not fortuitous, for he had brought the rule of Davidic kings in Jerusalem to an end. He ruled the first gentile empire to exercise directl control of Jerusalem’s destiny. Beginning in his day the Judahites are part of worldly history. This development does not mean that history is working against God and his purpose for Israel. The Middle Eastern kings under whom the Judahites will henceforth live are under God’s sovereignty in the same real, though indirect, way as the kings of preexilic Judah had been. He sets their story in motion; he terminates it.[[559]](#footnote-559) The history of the world (Gen 1–11) had narrowed to become the history of Israel (from Abraham to the exile), but it now broadens to become the history of the nations, on the way to becoming the history of God’s rule.

Addressing Nebuchadnezzar as “king among kings” (v 37) will turn out to contain an irony. Nebuchadnezzar’s kingship is derived (v 38), and that from one who is Lord over the earthly king among kings (v 47).[[560]](#footnote-560) “Kings are enthroned on high…. But: the same eminences can be dethroned, brought low with astonishing ease.”[[561]](#footnote-561)

Daniel’s “You are the head made of gold” recalls Nathan’s “You are the man” and offers the first hint that Daniel is a prophet as well as a court adviser—or rather, that as a court adviser he is bound to become a prophet.[[562]](#footnote-562) He declares that the golden splendor of Nebuchadnezzar’s empire is God-given. God gave Nebuchadnezzar not only Jerusalem (1:2) but all his royal might and power (v 37, cf. 5:18), indeed gave him authority over all creation (v 38). Based as it is on Jer 27:5–7, Daniel’s claim represents the same theology of worldly powers as the prophets’ (cf. also Isa 10), though it takes that theology further. There a theology of world history was a marginal concern, here it becomes central. Further, while there is an implicit moral aspect to Jer 27:5-7 (and Isa 10) in that Nebuchadnezzar is given his power in order to exercise it in accordance with Yahweh’s judgment (even though Nebuchadnezzar does not realize it), here the royal ideology is “amoral.”[[563]](#footnote-563)

Were Nebuchadnezzar himself to claim to be “king among kings” and to hold “kingship, sovereignty, power, and honor” we would take it as an arrogant appropriation of God’s own splendor (cf. v 47; I Chr 29:10–11; and the traditional ending to the Lord’s Prayer). But it is God’s revelation that gives Nebuchadnezzar the “charisms” which will subsequently be given to the human-like figure in 7:13-14[[564]](#footnote-564) and that gives his rule its major theological significance. The book of Daniel makes its affirmations in the context of the domination of gentile peoples over Judahites, and asserts that this domination comes about by the will of God. Yet it is ultimately destined to be brought to an end and replaced by God’s implementing of his kingship. Bowing down to Babylon will not be for ever, but it is necessary now theologically, not merely pragmatically (as in Jer 27; 29).

The regimes that follow Nebuchadnezzar are not identified, nor are the reasons for the transitions discussed. Subsequent chapters may make it possible to infer their identity (see *Comment*), but in the drama of the story the description has to be allowed to remain allusive. We miss the point when we spend time arguing over who the empires were. For the recipients of the book what mattered was that they lived during the fourth regime, and when successive generations have reapplied the scheme of empires to the history of their day, in principle they have responded to the vision in the way it sought. If for them the fourth empire is Britain or America or Israel or some other, then the vision applies to it. Lüthi nicely comments that he isn’t sure whom the four metals denote but he doesn’t think it matters too much because he couldn’t think of a regime to which the passage didn’t apply.[[565]](#footnote-565)

The vision looks on from Nebuchadnezzar himself to that final denouement; the inferior second and strong third are relatively unimportant. It may be that a further theological point is implied. Daniel’s understanding of Nebuchadnezzar as Yahweh’s agent (1:1–2; 2:37–39) corresponds to the prophetic perception of specific international events such as foreign invasions of Ephraim or Judah as a fulfilling of God’s purpose. Yet when Daniel goes on to describe the development of imperial history after Nebuchadnezzar, no further events of this theological significance are envisioned. Theologically nothing happens, as (or is it “therefore”?) historically nothing happens—though the book’s context in the fourth regime may be the consideration that explains the feeling of nonengagement with real events in the Daniel stories despite the vision’s concern with history.[[566]](#footnote-566) Nevertheless it is noteworthy that there is no “is given” in vv 39–40, and the message may be that God is not in this history.[[567]](#footnote-567) If the fourth regime is that of Cyrus, it is a striking judgment in light of the historical significance of Cyrus for Judah and his theological significance in Isa 40—55.

If the Vohuman Vasht-i pictures the iron-mixed age as the period of domination by demons,[[568]](#footnote-568) Daniel’s message contrastingly continues on the human plane; it suggests no cosmic dualism. The fourth regime has a remarkable strength. Evidently the readers know that they live under a power capable of awesome violence and destructiveness. Yet the capacity to crush and shatter is not wicked in itself (God’s rule has the same capacity: v 44). The description of the empire’s downfall apparently follows attempts to mend its inherent fragility by intermarriage. The readers are assured that these attempts will fail. Yet there is no explicit condemnation of the fourth regime, any more than of the others, nor does the vision imply that history has reached such a low point that divine intervention is inevitable (or imminent). History, it hints, is proceeding according to “laws” of its own, neither progressing nor degenerating, but simply taking its changing course, by God’s permissive will. History does not proceed as a series of acts of divine acts of grace, nor as a sequence comprising blessing, disobedience, punishment, repentance, and restoration. But “God remains the ultimate power over history even in the absence of God’s salvific nearness.”[[569]](#footnote-569)

But then God acts, for reasons we are not given, though apparently not because history has manifestly reached the appropriate point for this intervention or because a necessary sequence of events has taken place. It is not possible to work out when the act must come. Human history always stands before the possibility of God’s acting.[[570]](#footnote-570) His act emerges from his own freedom. But when God’s time comes, his reign requires the destruction of earthly regimes rather than his working through them. They are God’s will for now, but not for ever; and when his moment arrives, his reign comes by catastrophe, not by development.[[571]](#footnote-571)

So there is no hint of timing in Daniel’s revelation. Whether the revelation comes from the Babylonian period, the Persian period, or the Greek period, it implies that history can be divinely foreknown, but not that it is divinely foreordained. It does not speak of final events fixed since time’s beginning, of the whole world under evil’s power, of a dualism of this world and the righteous world to come, of judgment in the form of an immutable fate, or of a division of world history into periods determined by God—Moltmann’s characterization of apocalyptic.[[572]](#footnote-572) Indeed, it satisfies von Rad’s characterization of Israelite historiography.[[573]](#footnote-573) It assumes that human beings make real decisions that do shape history, yet that human decision-making does not necessarily have the last word. It affirms the sovereignty of God in history, working sometimes via the process of human decision-making, sometimes despite it. “History moves on the border of chaos like a [path] winding along a cliff... At one particular time, however, history will turn over the edge.”[[574]](#footnote-574)

The end of history promised here is not history coming to its goal.[[575]](#footnote-575) Nor, however, is it history being broken off.[[576]](#footnote-576) Nor are the four empires succeeded by a further, fifth empire, but by something wholly other. Daniel promises a new future, one which is not merely an extension of the present.[[577]](#footnote-577) It is of supernatural origin. But it is located on earth, not in the heavens. Daniel envisages no dissolution of the cosmos or creation of a different world. His understanding of this reign is more like the prophetic idea of the Day of Yahweh than that of some later apocalypses. The problems of politics and history can be resolved only by a supernatural intervention that inaugurates a new regime, but this intervention involves changing the lordship of this world, not abandoning this world. The new regime fills the earth. History is not destroyed; other sovereignties are.[[578]](#footnote-578) The qualities of this new rule are not described except by saying that it is God’s and that it lasts, both of which qualities contrast with those of its predecessors.

The rule, the power, and the glory had belonged to Nebuchadnezzar for a while by God’s gift, but now they are manifested elsewhere “for ever and ever” (v 44). The motif of time recurs once more: Nebuchadnezzar’s kingship cannot last for ever (contrast v 4), but God’s regime will do so, because he himself does (cf. v 20). Whereas the insight and power of Israel and its God seemed unimpressive (as they did to the exiles to whom Isa 40–55 is addressed), in fact God holds and shares resources of insight and power beyond Nebuchadnezzar’s dreaming (as Isa 40–55, too, asserts in relation to Babylon and Cyrus). Not that Daniel sees the rock as representing an Israelite empire. His emphasis is that power and insight belong to God. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream “reveals that the traditional Israelite ways of narrating divine power and presence in history are no longer able to account for the experience and also what it *does* for its… readers.”[[579]](#footnote-579) In those circumstances, if encouragement is the first aim of a piece of apocalyptic literature such as this one,[[580]](#footnote-580) it is that fact about God’s power and insight rather than their own status that Daniel offers as an encouragement to his Judahite readers. Indeed, Dan 2 has no reference to the people of God, the messiah, the eternal destiny of humanity, the remnant, or the temple.[[581]](#footnote-581) God’s rule has sole focus. This focus gives a context to subsequent chapters’ references to these other motifs.

Daniel’s vision was not fulfilled in the historical periods to which the book refers. In this it parallels the many prophecies that give the impression that the Day of Yahweh is about to dawn, but after which things continue as they have done before. It happens again after Jesus came declaring the present or imminent establishing of God’s reign (see 2 Pet 3:4). Yet each prophet’s words (and Jesus’ words) were received as from God, partly in the conviction that they would find their fulfillment in time, partly in the awareness that they had seen some measure of fulfillment already which encouraged the conviction that further fulfillment would follow. So it is with Daniel’s vision. The regimes that Daniel and the readers knew did disappear; the reign of the God of the heavens was reestablished in Jerusalem.

By NT times, the rock in Daniel had become associated with other “rock” passages, Isa 8:14 (see also 28:16) and Ps 118:22 (see Luke 20:17–18).[[582]](#footnote-582) While “Daniel 1—6 has no interest in the Davidic line”[[583]](#footnote-583) and there is no indication that Daniel understood the rock to denote a Messiah, it turned out that the one who initiated the ultimate downfall of worldly empires and the establishment of God’s reign was the man Jesus.[[584]](#footnote-584) His virgin birth makes a parallel point to the picture of the rock breaking off without human involvement. He came to a people looking for God’s reign, and he proclaimed that it was now arriving (Mark 15:43; 1:15), though it transpired that the King among kings could also be described as a lamb with the marks of slaughter upon him (Rev 5:6; 17:14), which excludes any triumphalistic understanding of this kingship.[[585]](#footnote-585)

Christians living much later than Jesus’ day have to face the difficulties of their conviction about him. Calvin attempts to demolish Avravanel’s exposition of these difficulties, but he is not entirely successful.[[586]](#footnote-586) The book of Daniel’s own response to the fact that the exile did not bring the ultimate realization of Yahweh’s kingship, in keeping with the proclamation in Isa 40–55, is not to turn that kingship into something nationalistic (Yahweh is Israel’s king) or individualistic (Yahweh’s kingship is realized in the individual believer’s life) or inward (it is realized in a person’s inner being) or otherworldly (it is realized in heaven).[[587]](#footnote-587) It reaffirms the universal, this worldly, material, corporate persepctive of Isa 40–55. It is talking about a reign of God on earth, which continues to be more an object of hope than of sight. We still pray “may your reign come” (Luke 11:2), and—in light of Daniel’s revelation—we have to be referring to a reign which is temporal, worldly, material, and social. Precisely at moments when such a vision is difficult to believe, Daniel’s readers are urged, via his final declaration to the king (v 45b), to take it with utmost seriousness (cf. 8:26; 10:21; Rev 19:9; 21:5; 22:6).

**46–49** Giving Nebuchadnezzar the vision brings glory to God and comfort to dispersion Judahites,[[588]](#footnote-588) and withholding the vision and its interpretation for a while from Nebuchadnezzar has brought recognition to Daniel as a prophet.[[589]](#footnote-589) Nebuchadnezzar is not now expected to take any action in light of this foreshadowed future (contrast 4:27 [24]). He offers the only possible response, an acknowledgment of the revealer—of God and of his human agent. The experience of God at work leads to an awareness of who God is and who is God (v 47). Arguably it is the goal of the story and its point is the main one. Perhaps one may infer that “God loves Nebuchanezzar, too, and has a role for him to play in the fabric of his history.”[[590]](#footnote-590) Its point would then parallel that of Jonah: not just that Yahweh is concerned for all nations, as the OT often affirms, but that God reaches out to oppressors.

Acknowledging God as Master among kings does mean Nebuchadnezzar implicitly qualifying the meaning of his own kingship in a revolutionary way. Acknowledging him as God among gods is not technically a monotheistic statement[[591]](#footnote-591) but it means such a radical qualifying of the ascription of divinity to other deities that when “monotheism or polytheism” becomes the question in the context of later Greek thinking, monotheism is what it implies. The story’s envisaging of such a response by the heathen king corresponds to the earlier affirmation of his position (vv 37–39); indeed it works out the demand implicit in that affirmation. Both affirmation and expectation correspond to ones regarding Cyrus in Isa 40–55 (e.g., 45:1–7). The two belong together. The affirmation (cf. Rom 13) presupposes the expectation that the gentile authority submits its power to God; where this expectation is not fulfilled, the affirmation is withdrawn (cf. Revelation).

Yet the idea of an Israelite being the head of the Babylonian experts again suggests a less exclusive attitude to their worldly wisdom than that of Isa 40–55.[[592]](#footnote-592) Vv 46–48 may seem to confuse the testimony of vv 1–30 that Babylonian wisdom is worthless and that Daniel is nothing except by God’s power,[[593]](#footnote-593) but we are invited to sense no conflict between this insistence and Nebuchadnezzar’s instinct to honor Daniel as God’s representative, the prophetic expert par excellence.[[594]](#footnote-594) Daniel’s revelation has referred to a future assertion of God’s reign. Paradoxically, it effects a realization of God’s reign even now. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that God already rules, “on earth as in the heavens,” and by giving God’s servants authority over the experts and over Babylonian political affairs he institutes another indirect form of divine rule in Babylon itself, “on earth as in the heavens.” The fact that there is to be a new future makes it possible to hope for a new present; it does not mean ceasing to have any hopes for the present. It does imply that any hopes that Judahites have for the present need to bear in mind the interim, temporary, and doomed nature of that system with which they seek to work. The dream “destabilizes the ideological compromise between an affirmation of YHWH’s sovereignty and the reality of Gentile rule” because it speaks of “action by God to bring to an end the delegation of divine rule to Gentile powers…. It challenges the compromise that the plot of the stories had made with Gentile rule.”[[595]](#footnote-595)

The book’s implied readers under the fourth regime (or its actual readers later) are invited to join Nebuchadnezzar in acknowledging the insight of Daniel’s God as revealer and his sovereignty as lord of history, the more convincedly now that they have seen regimes passing as Daniel described, and to look with expectation for the rock breaking off from a crag and destined to dominate the world. Whether they are tested by persecution or by success, such testing is designed to draw them to acknowledge that God is Lord. He is lord of history, whether or not at present he seems to be acting as such. History is going somewhere, even if not by its own energy or design, and even if its movement can be perceived only by divine revelation, not read off from events.[[596]](#footnote-596) While the vision offers no hint regarding the chronology whereby God’s rule will arrive, it does invite its recipients to live as people who expect it as a living reality.[[597]](#footnote-597)

“The story from beginning to end portrays the nature of the reign of the God of Heaven, as it is manifested on earth.”[[598]](#footnote-598) The world rulers are under God’s control, and when he chooses he can make them acknowledge it. The shape of human history is under his control, and the coming of God’s rule is certain. People in exposed positions such as Daniel’s prove God’s wisdom before gentile masters; how much more can ordinary people do so, in the context of their ordinary pressures. Only God controls history, and only he reveals what it holds.The unique sovereign power of the God of Israel has been simultaneously unveiled to and concealed from Nebuchadnezzar, relied on by Daniel, revealed through and in the dream/vision, and recognized by Nebuchadnezzar.

# God Vindicates His Power When Three Judahites Choose Burning Rather Than Compromise (3:1–30)

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## Translation

1aKing *Nebukadne’ṣṣar* made a gold statue, sixty cubits high and sixb cubits wide, and set it up in the vale of Dura in the province of Babel.*c* 2And King Nebukadne’ṣṣar sent word for the assembling of the asatraps, governors, and commissioners,a the bcounselors,c treasurers,d judges, officers,b and all the provincial officials, to come to the dedication of the statue which King *Nebukadne’ṣṣar* had set up. 3aThey assembled, the satraps, governors, and commissioners, the counselors, treasurers, judges, officers, and all the provincial officials, for the dedication of the statue which King *Nebukadne’ṣṣar* had set up, and they were standing in front of the statue bwhich Nebukadne’ṣṣar had set up.b 4And the heralda proclaimed in a loud voice: “Peoples, nations, and languages: you are biddenb, 5at the set moment when you hear the sound of the horn,a the pipe,b the guitar,c the trigon,d the banjo,e the ensemblef with every kind of music, to gbow prostrateg before the gold statue which King Nebukadne’ṣṣar has set up. 6Anyone who does not bow prostrate will be thrown straightaway into the middle of a red-hot blazing furnace.” 7So at the very moment the peoples all heard the sound of the horn, the pipe, the guitar, the trigon, the banjo,a with every kind of music, the people of all races, nations, and languages would bow prostrateb before the gold statue which King Nebukadne’ṣṣar had set up.

8aSo at that very moment some Kasdites came forward and denouncedb the Yehudites. 9They averred to aKing Nebukadne’ṣṣar, “Long live the king! 10Your majesty, you gave notice that everyone who heard the sound of the horn, the pipe, the guitar, the trigon, the banjo, and the ensemble with every kind of music, was to bow prostrate before the gold statue, 11and that anyone who did not bow prostrate would be thrown inside a red-hot blazing furnace. 12There are some Yehudites whom you appointed over the affairs of the province of Babel, Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego. These people have not taken any notice of you, your majesty. They have not honored your godsa or bowed down to the gold statue which you have set up.”

13Nebukadne’ṣṣar, in a furious rage, said to bring Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego. These men were brought before the king. 14Nebukadne’ṣṣar averred to them, “Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego, do you reallya not honor my gods or bow down to the gold statue which I have set up? 15If you are indeeda now ready to fall prostrate before the statue I have made, at the set moment when you hear the sound of the horn, the pipe, the guitar, the trigon, the banjo, and the ensemble with every kind of music….b But if you do not bow down, you will be thrown straightaway inside a red-hot blazing furnace. Then who everc is the god whoc could rescue you from my power?”e 16Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego responded to King Nebukadne’ṣṣar,a “We do not needb to make any cresponse regarding this.c 17Ifa our God, whom we honor, exists,b he is able to rescue us from the red-hot blazing furnace, and he will rescue us from your power, your majesty. 18Even if he should not,a your majesty may be assured that we are not going to honor your gods or bow down to the gold statue which you have set up.”

19Nebukadne’ṣṣar filled with rage, and the image on his face towards Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego changed. He averred that the furnace was to be heated seven times*a* higher than it was usually heated.*b* 20He told athe strongest men in his armya to tie up Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego for throwingb inside the red-hot blazing furnace. 21These men were tied up in their trousers,a their pattishin,b their headwear and their clothes, and thrown inside the red-hot blazing furnace. 22Now as a result of the king’s strict order about the furnace being heated very high, the flames from the fire killed those men who took up Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego.

23aSo these three men, *Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego*, fell inside the red-hot blazing furnace, tied up. 24Then King Nebukadne’ṣṣar, astartled, stood up in alarma and averred to his courtiers,b “Was it not three men that we threw into the middle of the fire, tied up?” They responded to the king, “Yes it was, your majesty.” 25He averred, “There, I can see four men, free, walking abouta in the middle of the fire. It has no effect on them. And the appearance of the fourth is like a divine being.”b

26Nebukadne’ṣṣar went towards the door of the red-hot, blazing furnace and averred, “*Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego*, servants of God On High, come out, come here.” Out came *Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego* from the middle of the fire. 27The satraps, governors and commissioners, and the royal courtiers,a gathered around to seeb these men: the fire had had no power over their bodies, the hair on their heads was not singed, their trousers were unaffected, and the smell of the fire had not come onto them.

28Nebukadne’ṣṣar averred, “Blessed bea the God of *Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego*: he has sent his aide and rescued his servants who entrusted themselves to him. They defiedb the word of the king and gave up their bodiesc rather than honor or bow down before any god but their God. 29I hereby give notice that anyone of any people, nation, or language that says anything remissa about the God of *Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego’* will be torn limb from limb, and his house turned into rubble, because there exists no other God who can deliver in this way.”b

30The king promoted *Šadrak, Mešak, and ‘Abed Nego* in the province of Babel.a

## Notes

1.a. G adds “in Nebuchadnezzar’s eighteenth year,” the year of his capture of Jerusalem (cf. Jer 52:29), which would have been the source of some of the gold that is about to be referred to. See also the *Comment* on 1:1. OG also adds a description of Nebuchadnezzar’s worldwide rule (and another description in v 2).

1.b. One ms of OG has “twelve,” which gives the statue more plausible proportions.

1.c. Or “in the vale of the wall in the city of Babylon” (so Cook, “In the Plain of the Wall”; Saadia also has “city”).

2.a-a. The *and* separates אחשדרפניא (OP), סגניא, and פחותא (both Akk.) from the other officials, who are apparently less senior. As the words mix OP and Akk., they hardly belong to a single ranking structure (e.g., as ministers of satrapies, of provinces, and of smaller areas). Rather the list adds to Persian *satrap* two more familiar Semitic terms known from various contexts in the OT (including 2:48). Both can denote area- or city-governors, or officials more generally, and they need not be distinguished too specifically from *satrap* or from each other here. “It is noteworthy, however, that none of these titles is Greek” (Collins, *Daniel*, 183; see also Koch).

2.b-b. OP terms of more specific, though sometimes uncertain, meaning (see Koch).

2.c. אדרגזריא: perhaps equivalent figures to the “king’s eyes” (and ears) known from Greek and Aramaic texts, officials in the imperial administration whose task was to keep the king informed on affairs in the empire (Oppenheim, “‘The Eyes of the Lord,’” 178; Balcer, “The Athenian Episkopos,” 256–57; cf. Xenophon, *Cyropedia* 8.2.10–12).

2.d. גדבריא = גזבריא (or does it refer to the royal hairdressers?—so Gershevitch, “Amber at Persepolis,” 202).

3.a. באדין “then” is used as a connecting particle here and elsewhere in chap. 3 (like אדין in chap. 2); I have left it untranslated.

3.b-b. G omits, simplifying the repetitive MT.

4.a. כרוזא, cf. OP *xrausa*, Gk. κῆρυξ, *which* may be of oriental origin.

4.b. Lit. “they are saying” (impersonal third person pl.).

5.a. קרנא, ram’s horn (cf. שופר), more a heraldic than a musical instrument.

5.b. משרוקיתא: שרק “hiss” (onomatopoeic?) suggests a whistle or shepherd’s pipe (cf. Judg 5:16).

5.c. רוסתקי corresponds to κίθαρις; it is unclear whether it is originally a Gk. or Semitic word. It refers to something like a lyre or guitar (which etymologically derives from words such as κίθαρις).

5.d. סבכא, a Semitic word to denote an instrument of Asian origin, a triangular harp with four or more strings, played for entertainment (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 4.175de; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.14.7).

5.e. פסנתרין corresponds to ψαλτηρίον (from ψάλλω “pluck”), another oriental triangular stringed instrument, with a sounding board, played for entertainment (Macrobius [see n. 5.d]; mentioned earlier in Aristotle, *Problemata* 919b).

5.f. סומפניה corresponds to συμφωνία. It can denote ensemble playing, here indicating the instruments playing together after each plays individually, in accordance with common practice. Later it can refer to a particular instrument, perhaps a tambourine (Mitchell). When Antiochus Epiphanes revels to the συμφωνία (Polybius 26.1.4), it could have either meaning. Its omission in v 7 (whether original or not) is more natural if it is taken to refer to playing together; it would be less dispensable if it referred to a specific instrument. In contrast with the list in v 2, several Gk. words come in this list.

5.g-g. Lit., “fall and bow down”: see n. 2:46.a.

7.a. Some medieval mss, Th, and Vg add וסומפניא “and the ensemble”; more likely assimilation to vv 5, 10, 15 than original here.

7.b. Taking the participles סגדין . . . נפלין to have imperfect meaning, though BA participles often have aorist meaning, and the context could refer to one occasion. See BL 81n.

8.a. Th, Syr lack דנה ל ב ק כל “so” (OG links it to v 7), which could be dittog. from v 7 where it is also followed by זמנא בה “at the moment that,” but is more likely an omission on the basis of unclarity about the logic of the “so” (see *Comment*).

8.b. די יהוןקרצ‍ אכלו “ate pieces of,” an Akk. expression for “accusing” (*CAD* A, 1:255–56).

9.a. Usually people speak “before” (ם ד ק) not “to” (ל) the king (cf. 2:10, 27) The story may imply discourtesy on the accusers’ part (cf. vv 16, 24; 6:6, 15 [7, 16])(Charles).

12.a. K’s ך י ה ל א explicitly marks the word as pl. (cf. Muraoka, *Reader*, 47); Q ך ה ל א may conform the spelling to a different morphological convention or may be s. OG τῷ εἰδώλῷ σου takes as s., and specifically takes the statue as a god/idol.

14.a. א ד צ (√ יצד); cf. Torrey, “Stray Notes on the Aramaic of Daniel and Ezra,” 231–32. It need not be equated with or emended to אזדא (BDB) or translated “deliberately” (cf. BH צדיה).

15.a. ן ו כ י ת י א retains an emphatic sense.

15.b. “The fact that the first sentence lacks an explicit apodosis is not disturbing, as there are many parallels for this phenomenon” (Wesselius, “Language and Style in BA,” 205; cf. JM 167r).

15.c. הוא מן (BDB, 1100b).

15.d. Reading דִּי, not דֵּי “sufficient” (BDB, 191)—against L.

15.e. MT has pl. “my hands”; some medieval mss, Th have יְדִי “my hand”; v 17 has s ידך “your hand.”

16.a. Repunctuating with BHS against MT למלכא נבוכדנצר (“to the king: “Nebukadne’ṣṣar . . .’”), which is implausibly discourteous (see further Mastin, “The Text of Daniel 3:16”) though it prompts Rashi to pass on the observation that when Nebuchadnezzar acts legitimately he is “the king,” but on an occasions like this one he is simply “Nebuchadnezzar.”

16.b. Read חָשחין with some medieval mss, not חַשחין “needed,” against L (השחין in the BHS fascicle is a misprint). “We have no difficulty . . .” (Ehrlich) is attractive, but difficult to justify. “We do not mind/care . . .” (cf. rv mg, Ps-Saadia) presupposes that חשח = חוש/חשש.

16.c-c. פתגם ה נ ד על; cf. Ezra 5:11, 17; *TTH* 208. EVV “in this matter” assumes דנה qualifies פתגם (cf. G but not Syr); this would require פמגמא (emphatic).

17.a. Vg takes הן to mean “behold,” and G imply the same assumption, as they have a statement and they thus avoid what might seem a troubling if-clause, but הן does not mean “behold” in BA.

17.b. Cf. neb; איתי thus, uninflected, usually means “is, exists” (cf. esp. v 29). rsv has “If it be so [i.e., if the king does so], our God is able . . .” (cf. Ezra 5:17), but the phrase is abrupt, and the punctuation destroys the parallel with v 15, which v 17 takes up. “If our God . . . is able . . .” (NRSV) links איתי with יכל, but the separating of copula and participle is unparalleled in BA. Further, it is unlikely that the men would be pictured as questioning God’s power, whereas the question whether such a God exists has already been raised (v 15), and v 17 takes this up; cf. v 29. See discussion in Coxon, “Daniel iii 17”; Joubert, 56–58.

18.a. לא והן, i.e., “even if he does not rescue us,” not “even if such a God does not exist.” The conditional clause follows on from that in v 17, rather than paralleling it (Heller**,** “ ‘But if not…’ *What?*” argues for “even if you do not throw us into the furnace”). OG again safeguards against the scandalous possible interpretation by turning the if-clause into an affirmation, “and then it will be clear to you” (cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 177).

19.a. Lit. “one seven”; a proverbial hyberbole (cf. Prov 26:16, 25).

19.b. “Lit., “was seen” to be heated—than anyone had seen before (Behrmann; cf. Koch).

20.a-a. Lit., “men mighty of strength who were in his army”; for this as superlative (jpsV, neb), cf. ב גבוד in Ps 112:2 (neb), Prov 30:30 (BDB, 150a). Variants of the same roots are here used for “men” and “mighty,” then for “strength” and “army,” so that the effect is almost “the most forceful he-men in his forces.” גבר itself suggests “man as strong” (BDB, 150).

20.b. The second inf. למרמא is dependent on the first לכפתה “to tie up”; cf. BL 85a. EVV “and to throw them” requires ו before the verb (haplog?).

21.a. See Lacocque. Less plausibly טרליהון is taken to denote cloaks (Cook, “The Articles of Dress in Dan. iii, 21; BDB; *DTT*) or headwear (Nyberg, “Ein iranisches Wort im Buche Daniel,” 178–87).

21.b. פטישיהון is the most puzzling of the four words in the list. *DTT* suggests “trousers”; Gk. πέτασος means “headwear.” Possibly at least one of the words is an explanatory gloss on an unfamiliar expression (see Nyberg, “Ein iranisches Wort im Buche Daniel”); I have thus transliterated this word, which may have been strange to the original hearers.

23.a. The verse reads better as a resumptive lead-in to a new paragraph than as (otiose) repetition at the end of the previous paragraph (against MT).

24.a-a. בהתבהלה וקם ה נ ת suggests fear, not mere amazement (BDB), as Syr makes explicit: cf. n. 2:25.a.

24.b. הדברוהי, cf. 3:27; 4:36 [33]; 6:7 [8]. The term is not used in a consistent way and it is not clear how these people relate to the groups listed in v 2. In v 27 it may summarize the second, subordinate group of officials in that list.

25.a. On the vocalization of מהלכין, see Eitan.

25.b. אלהין בר. “The Son of God” (KJV) would require emphatic אלהיא, or better emphatic s. אלהא. Further, in BA pl. אלהין does not elsewhere have s. meaning like BH אלהים (Ginsberg, *Handbook* i, 2:17; BL 87f). OG has “angel of God,” Th “a son of God,” Vg “a/the son of God.” Jewish tradition identifies the aide with Gabriel, who appears in Dan 8 and 9 (see Pace, *Daniel*, 107).

27.a. See n. 24.b.

27.b. See BL 107h.

28.a. בריך is pe’al (contrast 2:20), perhaps implying “blessed is . . .” (cf. Bickerman, “Bénédiction et prière,” 527).

28.b. So EVV for שנא (lit., “change”); BDB, “frustrate.”

28.c. G “to the fire” adds לנורא (cf. 1 Cor 13:3).

29.a. While שלה might be a misspelling of שאלה (“thing,” 4:17 [14]), the latter would be a weak word here—hence perhaps Q שלו (“remissness,” 6:5 [6]). Perhaps K is שֹׂלָּה “insult, blasphemy” (neb; Akk. *sillatu*, BHS; and cf. BH ה ל ס, Jewish Aramaic סלא; see Paul, “Daniel 3:29”).

29.b. כדנה: “like this [god]” (Bentzen) is grammatically possible, but would be unusual.

30.a. MT correctly marks a section division here (cf. EVV). The printed Hebrew Bible locates it three verses later.

## Form/Structure/Setting

### Form

See chap. 1 *Form*. Along with chap. 6, Dan 3 can be seen as a tale of court conflict, concerning three men who have been promoted in the administration; a royal edict gives their rivals the opportunity to attack them for treason, they are found guilty, but they are then vindicated and further promoted.

Given that the story concerns a religious and not merely a political offense, it can also be seen as a confessor legend telling of heroes of faith who defy a royal edict despite the sanction of execution, because obeying it would mean contravening a fundamental aspect of their religious commitment. The sceptical king examines them and gives them a final opportunity to obey, but he thereby only provides them with a chance to make their confession before the king himself, despite the reiterated threat of death. The penalty is duly exacted.

Matters do not turn out as the king expected, because the story also has features of an aretalogy—it is not merely about their amazing faithfulness but about God’s amazing faithfulness. The confessors’ peril is underlined by repeated motifs such as the king’s personal initiative regarding the statue (vv 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 14, 15, 18) and the ceremony (vv 2, 4–5, 10–11, 12, 15), his wrath (vv 13, 19), the red-hot blazing furnace (vv 6, 11, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23, 26) heated extraordinarily high (vv 19, 22), and the men’s being tied up, by particularly strong soldiers (vv 20, 21, 23). The theological possibility of some act of God is underlined by the overt blasphemy (v 15b) which makes explicit the statue’s own significance, and the possibility of such an act of God is raised by the men’s confession (v 17). The act itself comes at the last moment; the event is announced first by the king’s reaction (v 24). It constitutes an extraordinarily complete preserving of the men, by clearly supernatural means (vv 25-26), whose results are also witnessed by the ministers of state (v 27). Blasphemy is replaced by blessing, confrontation by recognition, opposition and persecution by tolerance and protection (v 28–29).

In effect, as a result of the act of God, the chapter ends up as a conversion story. The three men do not emerge as individuals in the story, and they themselves give us no account of their experience. The one who gives the account is Nebuchadnezzar; the story is about him.[[599]](#footnote-599) The chapter begins with Nebuchadnezzar as something like a blasphemer and ends up with him as someone who is blessing God[[600]](#footnote-600)--even if it will turn out that he has been only “half-converted.”[[601]](#footnote-601)

The story combines factual allusions and traditional motifs that appear in many oriental court folktales.[[602]](#footnote-602) A place called Dura, colossal gold-plated statues or monuments, dedication ceremonies, lists of state officials, the use of a variety of musical instruments, brick furnaces, and execution by burning are all known from the Babylonian or Persian periods. They indicate either that the story has factual reference or that the storyteller is giving local color to his fiction. Jer 29:21–23 tells of the burning of two patriotic prophets by Nebuchadnezzar, and Dan 3 has been seen as a legend based on that event.[[603]](#footnote-603) With Dan 6, the companion court conflict tale/confessor legend/aretalogy/conversion story, the chapter as a whole is closer to oral models than are other stories in Daniel. This aspect is reflected in the extensive use of repetition (much of which OG removes):[[604]](#footnote-604) “the satraps, governors, and commissioners . . .,” “the [gold] statue which King Nebuchadnezzar hadsset up,” “people of all races, nations, and languages,” “the moment you hear the sound of the horn, the pipe . . .,” “fall prostrate,” “Shadrak, Meshak, and Abed Nego,” and “[thrown inside the] red-hot blazing furnace”; the ten occurrences of גברין “men” are also noticeable. In other instances, words or phrases recur with different meanings: the king gives notice (v 10), the men take no notice (v 12), the king gives notice in the opposite direction (v 29) (each time טצם שם). Nebuchadnezzar’s attitude changes (v 19), the men’s appearance is not changed (v 27), they change the king’s word (v 29).[[605]](#footnote-605) Repetition need not suggest mockery or humor (repetition is a stylistic feature in Gen 1), but in this story several of the repetitions do convey a humorous, mocking impression, and thus heighten a sense of satire about the story.[[606]](#footnote-606) It is “a parody of this ruthless king.”[[607]](#footnote-607)

Dan 3 can also be seen as a midrash, the story taking as its text Isa 43:1–3 (cf. Ps 27:2; 66:10–12); compare Isa 48:10; 50:11.[[608]](#footnote-608) Its polemic against idolatry gives concrete form to the sarcastic attacks on idolatry in Isa 40:18–20; 41:6–7; 44:9–20; 46:1–7 (cf. Jer 10); סגד “bow down” occurs in the OT only in Isa 44:15–19; 46:6; Dan 3 (ten times), also 2:46.[[609]](#footnote-609) OT promises about Yahweh’s heavenly aides protecting his people (Ps 34:8 [7]; 91:11) become concrete reality here. The story also parallels Gen 38, the one other OT story about someone who escapes judgment by fire.[[610]](#footnote-610)

### Structure

After the opening statement setting the scene (v 1), the story begins (vv 2–7) with a paragraph involving Nebuchadnezzar/his herald and the state officers who are summoned for the ceremony. This paragraph hints at the difficulty that becomes explicit in the second paragraph (vv 8–12), which involves Nebuchadnezzar and the accusers, and is dominated by the words of the latter. The third paragraph (vv 13–18) comprises a confrontation between Nebuchadnezzar and the three Judahites, which brings the confessor legend to its climax. The plot thus far is simple, and dominated by dialogue.[[611]](#footnote-611) Vv 19–29 are more complex. They interweave dialogue and action, bring several actors onto the stage at once, and describe feelings as well as words and deeds (vv 19, 24). The straightforward narrating of words and events is also varied by the suspenseful device of recording the king’s response to what happens before relating the event itself; indeed, the main description of the event is given via Nebuchadnezzar’s words (vv 24–25), as is the main theological response to its significance (vv 28–29). V 30 rounds off the court tale aspect to the story. MT has section breaks after v 12, 18, and 25 and a chapter break after v 23.

The story relates how the three men are put on the spot, denounced, interrogated, executed, delivered, and promoted. The arrogant king is humbled, the faithful Judahites are exalted. Put diagrammatically:

The king commands all to bow to the statue → Judahites sentenced

The king commands all to bow to God On High ← Judahites saved.[[612]](#footnote-612)

After v 23 G includes a song of praise by the confessors, closing with a prayer, and nicely adds that it was the sound of the singing from the furnace that gained the king’s attention. The effect of the additions is to suggest a link between prayer and deliverance,[[613]](#footnote-613) to slow the narrative down markedly, and to shift the center of the chapter from the story to the prayer and song.[[614]](#footnote-614)

### Setting

The pressure to assimilation and the mortal price that may be paid for faithfulness suggest a setting in the dispersion, though the challenge to resist pagan pressure, if necessary to the death, would also be urgently relevant in the Antiochene crisis in Jerusalem. Three of the terms for musical instruments are of Greek origin, which could point towards a setting in the Greek period, though the evidence for Greek influence in Asia in the Persian era means it does not require it.[[615]](#footnote-615) The event has been connected with a ceremonial convocation to pledge loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar referred to in Jer 51:59–64[[616]](#footnote-616) and with Nabonidus’s introduction of the Sin cult in Babylon.[[617]](#footnote-617) Herodotus, *Histories* 1.86–87 relates a story about Cyrus putting Croesus, the king he had defeated, on a funeral pyre, wondering if some god would save him; Croesus is saved by a rainstorm in response to his prayer to Apollo.

Dan 3 comprises a sharpened version of Dan 1. The three men are put into a difficulty that follows from 2:49, though Nebuchadnezzar’s own behavior and his sceptical question (v 15) do not follow on from his experience in chap. 2 and his confession in 2:47. The stories in Daniel are separate and largely independent, and they deal in types and cartoons rather than rounded characterization; there is no character development in them, as if they were a modern novel.[[618]](#footnote-618) But the order of the book might imply that building a real statue arose from seeing the visionary statue of chap. 2[[619]](#footnote-619) and sought to consolidate the empire that the dream threatened. And/or the story about a statue clarifies the significance of the dream statue in the preceding story.[[620]](#footnote-620) The gold statue affirms that Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold and ignores what happens later to the statue, in a way that parallels the cynical reading of Isa 39:8.

One can only guess at the reason behind Daniel’s absence from the chapter. The effect of his absence is to make the story complement the previous chapters in which he has been the key figure. While the three men are not exactly ordinary Judahites, they are not in the same league as Daniel, and their story might speak in a distinctive way to ordinary Judahites.

## Comment

**1-3** Setting up statues is a familiar feature of the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek empires.[[621]](#footnote-621) This statue stands higher than most, though not than the Rhodes Colossus (70 cubits; the various standards for the cubit average about half a yard). Perhaps it included a pedestal like statues that are said to have been located at one of the various Babylonian sites called Dura/Duru/Dur (Akk. “fortification”).[[622]](#footnote-622) This understanding would also account for the statue’s odd proportions; compare also inscribed stelas with figures at the top,[[623]](#footnote-623) though a stela is really a מצבה not a צלם.[[624]](#footnote-624) But to reduce the statue to something normal (cf. jb) is to miss the point that the statue is extraordinary and monumental, even grotesque. Maybe the fact that sixty cubits was the height of the Second Temple (Ezra 6:3)[[625]](#footnote-625) implies that it is pretentious and beginss to hint at its blasphemous nature. On the other hand, the repetition of the figure six suggests something symbolizing imperfection, even something horrendous (cf. Rev 13:18).[[626]](#footnote-626) “Gold” may imply gold plating rather than solid gold (Isa 40:19), though Herodotus (*Histories* 1.183) describes a Bel statue made of 800 talents (22 tons) of gold. The gold also recalls the gold of Solomon’s Temple; R. Bibi ben Abaye related that the Babylonians had to bring all the gold that had been plundered from Jerusalem to make its base so that not would not fall over.[[627]](#footnote-627)

The statue may have represented Nebuchadnezzar himself. Assyrian kings set up such statues as symbols of their dominion, and Hellenistic monarchs were deified, and this understanding is suggested by the date in G (see n. 1.a). If Nebuchadnezzar had been insisting that he himself be worshiped, however, one would have expected the story to incorporate some explicit critique (cf. Isa 14:13–21; also Judith’s treatment of Holofernes, who seeks this worship on Nebuchadnezzar’s behalf [Jdt 3:8]). The association of bowing down before the statue with serving Nebuchadnezzar’s god(s) (vv 12, 14) rather suggests a statue of a divinity, presumably Bel.[[628]](#footnote-628) But the text’s omitting to clarify what the statue represented reflects its concern with the challenge it issued to the three Judahites, and reflects the interwovenness and support of god, king, and nation:[[629]](#footnote-629) compare the army commander’s combining of pragmatic and religious arguments—the latter themselves mutually contradictory—in 2 Kgs 18–19. Further, even if it was Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, falling prostate before it would imply acknowledging his god, as Nebuchadnezzar’s falling prostate before Daniel (2:46—the same words) implied acknowledgment of Daniel’s God. Conversely, even if it is a statue of a god, it is a kind of idol of Nebuchadnezzar himself, an extension of his will.[[630]](#footnote-630)

**4–7** People hearing this story in a Persian context might smile first at the talk of a gathering of all the peoples, nations, and language groups. The Persian empire was indeed the largest that Western Asia (let alone Europe or North Africa) had ever known. It was proud of the fact, it preserved and exhibited many lists of these nations, but it needed means of holding the empire together.[[631]](#footnote-631)

As in many cultures, music draws attention to state and religious processions and ceremonials. The band likely comprises two wind and three string instruments (see *Notes*).[[632]](#footnote-632) None are used in Israelite worship; most of the terms are foreign ones for instruments used in secular contexts. They thus imply a double judgment on the alien, pagan nature of the ceremony that Nebuchadnezzar is inaugurating. The omission of the word for “ensemble” when the list recurs may anticipate the disobedience of the Judahites. The king’s instructions are already not being completely heeded.[[633]](#footnote-633)

Commentators usually assume that the furnace (v 6) was metal and beehive-shaped with an opening on the top into which the men were thrown, and a door at the side through which the inside could be seen, [[634]](#footnote-634)  though a story about Abram in *The Book of Biblical Antiquities* (Pseudo-Philo) 6:15-18 implies it might have been a tunnel-shaped brick furnace. The burning of criminals is referred to throughout the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek periods (Jer 29:22; Herodotus, *Histories* 1.86; 4.69; 2 Macc 7; 13:4–8).[[635]](#footnote-635) Persians might see such an event as trial by fire rather than as punishment, because of the sacredness of fire.[[636]](#footnote-636)

**8–12** The “so” parallels the expression that opened v 7 and draws attention to the mean logic of the Kasdites. “The heart of a good story is grupping conflict moving toward resolution,”[[637]](#footnote-637) and here the conflict begins.

Why would the three Judahites not bow down? Bowing need not suggest the acknowledgment of a deity. Yet their refusal compares with Mordechai’s (Esth 3), and bowing down to any image came to be suspect.[[638]](#footnote-638) Although the OT can take for granted that no Israelite would be free to obey the king’s edict, the OT as a whole also makes clear that in practice Israelites often did bow down to other gods and their images, and the polemic of Isa 40—55 implies that such submission would indeed be a temptation in Babylon. Thus the assumption that the three men would take their firm stance would be a challenge to Judahites in exile.[[639]](#footnote-639)

The Kasdites may be people of Babylonian race (as in 1:4) who are hostile to the three Judahites on ethnic grounds (cf. Haman in Esther); or they may be court experts (as in chap. 2) suffering from professional jealousy (cf. chap. 6).[[640]](#footnote-640) Their accusation (v 12) relates to the three men’s office, which explains their expected presence at the ceremony and might explain Daniel’s absence (cf. 2:49). The three who were merely *youths* in chap. 1 and merely Daniel’s *friends* in chap. 2 are here full-grown *men* (גברין) of importance in their own right.

**13–18** For the king’s rage, see on 2:12. His question in v 15 has special emphasis, being an addition to the form of words used when the command and its sanction have appeared before in the chapter.[[641]](#footnote-641) It is uncomfortably similar to the questions attributed to the Assyrian king in 2 Kgs 18:28-35.[[642]](#footnote-642) In the context of Daniel, the obvious answer to his question is, “The one you just called God among gods” (2:47).[[643]](#footnote-643)

Yet the arrogance of his challenge and of the confessors’ reply should not be exaggerated. Nebuchadnezzar may not be seen as purposely slighting God. His scepticism compares with that of the experts in 2:11, and he is not condemned for blasphemy; indeed he is granted a revelation, to which he duly responds (vv 24–29). He is not an anticipation of the small horn of 7:24–25.[[644]](#footnote-644) In the confessors’ reply (vv 16–18), the lack of formal address to the king corresponds to the form of exchanges in chaps. 1–2; their directness also parallels Daniel’s directness elsewhere (though the formal greeting appears in 6:21-22 [22-23]) and expresses a positive commitment to God more than a contempt for the king. The *this* to which they need make no response is perhaps not the command of v 15a but the theological assertion at the end of v 15.[[645]](#footnote-645)

With “our God, whom we honor” (v 17), compare the characterization in vv 28, 29 and the contrast with vv 12, 14. Chap. 3 again avoids using the name Yahweh by utilizing these phrases. The three men speak as if their God’s existence is an open question (see n. 17.b), and thus as if their rescue is an open question. But the allowance is made only for the sake of argument; it is the point which Nebuchadnezzar has implicitly questioned (v 15) and which events will have to establish. For themselves, the story assumes, the three have no doubt that their God can and will rescue them: v 17 makes this conviction explicit. There is here no questioning of God’s power or will separate from the questioning of his existence. If his existence is accepted, it is the existence of one who can and will rescue. The confessors’ implied confidence of rescue thus parallels Daniel’s confidence in 1:12–13; 2:16. Philologically, indeed, their “if not” (v 18) could denote “if he cannot [rescue]” or “if he does not [exist]”; the three men would then be genuinely contemplating the possibility that their God lacks existence or power, yet boldly resolving to continue to be loyal to him. But this magnificent idea is implausibly modern. The three men are granting only the theoretical possibility that God will not intervene, and assuring the reader, for whom God will probably not do so, that this possibility would make no difference to their stance. Saadia comments that there are three situations in which one would be compelled to give up one’s life: if we are pressured to commit something forbidden such as adultery (cf. Gen 39:9), if we are pressured to kill (cf. 1 Sam 22:17), and if we are pressured to bow down to an image.[[646]](#footnote-646)

**19–22** The narrative nicely reuses the word for “image” to apply to the look on Nebuchadnessar’s face. He is so angry that the executioners are not even allowed time to strip the prisoners (v 21; contrast Ps 22:18 [19]; Mark 15:24; *m.* *Sanhedrin* 6:3), which eventually heightens the miracle (v 27). Tormentors are often described as experiencing the torment they had planned (6:24 [25]; Esther),[[647]](#footnote-647) in accordance with their deserve; the fate of these executioners in the fierce fire once more underlines the confessors’ hopeless situation.

**23–30** The resumptive introduction to this paragraph and what follows (vv 23-24) takes attention away from the three men and their fate and builds suspense as it requires us to look at things from Nebuchadnezzar’a angle. We no longer see things for ourselves; we see them only though his eyes.[[648]](#footnote-648) Apparently he alone sees the “divine being” (v 25; cf. theophanies in 2 Kgs 6:17; Acts 9:17). אלהין בר might for Nebuchadnezzar suggest an actual god. Similarly God’s aide (מלאך, EVV “angel,” v 28; cf. 6:22 [23]) might signify in effect God himself; compareYahweh’s מלאך in passages such as Exod 3:2. Indeed, Isa 43:1–3 has promised God’s own presence when Israel walks through fire. Nevertheless to Judahites אלהין בר would rather indicate a subordinate heavenly being: compare the supernatural lookout (וקדיש עיר) of 4:13, 17, 23 [10, 14, 20], and the humanlike heavenly interpreters and leaders in chaps. 7–12. In such a context, then, God’s מלאך will denote a heavenly being who is of another order than God himself.

The title *God On High* (v 26) is another expression at home on the lips of either a foreigner (4:2, 17, 34 [3:32; 4:14, 31]; Gen 14:18–20; Num 24:16; Isa 14:14) or a Judahite(Dan 4:24–32 [21–29]; 5:18, 21; 7:18–27; Gen 14:22; Deut 32:8; Psalms), though its nuances for each would again differ. To both it suggests a God of universal authority but of otherwise undefined personal qualities. For a pagan, it would denote only the highest among many gods, but as an epithet of El it was accepted in early OT times and applied to Yahweh, so that for a Judahite it has monotheistic (or mono-Yahwistic) implications. Like terms such as *Lord of the heavens*, this expression of ultimately pagan origin becomes popular after the exile as a substitute for “Yahweh”; unlike the former it continues to increase in popularity over later centuries (cf. 2:18 *Comment*).[[649]](#footnote-649)

## Explanation

**1–7** This Nebuchadnezzar is one whom God allowed to devastate and pillage the temple in Jerusalem (cf. G’s date) which David had enriched with 100,000 talents of gold. He is one who has been characterized in chap. 2 as the gold head of a multi-metaled statue, and he has allegedly acknowledged the picture. But “here is a strange alteration of a man, that upon so good ground a little before acknowledged one only true God, now to fall to this foul sin of exalting himself as a God, but such is the fickleness and inconstancy of carnal men.”[[650]](#footnote-650) That earlier acknowledgment seems to have been “the confession… of a man thunderstruck,”[[651]](#footnote-651) after which “he returned to his former self, like a dog to his vomit” (Prov26:11).[[652]](#footnote-652)

He now constructs an immense gold statue of his own, one which signifies “erecting Nebuchadnezzar’s ego.”[[653]](#footnote-653) It affirms the beginning of his dream vision but it implicitly disputes what follows, and in particular disputes that statue’s fatal weakness and destruction.[[654]](#footnote-654) This statue was to be more impressive than any that dispersion Judahites would ever see, to be dedicated in the presence of as impressive a gathering of state dignitaries as they would ever witness, representing as many nations as they could ever envisage, at a ceremony heralded by as cosmopolitan an ensemble as they would ever hear. I write on the eve of the inauguration of a new president of the United States and at a time when Brits are discussing the eventual coronation of a new monarch. Such great ceremonial occasions use religion to undergird the significance of the occasion. They play an important role as affirmations of national identity; they reinforce the bonds that are needed to hold the nation together. They are occasions that make a point of involving representatives of the nation’s various ethnic groups; they are designed to incorporate the nation’s diversity into that bond. Nebuchadnezzar similarly wanted the diversity of his empire to be recognized and to have its diverse ethnicities and cultures join together.

So we might have little grounds for complaint at Nebuchadnezzar’s plan, unless it sounds like a worrying reversal of the scattering from Babel in Gen 11.[[655]](#footnote-655) The herald’s summons comes to its climax, however, with the sanction applied to nonpartircipation in the ceremony, a personal holocaust for anyone who refuses to take part. The image now assumes more sinister significance regarding the destiny of any nonconformist, and regarding the thinking of the king himself. Unclarity over whether the statue represents Nebuchadnezzar or his god does not matter so much. The point it that Nebuchadnezzar set it up (vv 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 5, 7, 12, 14, 18). It represents his authority. It counteracts the vulnerability implicit in the image in chap. 2. But “there’s a suspicious abundance about this music” which suggests Nebuchadnezzar only half-believes that he has people’s inner allegiance.[[656]](#footnote-656) He feels insecure.[[657]](#footnote-657) The atheism of force is actually an atheism of fear.[[658]](#footnote-658)

But when Nebuchadnezzar summoned, people assembled (v 3), and when his band played, people fell on their faces, “as if mindlessly… as if that bowing down were just a thoughtless reflex.”[[659]](#footnote-659) An impressive ceremony of the kind described, supported by the sanction attached to neglecting it, embodies the double pressure of the pagan state, its attractiveness and its unscrupulousness.[[660]](#footnote-660) The participants are leaders of all ranks from all over the empire, and Judahite leaders would be expected to take part among them. For most Judahites, the expectation would not apply; ordinary people did not have to attend. But the story presupposes contexts where some Judahites attain positions of responsibility in the state, and have to face the question of where lie the limits to their accepting its expectations.

Nebuchadnezzar might have reminded the Judahite leaders that there had been contexts when bowing before foreign idols was tolerated (2 Kgs 5:18–19). Judahites had not minded worshiping idols when they were in Canaan (there were no Judahite martyrs then), and Moses had said they would do so in exile (Deut 4:27–28).[[661]](#footnote-661) So it might not be obvious that they had to draw the line where they did, as was the case over where to draw the line in chap. 1; and there is no indication that they made a point of publicly displaying their non-cooperation. Yet the story assumes that they had no difficulty perceiving that they could not take part. It does not even directly state the fact. After all, the prostration required is just like that offered to Yahweh (e.g., Pss 95; 100).[[662]](#footnote-662) Paul will later tell the faithful in Rome to be subject to the governing authorities (Rom 13:1) but John will imply that faithfulness will refuse to bow down to an image set up by a beast even though it is given authority (Rev 13).[[663]](#footnote-663) Perhaps the Judahites face a choice between offering loyalty and honor to the king as their patron or to their God as their patron. You can’t be loyal to and honor two patrons.[[664]](#footnote-664)

**8–12** Some Kasdites draw the king’s attention to the Judahites’ indifference to his favor, their flouting of his word, their rejection of his gods, and their disregard for his statue. Perhaps behind their action is another dispersion experience, the jealousy of members of the host nation at Judahite success.

The Kasdites’ attack and Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction suggest that they saw the Judahites’ stance as involving both disloyalty (as if it were the king’s statue) and impiety (as if it were a god’s). From Nebuchadnezzar’s angle, the Kasdites suggest, the problem with the Judahites action is that it ignores “your” gods and the statue that “you” have set up (v 12; cf. v 18). Whatever the statue’s nature, it held religion and state together. The institution that claims absolute authority is inclined also to claim the sanctions of religion. “Nebuchadnezzar’s statue stands for political and economic power” while the Judahites are characterized by “political ‘atheism’… in their refusal to bow to the symbols of Babylonian power.”[[665]](#footnote-665)

Empires can have feet of clay and can fall apart, so it is as well to use all means to reinforce their strength and unity.[[666]](#footnote-666) God is acknowledged not because he is God, but because this acknowledgment helps to undergird the state. Herr Baldur von Schirach declared in 1936, “One cannot be a good German and at the same time deny God, but an arousal of faith in the eternal German is at the same time an arousal of faith in the eternal God. If we act as true Germans we act according to the laws of God. Whoever serves Adolf Hitler, the Führer, serves Germany, and whoever serves Germany serves God.”[[667]](#footnote-667) Five years later in an essay on “The Gods of the Nations and God,” Martin Buber observed how every nation is inclined to make an idol of its own inner spirit; Israel’s calling was to erect a throne to God rather than to itself, and “that is why every nation is bound to desire to get rid of us at the time it is in the act of setting itself up as the absolute.”[[668]](#footnote-668) The reality of the actual holocaust that followed prevents us from regarding chapters such as Dan 3 as children’s stories. And whereas readers in the United States and the United Kingdom are inclined to identify with the three men, it is at least important for us to identify with Nebuchadnezzar.

**13–18** Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction of rage parallels the fury he expressed to the Kasdites in 2:12. There is no carry-over from the recognition reached in 2:46–49. The king has become “a persecuting tyrant.”[[669]](#footnote-669) The personal nature of his reaction suggests that the statue embodies not only a religious and national commitment but a personal one. Nebuchadnezzar’s own standing was tied up with the statue. He is offended at the affront, not just at their blasphemy or at their rebellion. His expectation is, “You shall have no other god but me.”[[670]](#footnote-670) The point becomes explicit when he asks rhetorically whether any *god* could rescue the confessors from *his* power. The challenge recalls those of Sennacherib’s field-commander in 2 Kgs 18:33–35; 19:10–13.[[671]](#footnote-671) Here as there and as in the story of the seven martyrs in 2 Macc 7, such expressions of human confidence and skepticism unwittingly function chiefly to provide opportunity for giving testimony in word or event to the reality and power of the God who is slighted.

The behavior and words of the three men stand in stark contrast to the “comic and absurd mechanistic behavior” of the officials.[[672]](#footnote-672) They speak straight and succinctly without the repetitions that characterize everyone else.[[673]](#footnote-673) “The miracle of the confessing Church stands before Nebuchadnezzar in absolute sovereign power,” in a way comparable with the stances of Jesus’ declaration before Pilate, of the apostles before the Sanhedrin, and of Paul before felix and Agrippa (Matt 27:11-14; Acts 5:20; 24—26).[[674]](#footnote-674)

There can be various reasons for refusing to reply to attacks and accusations (Ps 38:13-16 [14–17]; Isa 53:7; Mk 14:60–61; 15:4–5; Lk 23:9; 1 Pet 2:22–23). The confessors do so in order to leave events to testify to the sole worth-ship of their God, though they allow themselves two remarks that need to be made before the implementing of the king’s threat.

The first remark is their expression of conviction regarding what God is going to do (v 17). The confessors know a God who makes Nebuchadnezzar’s goldplated statue look tawdry.[[675]](#footnote-675) Formally, the existence of their God is expressed hypothetically; but neither they nor their readers regard his existence as uncertain. And given that he exists, he is able to rescue; that follows logically. And he *will* rescue; that is a bold, unevidenced wager parallel to those of 1:12–13; 2:14–16. This expectation is expressed before the event, like a prophecy, so that the event can be seen to be the vindication of it, of those who express it, and of the one in whom they hope.

The second remark stands in superficial tension with the first, for it speaks of the possibility of not being rescued. Their “if… but if not” in vv 17-18 thus balances the king’s “if… but if not” in v 15.[[676]](#footnote-676) Their wager has affirmed that they will be rescued. But such rescue has often not been the experience of the faithful, and for their sake the three heroes make clear that even in that situation they would still maintain their commitment to God. The implicit question being asked of them is the Adversary’s question about Job, does he honor God only because of the blessings God gives him? God may be trusted to protect us, but our honoring him is not conditional upon his preserving us from every blazing furnace, so that if he should not do so, we are free to abandon him and try some other god.[[677]](#footnote-677) Death is preferable to apostasy. We regard no other god but God, no matter what happens. We obey God, not human beings (Acts 4:19–20; 5:29).

Such a confession means that human potentates are defeated whether their victims escape the flames (as they will here) or whether they do not (as in 2 Macc 7). The confession of the three is the more remarkable because it is made without reference to the prospect of resurrection. It thus contrasts with the confessions made in 2 Macc 7 and expected in Matt 10:24–33 (cf. also Dan 12). If they are to be martyred, the confessors envisage no such vindication or resurrection. Their confession is made starkly for God’s sake. “Whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom 14:8).[[678]](#footnote-678) Their testing takes place in the flames, but it has already taken place when the flames have been threatened.

In the dispersion this testing takes place both metaphorically and literally. The exile is a white-hot crucible that tests by threatening to consume (see Ps 66:10–12). For many Judahites who are not threatened with a literal furnace, the furnace gives concrete form to the image of walking through fire. Life in exile can bring a threat to the distinctiveness of Judahites (chap. 1), to their very life (chap. 2), and also to their faithfulness to God. It asks for a bold trust and obedience that gives Caesar what is his, but reserves what is God’s for God.

**19–25** While the story reaches one climax with the Judahites’ confession, Nebuchadnezzar’s fury sets it on the way to another. He is enraged at the rights of God being exalted over his own, and he determines to seal the confessors’ fate more securely and speedily. The possibility of his moves being counterproductive is already advertised; his fury is beginning to rebound (v 22). The men who submitted to the king lose their lives; what will happen to the men who resisted the king? The confessors fall to their doom (v 23). “At first it looks here as if God were deserting his servants”; he does not protect them from being thrown into the furnace. “No help appears from heaven.”[[679]](#footnote-679) But suddenly Nebuchadnezzar sees a sign he cannot ignore, as he could ignore the deaths of his best soldiers. The king who thought that no god could save the confessors from his power is the one who now perceives God’s intervention.[[680]](#footnote-680) The three men have not been delivered *from* the fire, but they are delivered *in* the fire (cf. Rom 8:37).[[681]](#footnote-681) They reach affirmation and vindication not by way of risk-free triumph but by the way of the cross. They are free, looking as if they are enjoying a walk in the garden.[[682]](#footnote-682)

Nebuchadnezzar sees *four* unbound (v 25), who contrast with three bound. The deliverance of the three comes through the presence of a fourth person in their midst. Nebuchadnezzar will later declare that this person is a divine aide (v 28), the kind of supernatural being acting on God’s behalf and representing God who a ppears elsewhere in the OT (there is no pointer towardsits being a preincarnate appearance of Jesus). It is the divine aide who camps around those who honor God and extricates them from peril (Ps 34:7 [8]) and who here enters the fire, perhaps neutralizing its capacity for harm by the presence of his superior energy. God’s promise “I will be with you” characteristically belongs to such contexts of affliction and pressure (Exod 3:12; Isa 7:14; 43:1–3; Matt 28:20; see also Ps 23:4–5). The experience of God’s being with his people not only follows on their commitment to him, rather than preceding it; it comes in the furnace, not in being preserved from it.[[683]](#footnote-683)

**26–30** The kiln apparently has a door at ground level as well as the opening at the top through which the confessors were thrown. At Nebuchadnezzar’s command they emerge through this door. The courtiers who had looked on at their trial are there; so are the leading figures among the dignitaries who had gathered for the statue’s dedication. Once more they assemble as representatives of the peoples of the world as a whole, now not to bow before a statue and the king and empire it supports, but to witness how God may act when people bow before him alone. As chap. 2 shows that there *is* a God who can reveal the mysteries of the heavens, so chap. 3 shows that there *is* a God who can intervene in individual and national life, discrediting human pretensions and the monuments that embody them. The statue is now forgotten; both God and human beings have relativized the claim to universal significance made in respect of it (v 28).[[684]](#footnote-684) God has quenched Nebuchadnezzar’s flames. So has the faith of those Nebuchadnezzar subjected to them (Heb. 11:34), the act of consecration whereby they gave up their bodies for God’s sake (Rom 12:1).[[685]](#footnote-685)

The issue in Dan 3 “does not really concern the golden image but actually the question ‘who is god/God.’”[[686]](#footnote-686) Nebuchadnezzar’s acknowledgment of God brings the story to its second climax. In outward expression of this acknowledgment, the king makes Judaism a recognized religion with rights to toleration and respect, in a way that parallels the actions of Persian kings in Ezra and elsewhere.[[687]](#footnote-687) It also prefigures Constantine’s, who later turns from making the faithful suffer to making the impious suffer.[[688]](#footnote-688) It does mean that Nebuchadnezzar still expects to control people’s religion; religion is still subordinate to the state. And the theological justification for his action (v 29b) might point to much more, and might make his action seem anticlimactic. But the act does close off one road that could take dispersion Judahites to the furnace, when clashes with the state arise from their religion’s not being recognized. And the prospering of the confessors in provincial affairs brings a final climax. The power of their God and the power of their commitment to him also bring them political power.[[689]](#footnote-689)

A narrative that combines features of court tale, legend, aretalogy, and midrash does not invite us to treat it as historiography. Yet its picture of a God who rescues from certain death hardly emerges from pure hope-against-hope. Judeo-Christian faith and hope claimed to be based on what God had done, not merely on itself, as if faith were its own miracle. It seems *a priori* likely that some *experience* of God’s deliverance underlies this *story* of God’s deliverance. It might be the experience of God’s delivering individuals in some extraordinary way; it might be the experience of his preserving people in the metaphorical fire of exile itself. Whether or not the story was inspired by the real, but metaphorical, fire of exile, it could be applied to that experience. God had promised that he would deliver, and the story gives believers who walk that fire a narrative embodiment of his keeping this promise.

It more specifically speaks to the individual experience of actual persecution. Dan 12 (or 2 Macc 7, or Matt 5:11–12) envisages reversal, resurrection, vindication, and reward after death. Dan 3 reminds us that the first fruits of that reversal are sometimes experienced now.[[690]](#footnote-690) From a position after Jesus, we can say that final resurrection is certain because it has begun in Jesus himself. Experiences such as the one underlying Dan 3 then evidence that God was always the God of resurrection. To put it the other way, if final resurrection is certain and its reality has already been at work in Jesus, why should it not also be known from time to time in other contexts before and after Jesus? After all, Jesus does promise his disciples that not a hair on their heads will perish (Luke 21:19).[[691]](#footnote-691)

The story of the faithfulness of the three men will turn out to be important in the context of the Maccabean crisis (1 Macc. 2:59) and it also likely lies in the background of Heb 11:34 and 1 Pet 4:12.[[692]](#footnote-692) Admittedly , the all-powerful God’s intervening in the confessors’ extremity does not imply that he can be expected to do so for all the faithful under pressure. Confessors often become martyrs, and their conviction that God can and will rescue from death has to be referred to that resurrection which Dan 12 envisages. But when the faithful face some white-hot furnace they may be encouraged to be steadfast in their commitment to their God, confident that he is Lord of death and that he will demonstrate that he is. The power of paganism offers no ultimate threat. When situations are utterly hopeless, they can trust him to vindicate their commitment and his power by rescuing them one way or the other.

The stories in Daniel speak of frightening threat and terrible danger, even though they have happy endings. Life in the dispersion is never safe. Yet it is possible to survive and even to triumph, and the faithful need to live in the conviction that the promises expressed in Daniel’s interpretations of dreams will be fulfilled.[[693]](#footnote-693)

As I was completing work on this commentary, I received this message from a friend who is a bishop in northeast Africa.

An icon often seen in the churches of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, North and South, is that of the four in the fiery furnace: Shadrach, Meshach,  Abednego, and “the One”, whom the Babylonians described as “like a son of the gods” (Daniel 3:25). In the suffering of the long war between North and South Sudan, it was this God, “He who suffers with us,” who was the comfort and the hope of many Christians. “Our God is able to save us from this fiery furnace,” the three young men declared, “but if not” (in this way), we will cleave to Him (“not bow down to Nebuchadnezzar”). Throughout northeastern Africa the message of this God is one that resonates with the African heart.

# Nebuchadnezzar Testifies to Kingship and Understanding Threatened, Lost, and Restored (4:1–37 [3:31–4:34])

In printed Hebrew Bibles the chapter is 3:31—4:34; a reference such as 4:1-37 [3:31-4:34] in this commentary thus gives the English numbering followed by the printed Hebrew numbering. Where only one form of reference appears, it is to the English versification.

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## Translation

1“King Nebukadne’ṣṣar to all peoples, nations, and languages who live in all the earth:

May your well-beinga abound! 2It has seemed good to me to tell of the wondrous signsa that God On High has done for me.

3His signs, how great,

his wonders, how mighty!

His kingship lasts through the ages,

his rule through all generations!

4aI, Nebukadne’ṣṣar, was successfulb and thriving,c at home in my palace. 5I had a dream and it disturbeda me. bThe imagesc in the visiond that came into my heade as I lay in bedb alarmed me. 6So I issued an order that all the experts in Babylon should be brought before me so they could let me know the interpretation of the dream. 7aThe diviners, the chanters, the Kasdites, and the exorcistsa came, and I recounted the dream before them, but they could not let me know its interpretation. 8Then finallya Daniyye’l, who is named Belṭešaṣṣar after my god,b came before me. The spirit of holy deityc is in him. I recounted the dream before him:

9“Belṭešaṣṣar, head of the diviners, I myself have come to acknowledgea that the spirit of holy deity is in you and that no mysteryb defeats you. Tell me about the vision in the dream I have had, and its interpretation.c 10The vision that came into my head as I lay in bed:

I was looking, and there before me was a tree,

at the center of the earth, of great height.

11The tree grewa in stature and might,

its height reachedb to the heavens;

cit could be seen fromc the ends of the earth:

12Its foliage lovely, its fruit abundant,

food for everyone in it.a

Beneath it the animals of the wild sheltered,

in its branches the birds of the heavens dwelt,

from it all living beings got food for themselves.

13I saw in the vision that came into my head as I lay in bed, and there before me was a lookout,a a holy being,b descending from the heavens,14 and proclaiminga in a loud voice:

‘Fell the tree, cut off its branches,

strip off its foliage, scatter its fruit.

The animals must flee from beneath it,

the birds from its branches.

15Yet athe stock from its roota

leave in the earth.

With a ring of iron and bronze around him,b

withc the grass in the wild,

He is to be watered with the dew from the heavens

and to shared in the plantse of the earth, with the animals.

16His human mind is to become changed

and an animal’s mind is to be given to him;

seven periodsa are to pass by for him.

17The decision is by the decree of lookouts,

the intenta by the word ofb holy beings:

With the object that human beings may come to acknowledge

that the One On High rules over human kingship.

He can give it to anyone he wishes

and set over it the most ordinary of human beings.’

18That is the dream which I, King Nebukadne’ṣṣar, had. You, Belṭešaṣṣar, tell me the interpretation, since all the experts in my kingdom are unable to let me know the interpretation, but you can do so, in that the spirit of holy deity is in you.”

19Daniyye’l, whose name was Belṭešaṣṣar, was overcome for a moment. His thoughts alarmed him. The king averred, “Belṭešaṣṣar, the dream and the interpretation are not to alarm you.” Belṭešaṣṣar responded, “My lord, the dream shoulda apply to your opponents and its interpretation to your foes. 20The tree you saw which grew in stature and might—its top reached to the heavens, and it could be seen from the ends of the earth; 21it had lovely foliage, much fruit, and food for everyone; beneath it the animals of the wild dwelt, and in its branches the birds of the heavens nested: 22 you, your majesty, are the one who has grown in stature and might; your stature has grown until it reaches the heavens and your rule until it reaches the end of the earth. 23Your majesty saw a lookout, a holy being, descend from heavens and say,

‘Fell the tree and destroy it;

yet the stock from its root leave in the earth.

With a ring of iron and bronze around him,

with the grass in the wild,

He is to be watered with the dew from the heavens

and to share with the animals of the wild,

until seven periods pass by for him.’

24This is the interpretation, your majesty. It is the decision of the One On High that has befallena my lord the king. 25You are going to be led away from human society. Your home will be among the animals of the wild. You will be fed plants like an ox and be watered with dew from the heavens, and seven periods will pass by for you, until you acknowledge that the One On High rules over human kingship, and that he can give it to anyone he wishes. 26But in that the stock from the tree’s root was to be left, your kingship will become firm for you from when you acknowledge that the heavens rule. 27Nevertheless,a your majesty, may it seem good to you to accept my counsel: break withb your wrongdoing by acting in faithfulness,c break withb your waywardness by showing favor to the lowly, in case there might be ea prolonging of your success.”e

28All this befell King Nebukadne’ṣṣar. 29At the end of twelve months, he was walking on the roof of the royal palace in Babylon. 30The king averred, “This is great Babylon, isn’t it!a And I myself built it as a royal seat, by my sovereign might and for my kingly honor.” 31The words were still on the king’s lips when a voice came down from the heavens, “These words are for you, King Nebukadne’ṣṣar. Kingship has passed from you. 32You are going to be led away from human society; your home will be among the animals of the wild. You will be fed plants like an ox, and seven periods will pass by for you, until you acknowledge that the One On High rules over human kingship, and that he can give it to anyone he wishes.”

33That very moment the words came true for Nebukadne’ṣṣar. He was led away from human society, he ate what grows from the earth like an ox, and his body was watered with dew from the heavens, until his hair had grown long like eagles and his nails like birds.

34“But when the time was over, I, Nebukadne’ṣṣar, lifted my eyesa to the heavens. As my understandingb returned,c I blessed the One On High and praised and honored the One who lives for ever.

His rule lasts through the ages,

his kingship through all generations.

35All the inhabitants of the earth

are to be counteda as nothing.b

He does as he wishes

with the forces of the heavens and the inhabitants of earth.

There is no one who can restrain his hand

or say to him, “What have you done?”

36When that same hour my understanding returned, and as fora my royal honor, my gloryb and my splendor returned to me, my courtiers and lords sought audiencec with me. dSo I was restored to my kingship,d and yet more greatness was added to me. 37Now I, Nebukadne’ṣṣar, praise and exalt and honor the King of the heavens. All his deeds are true and his ways just; those who walka in pride he can put down.”

## Notes

1.a-a. Your ם ל ש: the greeting is a standard one in a letter or encyclical (cf. 6:25 [26]).

2.a. Literally, “signs and wonders” (cf. v 3): a hendiadys.

4.a. OG provides the same date as in 3:1, suggesting that it was through an accomplishment such as the capture of Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar was successful and thriving.

4.b. Paralleled by רענן “thriving,” שלה suggests “prosperous” (cf. Th) rather than “relaxed” (cf. OG, Vg).

4.c. רענן (see Thomas, “ רַעֲנָן”); used of persons only here and Ps 92:14 [15] in a similar context, though see also the similes in Pss 52:8 [10]; 37:35.

5.a. וידחלנני, like many verbs in chap. 4, is imperfect. I have followed BL 78mpq in assuming that these are past continuous or occur in circumstantial clauses. But Daniel may be using the imperfect as a simple aorist-type tense, perhaps in imitation of BH’s alternation of perfect and imperfect.

5.b-b. Literally, “the images on my bed, even the visions of my head”; Th paraphrases and Syr abbreviates.

5.c. הרהרין; “fantasies” (neb) is a later meaning, and only in the sense of sexual fantasies.

5.d. On pl. י ו ז ח see n. 2:1.a.

5.e. See n. 2:28.c.

7.a-a. On these terms see on 2:2.

8.a. ן י ר ח א עד: probably abstract pl. of אחר “after” (Montgomery).

8.b. See n. 1:7.b-b.Nebuchadnezzar might imply that Belṭešaṣṣar is an abbreviated form of a theophoric name which omits the divine name, a common enough convention in OT names (e.g., Ahaz). But it would be odd to use the shortened form when the allusion is to the name which is omitted. More likely the name’s interpretation, like many in the OT, is based on assonance rather than etymology (cf. Driver).

8.c. קדישין אלהין. On a pagan’s lips, the pl. would usually mean “holy gods”: cf. 5:11; Eshmun‘azar’s inscription (*ANET*, 662); Vg. Nebuchadnezzar’s pagan faith has just been referred to, and expressions such as this one are not used of the true God elsewhere in Daniel (contrast 2:47; 4:2, 34; see BL 87f). Nevertheless, a Judahite writing or reading the phrase could take it to mean “the holy God”; cf. Th; Josh 24:19; there may be an implcit allusion to Gen 41:38 (cf. Becking**,** “A Divine Spirit is in You”). In Akk. the equivalent pl. is used for a single deity (Montgomery). See also n. 3:25.b.

9.a. It is “not necessary to give the pf. the present sense, ‘I know,’ for ‘I have come to know’ makes good sense” (Muraoka)—“I have come to acknowledge” fits even better.

9.b. רז (see on 2:18) here denotes a specific problem, not the great mystery of God’s plan for all history.

9.c. As was the case in chap. 2, there is initially some ambiguity about whether Nebuchadnezzar is asking Daniel to tell him the dream as well as the interpretation. But it is not what happens, and further, חלמי חזוי is an odd phrase; Syr paraphrases, apparently recognizing the problem (Taylor, *Peshiṭta of Daniel*, 135-36). Müller (“Magisch-mantische Weisheit,” 86) takes the ו ‍ of ופשרא as epexegetic (see n. 6:28.a): “Tell me the dream vision I have had—that is, its interpretation.”

11.a. רבה, perhaps “had grown”; but the visions in Dan characteristically portray happenings rather than static scenes, which suggests that Nebuchadnezzar sees the tree growing.

11.b. See n. 5.a.

11.c-c. ל וחזותה “and its appearance to”: cf. the phrase in 7:20 and the note.

12.a. MT by its maqqeph links בה לכלא “for all [who live] in it” (cf.Keil); more likely ה ב links with מזון “food . . . in it” (cf. G, Vg, Syr).

13.a. עיר, perhaps “protector” (see Murray, “The Origin of Aramaic *‘îr,*”), though this nuance does not esp. fit the context. Rather cf. BH ציר “envoy” (van Selms, “The Expression ‘the Holy One of Israel,’” 265).

13.b. קדישין are heavenly beings subordinate to God (van Selms [see n. 13.a]; cf. Ps 89:5-7 [6–8]). The term does not suggest beings that are holy in the moral sense but beings that belong to the supernatural realm. The ו is explicative (n. 6:28.a).

14.a. I follow Li (*Verbal System*, 47) in translating the participles.

15.a-a. For שרשוהי עקר, BDB implies that both words mean “root” (OG omits the first); the combination then conveys emphasis (cf. Common English Bible “its deepest root”). But עקר can suggest “descendant” and it makes better sense to take it to denote the stock which grows up from the root, which as such can be fettered (cf. Th; Koch, *Daniel 1—4*).

15.b. See *Comment: t*he vision’s reference to a man becomes clearer during the course of v 15; lacking a neuter gender, Hebrew can retain a semblance of ambiguity as it uses uses m throughout vv 7–13 in referring to the tree.

15.c. Emendations are proposed by Torrey (“Notes on the Aramaic Part of Daniel,” 269–70) and by neb, but the phrase’s repetition in v 20 argues for MT.

15.d. חלק could refer to his portion of food (cf. Deut 10:8) or to the lot in life allocated to him by God (cf. Isa 17:14); the latter is more common, but the former fits the context.

15.e. עשב surely refers to edible plants as in Gen 1 (cf. G, Vg) not “grass” (EVV, including NETS); Nebuchadnezzar’s diet need not be that bovine.

16.a. “Years” (OG) resolves the allusiveness of עדן, which denotes a set but unspecified period of time (עדון refers to a woman’s monthly “period” [*DTT*]); cf. 7:25; also מועד in 11:29; 12:7. The Akk. equivalent of עדן means “year” in the Harran Nabonidus inscription (Gadd, “Harran Inscriptions,” 88), as does Gk. χρόνος (Ginsberg, *Studies in Daniel*,1–2). But for “year” Daniel could have used שנה (e.g., 1:5; 5:31 [6:1]]; 7:1; 11:6; also Gen 41:25). So the period denoted may be a year, but “year” is not the meaning of עדן or מועד themselves. Theodoret makes them seven “seasons,” 3½ years, assuming a two-season year; Hippolytus refers to the view that they denote 1¾ years, seven seasons of three months; Ps-Saadia notes that they have been taken to be weeks or months or years.

17.a. On שאלתא, see Montgomery; also Gordis, “Studies in Hebrew Roots,” 45 = 197.

17.b. מאמר “[by] the determination of”: ב is understood from the parallel colon (GKC 119hh; Lacocque). Some medieval mss provide ב.

19.a. This might be a real wish (“may the dream . . .”) or only a hypothetical one (“if only the dream . . .”): see v 27 *Comment*.

24.a. מטא is used for “reach”/“befall” in vv 24, 28 as vv 11, 22 (Coxon, “The ‘List’ Genre,” 112).

27.a. See n. 2:6.a.

27.b. פרק “break” can mean “untie” and thus “release/redeem”; but the object is then the thing to be released, not the bond (cf. Ps 136:24; Lam 5:8), so that “redeem your sins . . .” (G λύτρωσαι, Vg *redime*;cf. neb) or “atone for your sins” (NRSV) is hardly possible (cf. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*).

27.c. צדקה includes seeing to a fair distribution of resources, and it came to mean charity, which Anderson (*Sin*, 135-44)takes as the specific meaning here (cf. Tob 12:9; 14:11; and here G ἐλεημοσύνη; similarly Vg, Syr). But a king had a distinctive responsibility for צדקה in the broader sense, and Nebuchadnezzar is addressed as king, so the older/broader meaning is appropriate. Cf. the parallel expression “showing favor to the lowly.”

27.c. Both חטיך and ן ת י ו ע (wrongdoing, waywardness) might be s. or pl.

27.e-e. לשלותך ארבה; RVmg “a healing of thine error” (cf. Syr, Th, Vg for the second noun) implies the pointing לְשָׁלוּתָך אֲבֻכָה (cf. BDB, 74a, 1115b). But שלוה is surely picked up from v 4.

30.a. I take א ל ה as an interrogative expecting the answer “Yes,” as in 2:27; 6:12 [13]. Mastin, “The Meaning of *hala´*, argues that here it is an asseverative; the implication is the same.

34.a. נטלת … עיני indicates not merely the direction the eyes take but the deliberateness involved in activating them (Reif, “A Root to Look Up,” esp. 239). The first idea is appropriate here, the second is even more so: see *Comment*.

34.b. ע ד נ מ denotes his capacity for knowledge or “his understanding and capacity for rational thought” (G. J. Botterweck, *TWAT* 3:511 [ET5:480]); and cf. Seow, *Daniel*, 72-73.

34.c. On the imperfect, see BL 78mq; Joüon, “Cinq imperfaits.”

35.a. See BL 82c.

35.b. כלה: for the spelling, cf. Deut 3:11; many medieval mss have the more usual כלא. For the use, cf. *GBA* 87.

36.a. ל: see GKC 143e; BDB, 514b; F. Nötscher, “Zum emphatischen Lamed,” esp. 377. The usual meaning of ל fits less well.

36.b. י רד ה; Th ἤλθον presupposes ת ר ד ה or takes the word as 1 s. from ר ד ה (see *DTT*), “I returned (to the honor of my kingship).” But the form is Eastern Aramaic; MT is taking up the phrasing from v 30.

36.c. יבעון “made request,” part of honoring him as king again; virtually “acclaimed” (Nober, “*Yeba‘on*”). The courtiers and lords are the people who had been exercising authority in the king’s place. I have taken the verb as a “genuine” imperfect, the preceding ones in v 33 being subordinate to it (cf. n. 34.c): but such an understanding may be forced, and the apparent use here of the “imperfect” as a narrative tense is the starting point for Rosén’s reconsideration of “The Use of the Tenses in the Aramaic of Daniel.”

36.d-d. התקנת מלבותי ועל “and to my kingship it was restored”: variant readings are perhaps combined in this verse (cf. BHS).

37.a. מהלבין: on the vocalization, see Eitan (cf. 3:25).

## Form/Structure/Setting

### Form

Like chap. 2, Dan 4 is a subtle, complex, and sophisticated composition that brings together elements from several genres (see chaps. 1 and 2 *Form*).

The opening verses suggest a letter; the identification of writer and addressee, and the greeting, are regular features of Aramaic and other letters.[[694]](#footnote-694) It specifically suggests an encyclical (cf. Ezra 1:1–4). The form of a royal proclamation gives the content a special degree of authority, which is then used to testify to a higher authority than the human king.[[695]](#footnote-695) The king is the central character in this chapter to a greater extent than is the case in other stories.[[696]](#footnote-696) His consultation of the experts is briefer and more formalized, and it conveys a less cartoon-like impression, while there is no reference to Daniel being rewarded or promoted. Elements of court contest tale, legend, and aretalogy thus reappear, but they are less pominent than in chap. 2.

The king’s confession of God’s greatness (vv. 2-3) marks a transition to something like a thanksgiving or testimony (e.g., Ps 30), in which a person recalls how their life was going well, how it went wrong, but how God then restored them; the closing verses resume the form of a testimony. More specifically, it parallels the less usual kind of testimony psalm that speaks of the suppliant’s wrongding, of God’s chastising, and then of God’s restoring (e.g., Ps 32). A second-millennium fictional story about King Naram-Sin of Kuth in Mesopotamia also combines an encyclical with an autobiographical account of humbling and advance to meekness.[[697]](#footnote-697) The testimony parallels other pseudo-autobiographies”[[698]](#footnote-698) such as the second-century account of a failure of the Nile’s inundation by the third-millennium pharaoh Djoser, which speaks of a period of seven lean years (*ANET*, 31–32).

The praise of God thus has both thanksgiving features (vv 2, 34a, 37a) and hymnic features (vv 3, 34b–35, 37b). Each is appropriate to the context; the formal ambiguity that results from their combination (is it a hymn or a thansgiving?) reflects the origin of the verses in a literary rather than a liturgical setting.[[699]](#footnote-699) The offering of praise after the beginning of a letter is paralleled in NT epistles; as is the case with this feature in the Epistles, the poetic passage fulfills a didactic function.[[700]](#footnote-700) The confessional opening and closing of the chapter help to unify its diverse formal features into a distinctive, intricately wrought whole. The encyclical/confession forms a bracket around the chapter’s dominant formal feature, a dream report, with introduction, dream, interpretation, and fulfillment.[[701]](#footnote-701) The fulfillment motif further distinguishes chap. 4 from chap. 2, as does the story’s ending with Nebuchadnezzar’s restoration rather than Daniel’s exaltation. The first-person form maintained through much of the chapter is natural to a dream report[[702]](#footnote-702) as well as to the confessional praise with which it begins; compare Nabonidus’s testimonies (*ANET*, 308–11; 562–63) and the Qumran “Prayer of Nabonidus,” 4QPrNab (4Q242).

Throughout, midrashic or intertextual features interweave. The basic story of the threatening royal dream which can be interpreted by no one but an exiled Judahite again parallels Gen 41; the king’s description of the interpreter, as one in whom is the spirit of holy deity, is a correspondence of detail with that story. Job 33 parallels the motif of God’s speaking through a dream to warn a man of the judgment coming upon his pride, then drawing him through illness to prayer, repentance, restoration, and testimony. Nebuchadnezzar’s sovereignty over all peoples, and God’s capacity to give earthly power to anyone he wishes (vv 17, 25, 32), recall Jer 27:5–7. The theme of God’s lordship over kings parallels Job 12:12–24; 36:5–14; Isa 40:17, which reflect psalmic traditions, as do Nebuchadnezzar’s confessions of this lordship (cf. Ps 145, especially v 13). Nebuchadnezzar almost “crowned all the songs and praises of David” (*b. Sanhedrin* 92b).

The central motif, the tree,[[703]](#footnote-703) appears widely in myth (see *Comment*), but the description of the tree and its felling, and the motif of the humbling of a proud monarch, follows passages such as Ezek 17 (the Judahite king as a tree planted, uprooted, replanted, fruitful, and protective [cf. Lam 4:20]; see especially vv 23-24); 19:10–14 (Jerusalem as a vine, flourishing, strong, and impressive, but uprooted); 28 (the prince of Tyre pretending to deity and to a wisdom greater than Daniel’s [!], but humiliated; the king of Tyre in his splendor in Eden, God’s garden, but humiliated for his violence, injustice, and pride); 31 (the Egyptian king as a tree, lofty, flourishing, impressive, protective, but felled for his wickedness; see especially vv 5–6, 12–13); Isa 14:4–23 (the king of Babylon fallen for his pretense to deity and his affliction of people);[[704]](#footnote-704) Ps 92 (praise of the One On High for his great works, which the brutish person cannot recognize; the wicked only flourish in the short term, the just flourish like strong trees); cf. also Isa 10:5–11:10; Deut 17:14–20.[[705]](#footnote-705) Tree fables (Judg 9:8–15; 2 Kgs 14:9; cf. 1 Kgs 4:33 [5:13]) are a wisdom feature, and the humbling of the proud monarch recalls aphorisms in Proverbs (Prov 16:5–7, 12).[[706]](#footnote-706) The tree is also one motif suggesting a link with with Gen 1–3; 11.[[707]](#footnote-707)

The account of the king’s chastisement/madness/illness/exile and restoration has several parallels outside the OT.

(a) The Greek writer Megasthenes (c. 300 bc) writes of Nebuchadnezzar announcing from his palace roof under some god’s inspiration the coming fall of Babylon to “a Persian mule,” who Nebuchadnezzar wishes might rather take himself off to some animal-like existence (see Eusebius, *Prepration for the Gospel* 9.41.6).[[708]](#footnote-708) (b) A fragmentary cuneiform text seems to refer to a mental disorder on Nebuchadnezzar’s part, and perhaps to his neglecting and leaving Babylon.[[709]](#footnote-709) (c) Josephus refers to an illness of which Nebuchadnezzar died (*Against Apion* 1.20 [1.146]). (d) The Babylonian poem of a righteous suffere, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* (“I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom,” *ANET*, 596–600) testifies to chastisement by God, illness, humiliation, seeking interpretation of a terrifying dream, being thrown over like a tree, being put outside, eating grass, losing understanding, being like an ox, being rained on by Marduk, nails being marred, hair growing, and being fettered, and then to a restoration for which he praises the god.[[710]](#footnote-710)

(e) In a number of inscriptions, especially from Harran, the last king of the neo-Babylonian empire, Nabonidus, testifies to praying before Marduk for a long and successful reign and receiving the deity’s promise that it would be granted, and to being led by a dream to spend ten years away from Babylon in Tema in Arabia, but then to return to Babylon. We have noted other inscriptions referring in the first and also in the third person to Nabonidus’s years away from Babylon and (with hostility) to his being punished for his “mad” neglect of Babylon’s deities (*ANET*, 305–16, 560–63).[[711]](#footnote-711) Nabonidus is the only known Babylonian dreamer.[[712]](#footnote-712) (f) The Qumran “Prayer of Nabonidus” records Nabonidus’s testimony to his being afflicted by God for seven years in Tema by a physical illness. He prayed to his gods for healing, but received it only after a Jewish exorcist (גזר) exhorted him to honor the true God.[[713]](#footnote-713) Dan 4 may then contain “‘ghost memories’ of Nabonidus.”[[714]](#footnote-714)

Scholars have held a wide variety of views on the relationship between these various documents and the traditions they represent, and on the development of the chapter.[[715]](#footnote-715) Whether or not we can reach any conclusions about the historical questions, study of comparative materials may help us to perceive characteristic and distinctive features of the text that concerns us.[[716]](#footnote-716)

### Structure

The whole chapter is in direct speech except for vv 19, 28–30a, 31a, and 33. It opens with Nebuchadnezzar’s introduction and his act of praise, and it closes with his second acts of praise. The opening announces where the chapter must lead; the question then is how it can reach this “unlikely” conclusion. Once the first person testimony begins, it uses suspenseful devices similar to those in chap. 2: the affect of the dream on Nebuchadnezzar is announced before its content, the sages are unable to interpret it, and the affect of its message on Daniel is announced before its content. The dream itself is recounted once again before its interpretation is given, its positive aspects thus standing in contrast to the solemnity of the message it brings. The tree theme is not developed in a sustained way; it is subordinate to the message, and the interpretation enters into the presentation of the dream itself as early as vv 15–16. The first overt climaxes come in the brief interpretive announcements in vv 22a and 25–26, then in the unpresaged admonition/invitation of v 27.

Whereas chaps. 2, 3, and 6 are narratives that close with proclamation, chap. 4 is a proclamation incorporating a narrative; and whereas Daniel has considerable prominence in chap. 2, here he is a role rather than a personality (like the Judahites in chap. 3), as Nebuchadnezzar has more focus.

The structure might be presented as

1 introduction to encyclical

2 introduction to opening confession

3 hymnic confession

4–18 report of dream (first person)

4-5 dream’s occurrence

6-9 quest for an interpreter (court contest)

10-17 content of dream

10-12 the tree in the dream

13-17 the lookout’s intervention in the dream

18 request to Daniel

19-27 interpretation of dream (third person)

19 introductory wish

20-26 interpretation

20-22 interpretation of the tree

23-26 interpretation of the lookout’s message

27 closing admonition

28-33 report of fulfillment (third person)

34-36 introduction to closing confession

37 hymnic confession

The chapter begins with stock phrases and expressions familiar from other stories of this kind and from elsewhere in the OT (vv 1–3, 5–10a). V 3, however, which is poetical in form (it manifests meter and parallelism), introduces roots that will be of key significance for the story: רב and תקף “great,” “mighty” (vv 11, 20, 22, 30, 36), מלך and ט ל ש “kingship,” “rule” (vv 17, 25, 26, 32, 34). The poetic form of v 3 reappears in part of vv 34–37, its actual phrasing being reworked in part in v 34b. Vv 34–37 also takes up the terms of v 30 and makes clear that the antithesis between divine and human kingship is not to be sharply drawn, nor does the humbling of human kingship necessarily mean dethronement rather than chastisement. Here, too, stock phrases accumulate, yet they become the vehicle of vivid testimony.

Nebuchadnezzar’s account of his dream introduces a further key pair of terms, the antithesis

ע ר א—שמין. Both terms are ambivalent. ע ר א can mean “earth” in the sense of “world,” and thus suggest the extent of Nebuchadnezzar’s rule (vv 1, 10, 11, 20, 22), though also suggest its ultimate insignificance compared with God, before whom the whole earth is nothing (v 35, twice). It can mean “ground,” and thus more directly suggest the extent of Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation (vv 15a, 15b, 23, 32, 33). שמין means “the heavens” (vv 11, 12, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 23, 25, 26, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37) both in the physical sense of the sky and in the metaphysical sense of God’s dwelling; the passage makes use of the fact that the former is a symbol of the latter, lets one meaning hint at the other, and sometimes leaves unclear which is referred to. No other chapter of the OT uses ם י מ ש/שמין as often, or uses the word as a periphrasis for God (v 26) or refers to God as king of the heavens (v 37), bringing together the two key fields of terms we have noted. Nor does any other chapter of the OT use as often the related title *One On High*: vv 2, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34. In their various senses שמין and ע ר א can both confront and associate with each other, setting up both links and tensions within the passage.

The accounts of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, its interpretation, and its fulfillment introduce a more sustained lyrical strain to the main body of the chapter. Nebuchadnezzar’s description of his own situation in v 4, the only non-stock element in the material that precedes the dream, anticipates both the theme of the “thriving” tree that is first described in vv 10b–12 and the content of Daniel’s exhortation in v 27 regarding a prolonging of Nebuchadnezzar’s success. The second part of the dream uses the lyricism to solemn, foreboding effect. Its implicit significance is made explicit in more prosaic and direct theological terms and parenesis (vv 17b, 27). Opinion varies as to how far to present the dream material as lyrical prose or as loose verse; I have followed BHS, but Lee[[717]](#footnote-717) not only sees vv 4-5 as continuing the poetry of v 3 but sees vv 10b-17 as originally the continuation of that poem. The chapter is as repetitive as others, yet it sustains interest by the use of variation, drama, and suspense; the repetition is the repetition of literary technique rather than the more artless repetition of folktale.

As the book of Daniel combines Hebrew and Aramaic in the manner of Ezra-Nehemiah, so it combines first- and third-person ways of narrating in the manner of Ezra-Nehemiah and Tobit.[[718]](#footnote-718) This chapter does so in a distinctively integral fashion. “The story is not only that of Nebuchadnezzar: it is also about Nebuchadnezzar.”[[719]](#footnote-719) Combining a testimony (vv 1-17, 34-37) with narrative (vv 19–33) has a dramatic effect: it enables the chapter to tell the story from two points of view or perpectives, from the implicit angle of the narrator (which the narrator presumably expects us to accept) and from the explicit angle of Nebuchadnezzar (which the narrator may or may not expect us to accept). Indeed, we get three perspectives in the chapter, insofar as it also reports the words of Daniel. In the context of the book as a whole, we might assume that we are expected to accept Daniel’s angle, but to be more suspicious of Nebuchadnezzar’s.[[720]](#footnote-720)

### Setting

The Qumran “Prayer of Nabonidus” shows that material such as this testimony could be of interest in Greco-Roman Palestine and could function as an attack on Hellenistic kingship ideology,[[721]](#footnote-721) and Hippolytus notes parallels between Nebuchadnezzar and the proud Antiochus Epiphanes (cf. 11:37) who was lampooned as Epimanes (Madman) and who acknowledged God on his deathbed according to 2 Macc 9.[[722]](#footnote-722) But the parallels are too broad to suggest that Nebuchadnezzar directly mirrors Antiochus. The latter’s character and story are different,[[723]](#footnote-723) and Daniel has different hopes of him (11:40–45). There are no concrete indications than Dan 4 was composed in Greco-Roman Palestine; the eastern dispersion is the more natural context.

The substantial diference between MT and OG may suggests that there were several versions of the story. In particular, OG includes a substantially more elaborate version of vv 34-37 that partly corresponds to the content of vv 1-3 (which do not appear in OG) but is also substantially longer than the MT version. It spells out the nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingship and expands on his expression of commitment to the One On High.[[724]](#footnote-724) The suggestion has been made that the Hebrew forms of the chapter developed in stages through the conflation of different versions until it reached the form we have, with one stage coming in the Antiochene period.[[725]](#footnote-725) But the attempted reconstructions of this process vary, their evidence is circumstantial, and their basis sometimes seems questionable: for example, alternating between first and third person is not evidence of redactional work.[[726]](#footnote-726)

At first sight 4:1–3 carries on from 3:30, and *b. Sanhedrin* 92b connects Nebuchadnezzar’s praise in those verses with the story in chap. 3; printed Hebrew Bibles count 4:1-3 as 3:31-33. The broader ordering of the material in the book, whereby a further chapter about Nebuchadnezzar follows the story in chap. 3 (as the story in chap. 2 followed directly on chap. 2) encourages this understanding. But MT locates the chapter break after 3:30; it provides a petuchah or chapter break at that point and not even a section break after 4:3. So “this chapter division… is not of masoretic origin, nor from any other Jewish source, but was introduced by gentile Bible scholars.”[[727]](#footnote-727) The chapter divisions in modern Hebrew Bibles apparently go back to the introduction of chapter divisions into the Vulgate in the medieval period; whereas this work was traditionally ascribed to Stephen Langton in the thirteenth century, it seems actually to have been developing before his day. But in his century “the Paris Bibles made the ‘Langtonian’ chapter division the standard.” They thus appear in the Gutenberg Bible,[[728]](#footnote-728) and they were also taken over into printed Hebrew Bibles. In these chapters in Daniel, however, it soon becomes clear that 4:1-3 begins a new unit. Thus Luther abandoned the “Langtonian” chapter division which he found in contemporary Bibles and pushed the beginning of the new chapter division back to where the Masoretes themselves had located it, and EVV follow.[[729]](#footnote-729)

In the context of the book as a whole, the end of chap. 3 marks the three friends’ final appearance. Henceforth the book entirely focuses on Daniel as its hero. Behind chap. 3, Dan 4 does link in theme with the earlier dream chapter, Dan 2. Daniel’s appearing last among the experts (v 8) need not be in tension with 2:48; it is not said that he is summoned after the others, only that (dramatically) he arrives last; perhaps he was with them but was at the end of the line.[[730]](#footnote-730)

Chap. 4 also marks the last appearance of Nebuchadnezzar.There is no development in Nebuchadnezzar’s character through chaps. 1–4; the chapters do not recount Nebuchadnezzar’s spiritual biography. Indeed, as chap. 3 pairs with chap. 6, chap. 4 has a closer relationship with chap. 5, where Belshazzar will pay a more conclusive penalty for a more explicit blasphemy accompanied by a refusal to learn from Nebuchadnezzar’s experience. In other words, chap. 4’s relationship with chap. 5 is more significant than its relationship with chaps. 1—3. “Daniel 4 is the positive example of an earthly king who suff ers a great indignity and thereby comes to “know” that God has sovereignty over human kingship, whereupon the king has his earthly dominion restored to him. Daniel 5 is the negative example of an earthly king who has not learned the lesson, does not acknowledge God’s sovereignty, and thereby suffers the ultimate loss of not only his kingship but his life.”[[731]](#footnote-731)

## Comment

**1—3.** The testimony put on Nebuchadnezzar’s lips in Dan 4 is centrally concerned with the kingship or rule of Nebuchadnezzar and the kingship or rule of the One On High, the kingship or rule of [the King/Lord of] the heavens (vv 2, 17, 18, 22, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37; cf. 5:18–23). “The One on High” was Nebuchadnezzar’s title for God in 3:26 and here he uses it again in both his opening and his closing act of acclamation. Nebuchadnezzar does not stand for ordinary humanity being judged for ordinary human pride. Nor does the chapter stress the fact that he is a Gentile and Daniel a Jew, or picture Nebuchadnezzar turning from paganism to faith in the God of Israel. But Nebuchadnezzar’s ghost writer does have him giving testimony in good Jewish fashion to the “signs and wonders” that the God On High has done (cf. Exod 7:3; Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 29:2-3; 34:11; Neh 9:10; Ps 105:27; 135:9; Jer 32:20-21; also Darius the Mede’s testimony in Dan 6:27 [28]).[[732]](#footnote-732)

**4–10a.** Troubled by another dream, Nebuchadnezzar recognizes Daniel as one in whom God’s spirit dwells (v 8). In the OT the presence of God’s spirit often implies the activity of God in his dynamic power, giving life and freedom to his people and to the world; the affect of this presence on human beings is to make them behave in remarkable ways and perform extraordinary deeds. Someone who receives out-of-the-ordinary insights or revelations does so by the work of the divine spirit (Gen 41:38; Num 24:2; 2 Sam 23:2; 2 Chr 15:1; 20:14; 24:20). Remarkable words suggest the breath of God himself, whether or not they reflect an ecstatic experience (see Job 32:8, 18; contrast 15:2!). V 8 does not imply that all words of insight indicate the activity of God’s spirit. Nebuchadnezzar is referring to knowledge of an extraordinary and inexplicable kind: such insight reflects the spirit of prophecy.[[733]](#footnote-733) This conviction has been expressed without using the word *spirit*, in 2:11. Reference to God’s spirit reinforces the suggestion of a real dynamic presence of God that contrasts with the spurious presence that the statue of chap. 3 might have claimed to imply. References in Daniel to the human spirit on its own are negative: it is disturbed by divine revelations (2:1, 3; 7:15) and insensitive to divine prompting (5:20). Daniel comes to be someone of extraordinary spirit (5:12; 6:3 [4]) only through the activity of the divine spirit (4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 14).[[734]](#footnote-734)

**10b–12** The portrayal of the tree has a background in OT texts (see *Form*), but a more general background in the OT and elsewhere. A lofty, pre-eminent, verdant, protective, fruitful, long-lived tree is a common symbol for the living, transcendent, life-giving, sustaining Cosmos or Reality or Deity itself. A sacred tree at the center of the earth symbolically links the earth and the heavens; a tree of life grows in God’s garden; world history can be symbolized as a tree.[[735]](#footnote-735) The image can be applied to humanity in general (Ps 1) or to one’s own nation—Babylon[[736]](#footnote-736) or Israel (Isa 4:2; 5:1–7). It is a natural symbol for the king, who mediates God’s life, provision, and protection to his people; he is tree-like to them (Isa 11:1; 53:2; Herodotus, *Histories* 1.108; 7.19).[[737]](#footnote-737)

The symbol is reworked in Dan 4, as metaphor rather than myth. The obvious interpretation is to refer it to the royal dynasty, which will be cut down (the present king will be removed) but will survive as a stump with the potential for renewed growth (a new king will arise); compare Isa 6:13; 11:1; also Job 14:7–9, which notes that what can be true of a tree cannot be true of an individual man. Daniel applies the dream to Nebuchadnezzar personally rather than to the dynasty. On the king’s authority over the animal creation (v 12), see on 2:37–45.

**13–18** In Daniel “supernatural lookouts” is one of a number of expressions for heavenly beings; for others see 3:28; 7:16; 10:13.[[738]](#footnote-738) These terms utilize the arrangements of a human court to picture God’s management of the affairs of the heavens and the earth, or they presuppose that God’s management of the affairs of the heavens and the earth are reflected in the arrangements of a human court. An earthly king had lookouts who were the eyes and ears whereby he controlled and provided for his realm (see n. 3:2.c).

There is nothing mortal that is faster than the system the Persians have devised for sending messages. Apparently, they have horses and men posted at intervals along the route, the same number in total as the overall length in days of journey, with a fresh horse and rider for every day of travel. Whatever the conditions—it may be snowing, raining, blazing hot, or dark—they never fail to complete their assigned journey in the fastest possible time. (Herodotus, *Histories* 8.98).

The heavenly king governs his realm by similar means. Such members of the Council of Yahweh, his cabinet (1 Kgs 22:19–22; Job 1–2; Ps 89:5–7 [6–8]; Jer 23:18) act as his eyes (2 Chr 16:9; Zech 4:10; cf. 1:9), keeping him informed on affairs in his realm and seeing that his will is put into effect throughout it. For “lookouts” in particular, perhaps compare Isa 62:6. Of course an earthly king’s agents might rebel, and so might God’s agents; “lookouts” became a term for such rebels (*1 Enoch* 1.5; 10.9, 15; 12.4; 13.10; contrast 12.2, 3); compare the “gods” in Ps 82.[[739]](#footnote-739)

Such supernatural figures also feature in Canaanite, Babylonian, and Persian religion;[[740]](#footnote-740) the Babylonians in particular personified night watches who, vigilant and never sleeping, are responsible for destinies on earth (*CAD* E: 326). Nebuchadnezzar might then be using a pagan expression, which Daniel later “corrects” (v 23); “lookout” is a description of God himself in Ps 121:3–4; as קדוש “holy/supernatural” often is. Yet Daniel refers elsewhere to God’s heavenly agents without implying that they rival God himself, and the rest of Nebuchadnezzar’s statement (v 17b) seems “orthodox” enough (see also v 35 and *Explanation* below). Nor need one infer that this way of picturing God acting is alien to that which generally appears in the OT.[[741]](#footnote-741) It emphasizes the *means* of God’s governing the world and not his direct agency, but it need not thereby imply that God is remote and inaccessible. The Isaiah who emphasizes God’s transcendence (Isa 6:1) also assumes God’s direct involvement in Israelite and international affairs; the Gospels and Acts that stress God’s presence with humanity in Christ and in the Spirit also portray the involvement of angels in the story of Jesus and the beginnings of the church.

The proclamation’s addressees are not specified (cf. Isa 40:1); the plurals (v 14) are impersonal and are syntactically, though not rhetorically, equivalent to passives (cf. vv 15–16; Lk 12:20). The point is the certainty that God’s destructive purpose will be fulfilled. When the lookout’s message describes someone being reduced to animal-like existence, the implication is not that he is going insane. It is rather than God is going to turn him from a creature with one set of instincts to a creature with a different set. What is natural for him is going to change.

Restraint by a metal ring is more likely part of that description (Jerome does compare it with the chaining of someone who is mad)[[742]](#footnote-742) than an aspect of tree culture, whether designed to keep the tree from disintegrating altogether or to keep it from branching anew. It suggests a reversal of the treatment Nebuchadnezzar had given Israel (Jer 28:14; 39:7; 52:11; cf. Deut 28:48; also Jer 1:18; Mic 4:13; Ps 107:16). To live in the open, tethered, feeding on natural vegetation, and exposed to the elements, is natural and not unpleasant for animals, but alien to human beings. The curses in a vassal treaty made by Esarhaddon, the seventh-century Assyrian king, include the prospect of wandering in the countryside like a wild donkey or a gazelle.[[743]](#footnote-743)

Talk of God’s being able to do as he wishes (יצבא, v 17) or acting according to his wish (מצביה, v 35) reflects the formulae of legal transactions[[744]](#footnote-744) and is thus another aspect of the portrayal of God’s way of acting by analogy with that of the human king.

**19–27** Daniel’s interpretation of the dream presupposes Babylon’s position as *the* world power of the day, as did 2:37–38. Psalm 79 spells out the results of such a world power’s typical behavior in relation to the people of Judah.[[745]](#footnote-745) Interpreters such as Rashi then note that Daniel’s wish can seem puzzling because Nebuchadnezzar’s opponents would then be the Jews. Such commentators commonly think in terms of Nebuchadnezzar’s being in charge of *Israel* (v 12), of his oppression of *them* (v 27), and of his empire’s destruction as the means of the *exiles* being able to escape his rule (v 14). But Rashi and Ibn Ezra note that Daniel’s wish actually it is a figure of speech.[[746]](#footnote-746)

In isolation, “the heavens” (v 26; the word occurs only in the plural) might denote the supernatural lookouts (v 17). After the assertions about the rule of the One On High in vv 24–25, however, more likely it is a surrogate for God himself. The two ideas (“God as king” and “the heavens”) are brought together at the climax of the chapter (v 37).[[747]](#footnote-747) As a surrogate, it is unique in the OT; elsewhere, see I Macc 3:18–19; 4:10; 2 Macc 7:11; m. *Abot* 1:3, 11; 2:12; 4:4, 11, 12; Matt 21:25; Luke 15:18; John 3:27; and the phrase “the reign of the heavens” in Matthew.[[748]](#footnote-748) More significant than these later parallels is the utilization of the term שמין throughout chap. 4 (see *Structure*). Nebuchadnezzar is like a tree reaching from the earth to the heavens (vv 11, 20, 22) and protecting the birds, which themselves defy the separation between the earth and the heavens (vv 12, 21); yet he is subject to judgment from the heavens (vv 13, 23, 31). The heavens to which he reached will supply his humble needs as it supplies those of the rest of creation (vv 15, 22, 25, 33; 5:21). In the end he must look to the heavens as the real source of help, rather than pretending to be self-sufficient; he must acknowledge that the heavens rule, and as a king on earth he must bow down to the King of the heavens who rules in the heavens as on the earth (vv 26, 34, 35, 37; cf. “Lord of the heavens,” 5:23). The acknowledgment of which Daniel speaks has, in effect, already been made in 2:47 in response to the revelation there; it Is another indication that the chapters do not build on one another in offering a portrayal of the king.

In the context of the Babylonian or Persian empire, it would not be surprising if the wrongdoing of which Daniel speaks included the accumulation of land, the accumulation of labor, and the imposition of burdensome taxes—as would have been the case in preexilic Judah.[[749]](#footnote-749) In this chapter Nebuchadnezzar is no longer a “likeable rogue for whom Daniel has considerable respect.”[[750]](#footnote-750) Yet "the empire is understood by the narrative as a potential place for mercy; Nebuchadnezzar is presented as a ruler who is capable of mercy to the oppressed.” Empires can be brought to a potential place of mercy when brought under God's sovereignty.[[751]](#footnote-751)

**28–33** The sense of achievement that Nebuchadnezzar here articulates is severely understated compared with that expressed in his successive building inscriptions in Babylon, which occupy 126 pages of text and translation in Langdon’s edition of them.[[752]](#footnote-752) The palace from which he surveyed Babylon was one of the citadels on the north side of the city. It had large courts, reception rooms, throne room, residences, and the famous hanging gardens, a vaulted, terraced structure with an elaborate water supply for its trees and plants; it was apparently built by Nebuchadnezzar for his Median queen. From the palace he would see in the distance the city’s 16-mile outer double wall, which he had built. His palace stood just inside the double wall of the inner city, which was punctuated by eight gates and encircled an area two miles by a half-mile, with the Euphrates running through it. The palace adjoined a processional avenue that Nebuchadnezzar had paved with limestone and decorated with lion figures, emblematic of Ishtar. This avenue entered the city through the Ishtar Gate, which he had decorated with dragons and bulls, emblems of Marduk and Bel. It continued south through the city to the most important sacred precincts, to whose beautifying and development Nebuchadnezzar had contributed, the ziggurat crowned by a temple of Marduk where the god’s statue resided. In Marduk’s temple there were also shrines to other gods, and in the city elsewhere temples of yet other Babylonian gods, restored or beautified by Nebuchadnezzar.[[753]](#footnote-753) “The magnificence of Babylon became legendary throughout the ancient world” but “these building projects, although they served social, religious, and military purposes, were also material propaganda for the imperial power of the king…. The grandeur of the palaces, temples, and fortifications thus stands as a testament to the power of the god as manifested on earth through his chosen kng.”[[754]](#footnote-754)

The *bat-qol*,[[755]](#footnote-755) the voice from the heavens with nothing to be seen (v 31), is a common Semitic and biblical motif (Isa 9:8 [7]; *T. Levi* 18.6; Syriac Ahiqar 1.6; Mark 1:11; 9:7). While Nebuchadnezzar’s subsequent behavior (vv 32–33) may resemble the symptoms of lycanthropy, a psychotic or depressive delusion,[[756]](#footnote-756) it need not do so—anyone’s hair and nails will grow long in the wild, and anyway the chapter itself is more concerned with the theological than ithe medical significance of Nebuchadnezzar’s experience. More significantly, the terms used to describe what happens to the king correspond to images for spirits and demons in the ancient Near East, and in ancient Near Eastern texts the vicitms of such demons can begin to look like them. Thus “Daniel 4 uses imagery of the underworld to convey to the reader the extreme affliction of its main character,” [[757]](#footnote-757) though the absence of explicit reference to demons in the OT makes it hard to know whether readers were necessarily expected to think in demonic terms about the affliction. In modern terms, it’s a kind of liminal experience as the king straddles the territory between human and animal before he can be reassimilated to the sphere of order.[[758]](#footnote-758)

**34–37** Looking to the heavens (v 34) suggests seeking God’s aid (Ps 25:15; 121:1–2; 123:1–2; 141:8)[[759]](#footnote-759) and thus implicitly recognizing God’s kingship. It opens the way to restoration, which is portrayed in v 36 along the lines of the allegory of the Davidic dynasty’s restoration in Ezek 17:22–24. In tales of danger/humiliation and restoration, the subject’s last state is characteristically higher than his first, as is the case with Daniel himself elsewhere in Dan 1–6 and with Job.

The restoration of Nebuchadnezzar’s human understanding and his resuming an ordinary human life is introductory to the restoration of his power: once again, the story is about his power, nor merely about what happens to him as a human being. Similarly Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as moving, not from the worship of Marduk to that of Yahweh (contrast 2 Macc 9:17) but from a sole acknowledgment of his own kingship to an acknowledgment of God’s kingship (v 37). “King of the heavens” is another expression unique in the OT (though cf. 1 Esd 4:46, 58; Tob 13:7, 11; and for similar expressions, Dan 5:23; Jer 7:18; 44:17–19). Here its significance is to bring together at the climax of the chapter its two key motifs, kingship and the heavens.

## Explanation

**1–3** A man of authority speaks to us. The great Nebuchadnezzar, lord of a worldwide empire, sends word around this empire, and his subjects wonder what further demand or obligation is to be placed on them. The content of his message confounds their expectations. The communication ceases to be an encyclical and becomes a testimony such as we read in the Psalms, the confession of a man whom God has marvelously rescued from some calamity who now makes public acknowledgment of the wonders God has performed for him and offers the praise that recognizes how God’s power extends beyond this one moment to the whole of history. Earthly might acknowledges the power of God; one who rules for a while as king acknowledges one whose kingship is unconstrained by time. His testimony subverts any tendency to be overimpressed by the significance of human government, as happened within the ancient Near Eastern royal ideologies, rather as chap. 3 subverts any tendency to be overimpressed by the significance of human religion.[[760]](#footnote-760)

The chapter concerns the question of who is king, but by its form it gives us the answer before we begin. OT narrative, psalmody, and prophecy elsewhere speak of nations and kings once acknowledging God, challenged to acknowledge him, and destined to acknowledge him. Nebuchadnezzar makes this acknowledgment, in the present, in the history of this age. Whereas often it does not seem that God rules in history, occasional yet momentous events whose memory the scriptures preserve give the grounds and the periodic reinforcement for the conviction that he does rule. The author of Daniel affirms that conviction of faith for himself and for his readers as he puts it on the lips of the great Nebuchadnezzar.

**4–9** When a confessional psalm (e.g., Ps 30) begins as this chapter has in vv 1–3, it invites us to pay close attention to the testimony that follows, which takes us over the way its unlikely result came about. As happens in such a psalm, Nebuchadnezzar now begins at the beginning. His confession goes further than the one in chap. 2, and his testimony takes us further back than chap. 2 did when he recounted his earlier dream. He begins from the secure, successful circumstances of his life before his troubling dream came. The very description of things going well would make us wonder whether catastrophe is imminent, especially as God is omitted from what he says (Deut 8:11–14; Ps 30:6–7 [7–8]; Luke 12:19). The thriving state of Nebuchadnezzar’s monarchy, at the head of its mighty empire, is to be reflected in the flourishing tree of his dream, symbolic of the great cosmic provider and of his royal earthly embodiment; but the broken tree of the dream will reflect the dreamer’s actually fragile position—and perhaps his subconscious sense of that fragility—which even a dream that hardly required much interpretation[[761]](#footnote-761) could nevertheless not enable to become a conscious awareness. “Absolute power is inescapably haunted by misgivings and precariousness, for every absolute power is inherently edgy in its awareness of fragility. Daniel's interpretation gives force and specificity to the misgivings hosted by arrogant power.”[[762]](#footnote-762)

Among the people invited to interpret the dream, Daniel arrives at the end of the line. The other experts’ failure (caused by their own fear of saying the obvious?)[[763]](#footnote-763) heightens the challenge to and our expectations of someone who already has a special status deriving from a special divine gift. As usual, the “‘court contest’ is in reality… ‘no contest.’”[[764]](#footnote-764) The Nebuchadnezzar of chap. 2 had been told by the experts that conundrums beyond human insight could not be solved, because the gods’ home is not among mortal humanity; Daniel had then proved to him that the God of the heavens could solve them (2:11, 28). Here the king expresses convictions about God’s presence in Daniel, and about his consequent ability to solve conundrums, which the story will vindicate. Notwithstanding the apparent obvious meaning of the dream, Daniel’s insights do not reflect merely human capacities; they come from divine revelation regarding what would otherwise remain mystery. The OT does not assume that the meaning of historical events (such as the dream portrays in symbol) can be read off from them. Neither the unbelieving world, nor the believing community, is at fault for finding history enigmatic. The significance of events may be perceived only when God chooses to reveal it through some person he endows with prophetic gifts.

**10–16** Humanity finds ways of reassuring itself that the life and resources of the cosmos are secure. The myth of all-providing science has offered that reassurance in Western history; the myth of the cosmic tree offered it to the ancient Near Eastern world. Nebuchadnezzar’s fearful dream warns of the wasting of this resource, from the very quarter it sought to reach. It is not, after all, a secure locus or source of achievement and transcendence, of life, security, and provision. (It will eventually be a very different tree that more effectively links the earth and the heavens and displays itself—or rather displays the one it bears—before the earth and the heavens. It will be a tree which, moreover, also has to become a tree of shame—but not for its own shortcomings—before it can be a tree of glory. That tree will offer life, security, and provision in fuller senses, though the fuller sense must not exclude the physical senses which are this vision’s concern, and which are God’s own concern.)

The visionary tree is not totally destroyed; God’s judgment characteristically has a “yet” (v 15) contained within it. But like the survival of a (mere) remnant in OT prophecy, the way its remains survive serves to underline the wasting it experiences. From the center of the earth it had reached towards the heavens; now it is confined to the earth, fed from the earth, and all it knows of the heavens is rain. It had provided for the animals; now it is provided for in the midst of them. Its abasement will last for a long, but unspecified, period of time, though a time determined, not a time to last forever.

As happened in chap. 2, the dream vision is now in the midst of taking a bizarre twist. The tree is being treated like an animal. The animal turns out to be a human being deprived of his senses. The life and resources of the cosmos, then, had been embodied in a person. This, too, is a familiar ancient Near Eastern and OT theme; a nation’s king embodies, guarantees, and sustains its life and destiny. For all the repudiation of monarchy in the modern world, the hopes and expectations attached to presidents, prime ministers, and heads of state evidence the same instinct (again I note that I write on the eve of a presidential inauguration). The OT warns against it (see Jotham’s parable, Judg 9:6–15, especially v 15) and often portrays the judgment of kings. It is dangerous to embody too much in one person. Severe theological questions are thus raised by the traditional shaping of ministry (one church, one minister), as well as by the papacy, and by any situation in which monarch, president, prime minister, or party secretary becomes the equivalent to the government, becomes the embodiment of all power, in his or her own thinking or in the people’s. Only God is the One in whom all things hold together. Other so-called embodiments of some whole are idols who will disappoint, fail, and fall. So here a royal figure is taken from being the lord of all and source of life for all to being the least of all, unable even to sustain his own life. (The real tree of life will indeed bear such a man.)

**17-18** The tree’s downfall is ordained and announced by supernatural lookouts who make and implement decisions on behalf of God On High. Heavenly figures involved in such ways in God’s governing of the world appear from time to time throughout the scriptures. Their activity indicates the reality of God’s involvement in the world to protect his people and to punish evil, yet it also indirectly suggests his own exaltedness and transcendent authority, implemented (like that of the imperial authority) by means of his subordinate representatives. They belong to the heavens, they are themselves supernatural beings, and they thus bring the word of God. They descend from the heavens and they speak in the hearing of an earthly king, and they thus implement the will of God on earth. Daniel’s lookouts well illustrate the thesis that the true ministry of angels is that of witnesses to God’s work and word, to the God who alone rules.[[765]](#footnote-765)

The object of the event they announce removes any possibility that they might be rivals of God. Its object is that people may acknowledge that the One On High rules. This declaration is perhaps a tautology; of course the One On High rules. But it might be possible to understand that rule as holding in the world above and in the world to come but not in this present world. The lookout declares that God rules here and now. The scriptures often affirm that God rules *through* human kingship; the calling of political authorities is to be the means of realizing God’s provision, justice, and discipline in the world (hence Rom 13:1). Thus God works through the successive kings of the Middle Eastern empires (Isa 10:5; 13:3–6; 45:1). It also affirms that God rules *over* human kingship, for the pride or the failure of political authorities may require that they themselves be disciplined (hence Mark 12:17; and see Isa 10:5–19). God’s power to overrule them is demonstrated by his ability to deprive the mighty of their authority and to give it to nobodies like Nabonidus, who broke the power of Nebuchadnezzar’s dynasty and whose person is part of the background to this chapter. That ability, too, belongs not merely to past history (Ps 78:70–71) or to the moment when God’s ultimate purpose is fulfilled (Luke 1:52) but to present events, to current experience. To affirm that the heavens rule (as v 26 later does) is to affirm that history is not limited to what seems humanly possible: the heavens are “where God is enthroned” and they are thus “the source of the transformative possibilities that God presents to every actual entity.. . . To paraphrase Whitehead, ‘Heaven’ is the ‘home of the possibles.’”[[766]](#footnote-766)

The first reason the chapter gives for the felling of the tree is that it will show that God rules. Its cause here is not Nebuchadnezzar’s pride; it is not for reasons to do with Nebuchadnezzar at all. The lookout is concerned about whether people in general have the right attitude to human governments. The author will have in mind the unbelieving world of his day, and the faithful insofar as they are tempted to adopt that world’s way of thinking. The felling of the tree proves who is king. The tree speaks of a human authority that has its place (cf. v 36) but that has to be kept in its place. Human power is helpless outside of the permissive will of the divine power. Much of the dream’s basic meaning thus overlaps significantly with that of chap. 2. So what is its purpose? Is the implication that the dream comes because Nebuchadnezzar didn’t get the point the first time?[[767]](#footnote-767) Or is it that the readers might not have gotten it the first time?

Dramatically, the inability of Nebuchadnezzar and his experts to understand the dream heightens the suspense and prepares the way for Daniel to do so, even though its interpretation will require little more than Nathan’s “You are the man” (2 Sam 12:7). Perhaps we are to infer that Nebuchadnezzar’s staff were scared to risk saying what was really self-evident.[[768]](#footnote-768) Such an inability would reflect an understandable fear on the part of ministers of state as well as king. Messengers who bring bad news sometimes pay for it as if they were responsible for it, but the king reassures Daniel that he is not to fear for his own fate.

**19** Daniel’s fear, however, is for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel is not a prophet who enjoys delivering a message of judgment.[[769]](#footnote-769) His desire that the dream portrays the fate of the king’s enemies rather than that of Nebuchadnezzar again builds up the tension, though it implies a positive concern for the king. Daniel here encourages the readers of the book to long for God to have compassion on world rulers, specifically the wicked ones, and he encourages the world to assume that judgment is never inevitable. Both features parallel the book of Jonah. If we bait the tyrants and dare them do their worst, they may. Daniel invites readers to care about people in power, even people who abuse power, to appeal to their humanness not their sinfulness, and to treat them as people given a responsibility by God and people who may respond to an appeal to right and wrong.[[770]](#footnote-770)

**20–27** Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon had been the contemporary embodiment of that recurrent ambition of nations to be the Godlike ruler of and provider for the whole world. But “reaching up to the heavens” can suggest a rebellious arrogance, which the heavens themselves must judge (Gen 11:4; Isa 14:13).[[771]](#footnote-771) Only a tree that stands for God’s own rule will ultimately be allowed to grow so high and broad that the birds of the heavens shelter in its branches (Mark 4:30–32). Every Nebuchadnezzar has a lookout by his side,[[772]](#footnote-772) one who implements not merely the will of subordinate heavenly powers but the will of the One On High (v 24). The action he heralds is designed to bring Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge the One On High (contrast v 17). Actually, Nebuchadnezzar would have acknowledged that the One On High ruled (indeed, see 2:47); but earthly rulers find it difficult to make this acknowledgment something more than formal, one that does not compromise their sense that they themselves are in control. Andrew Melville (1545-1622) reminded James VI, when he was asserting his rights, that Scotland had another King “of whose kingdom King James is neither Lord nor Head, but subject.”[[773]](#footnote-773) Nebuchadnezzar was affirmed in chap. 2, was confronted over religious questions in chap. 3, and is now confronted over his fulfillment of his kingship. At least it is a comfort that even God’s judgment has as its object not merely destruction but recognition (cf. the Psalms, e.g., Ps 83 with its surprising ending). Nebuchadnezzar is promised that he can be king from the point he acknowledges that actually he is not, because God is.

Yet what was Nebuchadnezzar thinking when he asked after the dream’s meaning? He seems to have thought that the terror would be lessened.[[774]](#footnote-774) When he asked for interpretation, he did not ask for advice, and the person who offers unrequested advice risks the reaction “If I’d wanted your opinion, I’d have asked for it”[[775]](#footnote-775)—or a much worse reaction, if we are talking about a Babylonian king.

The potential good news for Nebuchadnezzar is that announcements of judgment have as their object that their recipients give this recognition without the judgment having to draw it forth. Whereas the lookouts’ decision might sound like an expression of determinism,[[776]](#footnote-776) Daniel knows that as usual everything depends on the subject’s response.[[777]](#footnote-777) Jer 18:1-12 expounde the principle. When John the Baptizer says, “Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees” (Matt 3:10), like Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jonah, and Jesus, along with Daniel, he utters his warnings in order that what is announced can be averted.[[778]](#footnote-778) And like these prophets, Daniel is not the kind ofprophet who is looking forward with enthusiasm to seeing the guilty get their comeuppance. His wish that disaster be averted may be conventional, but it is real.

To avert it, the action required is to act in faithfulness (צדקה, conventionally “righteousness”). It denotes doing the right thing by the people in one’s community and thus doing what is right instead of what is wrong. More specifically it involves taking action on behalf of the ordinary, lowly, powerless people (ן י נ ע, conventionally “poor”) (v 27). Such policies are closely associated governmental obligations (Isa 11:4; Jer 22:15–16; Ps 72:2). Indeed, in building inscription 12, Nebuchadnezzar claims to be a just king, meek and humble.[[779]](#footnote-779) This royal ideal is suggested by the imagery of provision and protection in his dream vision, but it is omitted in Daniel’s description of what Nebuchadnezzar has actually achieved (v 22).

Daniel’s implicit accusation is not justified by anything we have been told in earlier chapters about Nebuchadnezzar.[[780]](#footnote-780) But a great national empire such as Nebuchadnezzar’s is characteristically the political equivalent to the Indian god Vishnu, who was supposed to be the Preserver of human life but whose huge image was traditionally carried in processions on a giant wheeled throne that crushed anything that got in its path. The “juggernaut” that is supposed to be preserver and provider easily becomes crusher and destroyer, totalitarian and absolute in its demands.[[781]](#footnote-781) And in this connection a passage such as Hab 2 gives Yahweh’s perspective on Babylon.[[782]](#footnote-782) Even pagan kings are called to be the means of God’s caring kingship being implemented;[[783]](#footnote-783) this king who has so far failed to implement it must take action now if he is not to fall as a result. In his case, at least, sin consists in injustice and unconcern. Such sins are a yoke weighing down on his neck that needs to be broken off if Nebuchadnezzar is to be free of their bondage,[[784]](#footnote-784) free to take on another yoke, but an easier one (Matt 11:28–30). “In short, the Babylonian emperor must no longer behave like a Babylonian emperor.” Daniel assumes that a regime that puts faithfulness first will then itself prosper.

**28–33** “Daniel disappears from the account at this point”; there is no reference to Nebuchadnezzar acknowledging him.[[785]](#footnote-785) In Jonah, Nineveh received no explicit invitation to repent, yet Nineveh and its king knew that contrition, fasting, prayer, and reform were the appropriate responses to Jonah’s warning of judgment. Nineveh and its king were given forty days to turn from their wrongdoing; Nebuchadnezzar is apparently given a year. But in contrast to the king of Nineveh, the king of Babylon apparently makes no response to the warning he has received, and he continues to enjoy the life of a successful monarch, the life he describes at the beginning of his story (v 4). He provides an anticipatory example of Paul’s charge in Rom 2:4-9.[[786]](#footnote-786)

Nebuchadnezzar had built an empire, built a culture, built a educated, multi-cultural administration—and he had built a city.[[787]](#footnote-787) His sense of achievement over his building projects in Babylon is quite justified, yet it is precisely this sense of achievement that apparently leads to his downfall. Perhaps his concern with his own kingship hindered him from seriously acknowledging God’s (cf. v 25), though again there is no explicit reference to pride on Nebuchadnezzar’s part (contrast Isa 14; Ezek 28; Acts 12:22–23). Perhaps the attention he gave to building projects should have been given to a concern for the needy (cf. v 27). “He heard the lowly coming to the door and crying out. He said, ‘What is the sound of this multitude in my ears?’ His servants said to him, ‘The lowly for whom you arranged a time for their provision.’” But if he fed them, he pointed out, he wouldn’t have been able to build great Babylon.[[788]](#footnote-788) Or perhaps the sense of achievement over these projects has usurped the place of a desire for a sense of achievements in the area of faithfulness towards his people (cf. Jehoiakim, Jer 22:13–19). Human kingship is called to reflect the kingship of the God who works through it, and to reflect his priorities. Yet further, even in the absence of pride, perhaps anything that or anyone who becomes great threatens by that very fact to rival the greatness of God (for “great Babylon,” cf. Rev 18:2). Whenever human beings rejoice in success and achievement, they may be about to experience the action of God to remind them and the world of their place as mere creatures before his majesty, the only true majesty. Absolute human power and achievement are only relative in relation to God’s power. Being rich in earthly possessions and achievements must not take the place of being rich towards God (Luke 12:16–21). God characteristically shames the wise and strong by means of the apparently weak and foolish (1 Cor 1:27).[[789]](#footnote-789)

Nebuchadnezzar’s banishment from human society into the wild is his personal and royal experience of that banishment experienced by the OT’s first human beings (that, too, being a story about a quasi-royal figure, and involving a tree of life). “The words were still on the king’s lips” balances “on the day that you eat of it” (cf. the “immediately” in Acts 12:23). A particular word or act, arguably no worse than many others, becomes the occasion of a devastating declaration of judgment. The original act of defiance meant banishment for all humanity; yet Adam and Eve’s fellow human beings often earn banishment from the alternative gardens they create for themselves. The desire to be like God led to humanity’s losing even its authority over the animals; yet the members of that humanity are sometimes transformed into beasts when they have sought to be like God (cf. also Ps 49:12, 20 [13, 21]).[[790]](#footnote-790) Insanity can take the form of religious delusion, but in Nebuchadnezzar’s case it was irreligious delusion that lost him his real humanity. Within him “there is a deep vein of irrationality and even madness.”[[791]](#footnote-791) In other words, if the story speaks of madness, it is making a theological point rather than a psychological one.

The achievement and the splendor then suddenly seem insignificant. Perhaps one should say that the true insanity belonged to the Nebuchadnezzar who had earlier been talking as if he were the eternal king and as if God did not exist. His outwardly weird behavior is the external expression of a delusion of which he has already been the tragic victim. Only a madman thinks he is a king or an emperor: politics is the house rules of a lunatic asylum[[792]](#footnote-792) (though those rules are important, because they make the madness as little harmful as possible).

**34–37** As God demonstrated his power and his faithfulness to his word in bringing judgment on Nebuchadnezzar, so he does once again in bringing to an end the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation. We are not told that Nebuchadnezzar repented before he was restored; indeed, it would be difficult for a man in his condition to do so. The reason for the timing of his restoration lay in the will of God.

“Chapter 4 is a story about two sovereignties.”[[793]](#footnote-793) Nebuchadnezzar’s confession affirms that his rule can be suspended or terminated; God’s never is. His power can be cast aside as a mere feebleness; *a fortiori* the power or opinion of other human beings counts for nothing. Supernatural lookouts scurry to implement God’s will; the forces of the heavens, are under his unquestioned command; the possibility of rebellion is hardly envisaged (see further Dan 10–12; contrast Isa 24:21). God rules in the heavens, but he also rules on the earth. Readers of Dan 4 who are impressed by earthly powers, and perhaps by heavenly ones, may be encouraged to live by Nebuchadnezzar’s confession. Occasions such as the exodus or the return from exile (or the emptying of the tomb) demonstrate the kinglike authority of God and make it possible to continue to believe in it between times.

In recounting how the restoration came about, the chapter closes with a return to Nebuchadnezzar speaking, which complicates an understanding of it. When the narrator was speaking, we were presumably intended to believe what the narrative said. But when Nebuchadnezzar is speaking, it is a more open question whether we are expected to do so. And there are two ways of reading Nebuchadnezzar.

One possibility is to take his words at face value. Their implication then is that “an attack of humility also led to sanity.”[[794]](#footnote-794) Nebuchadnezzar had looked over Babylon with a justifiable pride; now the determined period of his chastisement is over and he looks to God in recognition and need. God’s handling of him was effective. “The good news for Nebuchadnezzar—and for everyone made insane by power—is that the story turns…. The great usurper has come to his senses.”[[795]](#footnote-795) As was intended (vv 25, 32), dethronement and restoration have brought the earthly king to praise and confession before the One On High as the one whose kingship is never set aside. It is the praise and confession that an angel’s witness is designed to inspire.[[796]](#footnote-796) Thus the events follow a significant sequence. The time comes to an end; so the king turns to God for mercy; so God restores him to his full humanness; so he opens his mouth in fervent praise and worship. The “new Nebuchadnezzar” makes the confession appropriate to “Yahweh’s servant” (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 43:10),[[797]](#footnote-797) the confession to which Isa 40:12-26 invites Judahites in Babylon.[[798]](#footnote-798) The confession of God as King might seem to leave no place for human government (cf. Judg 8:23; 1 Sam 8:4–7; 12:12). But rather, the chapter continues to assume that if God’s kingship is acknowledged, human kingship can find its place. “Nebuchadnezzar is responsible for the way he handles power; he can set himself up as sovereign, or he can treat his sovereignty as derivative from God’s.”[[799]](#footnote-799) Even the majesty and the glory of human kingship are affirmed, in the context of that confession which is the fruit of personal abasement. It really is “the context”: the confession appears on both sides of the reference to his own glory, acting like a metaphorical lookout in relation to that dangerous self-description. Rule on the earth as well as the rule of the heavens comes to belong to the one who becomes poor in spirit (cf. Matt 5:3).[[800]](#footnote-800) The king’s sin has been characterized both as pride and as injustice or unconcern. His testimony finally brings the two together. God is the embodiment of faithfulness and justice and the demolition of pride. Nebuchadnezzar is an example, a warning of how not to be led astray by power and achievement, and a model of how to respond to chastisement and humiliation. He is even more a promise, that earthly authorities are in the hand of God, not merely for their judgment, but for his glory. The account of Nebuchadnezzar in chaps. 1—4 thus comes to a happy ending. It is a coming-of-age story about Nebuchadnezzar’s personal and spiritual education and his “final transformation.” He moves from being the confident victor over Judah to recognizing the smartness of some of the people he transported (chap. 1), from anxiety and heavy-handedness to recognition of Yahweh and his servants (chap. 2), from a demand for the acknowledgment of his statue to an insistence on people’s acknowledging Yahweh (chap. 3), and from disdain towards Yahweh’s warnings to praise of Yahweh as the God of the heavens (chap. 4).[[801]](#footnote-801)

But Calvin comments, “It is not known, however, whether this confession came from a true and genuine penitence. I leave it undecided.” [[802]](#footnote-802) And whereas the praise in vv 34 and 36 is nearly all his, his, he, he, his, him, his, his, he, the testimony in v 35 is all my, my, my, my, me, my, me, I, my, me (with another I in v 36). So the I’s have it.[[803]](#footnote-803)And Calvin seems not to remain undecided: “I rather incline to the opposite conjecture, that he had not put off his errors but had been compelled to give glory to the supreme God.”[[804]](#footnote-804)

The account of Nebuchadnezzar’s response to God’s rescue of the three youths in the fiery furnace indicated aspects of the king’s bifurcated character. One the one hand, he praised the “God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego”; on the other hand, Nebuchadnezzar continued his tyranny by decreeing that he would “tear to pieces” anyone who would speak derisively against their God, thus showing the emptiness of his understanding. This dual presentation invites questions about Nebuchadnezzar’s future behavior. Will his praise of God translate into just behavior, or will his unpredictability continue to prove dangerous? The account of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great tree (Dan 4) probes the nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s character and explores God’s concern for the just exercise of human power. By using this dream account as the last episode from Nebuchadnezzar’s life, the author modulates the king’s legacy. He is no longer the invincible conqueror; he is a subject to God’s will. The last words Nebuchadnezzar speaks prove his subordination: “the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to whom he will” (4:25, 32 [4:22, 29 MT])…. This submission consists of Nebuchadnezzar’s defeat, not of his transformation. With words, Nebuchadnezzar ultimately recognizes God’s power over earthly sovereigns, but he remains blind to its implications. Indeed, Nebuchadnezzar’s words and actions display a significant range of his ability to exercise power, but little change in his character. First a self- congratulatory emperor, he becomes a frightened man upon receiving the dream. The emperor who boasts of his great accomplishments// loses not only his kingdom but also must leave his place in society itself. Upon completion of his exile, he rejoins the human community, praising “the Most High” and “the king of Heaven”; his recognition of God, nevertheless, is incomplete. His words of praise ultimately say more about Nebuchadnezzar himself than they do about the God of Israel. Remaining obsessed with power, Nebuchadnezzar proclaims that his sovereignty is greater than any experienced previously. Ultimately, the author uses this ambiguous presentation of Nebuchadnezzar to underscore that God is indeed the final victor over tyrants, and that Jewish life, even under the rule of foreign kings, would continue despite the sudden and unpredictable challenges to security and even to life itself.[[805]](#footnote-805)

If insightful exegetes can read the confession either way, we should hardly seek to resolve the question of which way to read it. The way the chapter does its work on readers is by making them live inside the questions and the possibilities that the two interpretations raise.

# Belshazzar Fails to Learn from His Father’s Experience and Is Put Down (5:1–31 [5:1—6:1])

As with chap. 4, I follow Luther’s chapter division. The medieval division which appears in printed Hebrew Bibles such as BHS treats 5:31 (EVV) as the first verse of chap. 6. By means of its petucha MT itself makes the chapter break after 5:30; it then has section breaks after vv 7 and 12.[[806]](#footnote-806) The distinctive chapter division in printed Hebrew Bibles perhaps issued from misreading a marginal note when the divisions were transferred from the Latin Bible to the Hebrew.[[807]](#footnote-807)

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## Translation

1King *Belša’ṣṣar* a gave a great dinner for his thousand lords,b and he was drinking wine cin the company ofcthese thousand. 2aWhen he tasteda the wine, Belša’ṣṣar said to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father *Nebukadne’ṣṣar* had taken out from the palace in Jerusalem, so that the king and his lords, his consorts, and his mistressesb could drink from them. 3aThey brought the goldb vessels which had been taken out from cthe palace in the house of Godc in *Yerušalem*, and the king and his lords, his consorts, and his mistresses drankd from them. 4As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

5That very moment the fingers of a human hand went outa and they were writing on the plaster of the wall of the royal palace, over against the candelabra. The king could see the actualb hand as it was writing. 6The kinga—his face fellb and his mind was filled with alarm. The knots of his hips went loose and his knees knocked against each other. 7The king called in a loud voice to fetch the chanters,a the Kasdites, and the exorcists. He averred to the Babylonian experts, “Anyone who can read out this inscription and explain its interpretation shall wear the purple, with the gold chainb around his neck, and shall rule as a Deputyc in the kingdom.” 8aAll the king’sb experts came in,a but they could not read out the inscription or let the king know the interpretation. 9King Belša’ṣṣar grew very alarmed. His face fell further,a and his lords were put in turmoil.

10Because of the talk on the part of the king and his lords, the queen came into the banqueting hall. The queen averred, “Long live the king! Your thoughts should not alarm you and your face should not fall. 11There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of holy deitya in him. In your father’s time he was found to have insight and ability,b and an expertise like the expertise of the gods. King Nebukadne’ṣṣar, your father, made him head of the cdiviners, chanters, Kasdites, and exorcistsc—your father as king.d 12Since this Daniyye’l, whom the king named *Belṭeša’ṣṣar*, was found to have a remarkable spirit, knowledge, and ability, ainterpreting dreams, explaining puzzles, and loosening enigmas,a Daniyye’l should be summoned now, and he will explain the interpretation.”

13So Daniyye’l was brought before the king. The king averred to Daniyye’l: “So you are Daniyye’l, one of the Yehudite exiles whom my father as king brought from Yehudah? 14I have heard tell of you, that the spirit of deitya is in you. You have been found to have insight and ability and remarkable expertise. 15The experts (the chanters) have just been brought before me to read out this inscription and tell me its interpretation, but they were unable to explain the thing’s interpretation. 16But I myselfa have heard tell of you, that you can give interpretations and resolve enigmas. Now, if you can read out the inscription and let me know its interpretation, you shall wear the purple, with the gold chain around your neck, and rule as a Deputy in the kingdom.”

17Daniyye’l responded before the king, “You may keep your gifts, or give your rewardsa to some other man. Nevertheless, I will read out the inscription for your majesty and let him know the interpretation. 18You, your majesty:a God On High gave broyal authority and glorious splendorb to your father Nebukadne’ṣṣar. 19Because of the authority that had been given him, people of all races, nations, and languages stood in fear and trembling before him. He would kill whom he wished and spare whom he wished, elevate whom he wished and humble whom he wished. 20But when his attitude became elevated and his spirit arrogant, so that he behaved presumptuously, he was deposed from his royal throne, and honor was taken away from him. 21He was led away from human society, his mind becamea like an animal’s, and he lived with the wild donkeys.b He was fed plants like an ox and his body was watered with the dew from the heavens, until he came to acknowledge that God On High rules over human kingship and sets over it whomever he wishes.

22As his sona you, Bēlša’ṣṣar, have not humbled your attitude becauseb you knew all this, 23but have elevated yourself above the Lord of the Heavens. The vessels from his house have been brought before you, and you and your lords, your consorts, and your mistresses have drunk wine from them and you have praised the gods of asilver and gold,a of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which cannot see or hear or know, and have not glorified the God bwho has your lifebreath and all your ways in his hand.b 24That is why from his presence a hand was sent and this inscription written. 25This is the inscription that was written: ‘aCounted at a mina,a a sheqel,b and two halves,c’ 26This is the interpretation of the words. ‘A mina’ means ‘God counted out the days of your kingship and handed it over’.a 27‘A sheqel’ means ‘You have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.’ 28‘A half’ means ‘Your kingship has been broken in half and given to Maday and *Paras*.’”

29Belša’ṣṣar said to clothea Daniyye’l in the purple, with the gold chain around his neck, and a proclamation was issued concerning him, that he would rule as a Deputy in the kingdom. 30That very night Belš’aṣṣar a the Kasdite king was killed, 31and Dareyaweš the Medite acquireda the kingship asb a man of sixty-two years.

## Notes

1.a. בלשאצר, Bēl-šar-uṣur, “Bel protect the king.” One might have expected in BA בלשראצר (cf. Nērgal šar-’eṣer, Jer 39:3) (Plöger). בלאשצר (5:30; 7:1; 8:1) is more anomalous: see n. 30.a.

1.b. Taking the whole phrase אלף לרברבנוהי as determinate; cf. Th, BL 95k, against NRSV, Ehrlich “1000 of his lords.” Cf. 7:24 “the ten horns,” not “ten of the horns.”

1.c-c. Cf. jb; for the king to dine with them was an exceptional event. But לקבל may suggest “before them,” i.e., sitting at high table facing them (making a display of himself?).

2.a-a. בטעם, perhaps implying “under the influence of” (e.g., Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel*, 59-60; and the story in Esth 1:10).

2.b. ה ת ולחנ שגלתה: Apparently Akk. terms for the more high-ranking of the king’s wives and for other women from the royal household. The first is usually taken to mean “she of the palace” (cf. Newsom), though Feigin (“Word Studies,” 47) doubts this understanding and argues for “lady of the harem” more generally. The second might denote senior figures in the harem or might simply signify secondary wives (see *HALOT*;CAD E: 61–62; A/1:294; Diakonoff, “Some Remarks on I 568.” But there is a disparaging tone about the two words, esp. in the pl., and about the combination. The women contrast unfavorably with מלכתא “the queen” who appears in v 10, since the terms here do not denote people who exercise authority in the way that she does; cf. the two classes of women of the palace and of the harem in 1 Kgs 11:3; Cant 6:8 (Landsberger, “Akkadische-hebräische Wortgleichungen,” 198–204; Oppenheim, *Ancient* Mesopotamia, 104; and for the Persian period, Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 277-86). jb “singing women” for לחנתה connects the term with a word used at Elephantine (cf. Reider, “The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri,” 339; Couroyer, “Lḥn: chantre?”; Torrey, “More Elephantine Papyri,” 150–51, appealing to an Arabic root; cf. BDB for an Arabic cognate).

3.a. The verse begins באדין (EVV “then”) and the chapter uses both באדין and אדין as linking particles, hardly requiring translation (cf. notes 2:15.c and 3:3a).

3.b. Presumably the silver ones are implicitly included (cf. v 2); Th, Vg, make this explicit.

3.c-c. The epression might distinguish the היכל from the wider complex of temple buildings as a whole, cf. 1 Kgs 6:3. But more likely the pleonastic expression makes clear that the היכל in question is the temple, as Yahweh’s “palace,” not the king’s palace (as in 4:29 [26]). It thus prepares for v 4 and makes explicit Belshazzar’s sacrilege. Vg omits it and Plöger sees it as a gloss; Syr, Th omit בית.

3.d. אשתיו (also v 4). The prosthetic א is a mark of eastern imperial Aramaic, not of late Aramaic. (Coxon, “A Philological Note”).

5.a. Q נפקה (f. verb); K has m. verb with f. subject. Cf. n. 7:8.b; n. 7:20.a. The verb picks up the one used in the haphel in vv 2 and 3, there translated “taken out” (see Arnold**,** “Wordplay and Narrative Techniques”).

5.b. פס usually refers to the palm, which would be hardly visible during writing, even to someone below it (Bentzen). Effectively it refers here to the back of the hand or knuckles (Th; neb, Plöger, comparing Gen 37:3). It thus suggests merely a hand (unconnected to an arm; cf. Hartman/Di Lella). Perhaps we should think of it as a severed hand (Polaski**,** “*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin*,” 653). The hand writes on the wall above the high table, illuminated by the candelabra (cf. gnb).

6.a. Whereas in BH subject preceding verb is uncommon and usually implies an emphasis on the subject, in the BA of Daniel this word order appears in nearly a quarter of the clauses (see Buth; Cook; Folmer; Yakubovich [see *General Bibliography*]). In part this difference may reflect the influence on Aramaic of languages such as Akkadian and Persian, which are more mixed in word order. But it is worth asking whether in particular cases the subject or object preceding the verb suggests some emphasis or focusing. And in this clause the extraposed positon of the subject makes the focalizing clear.

6.b. Literally, “changed [on] him: the suffix on שנוהי is an anomalous indirect object (BL 75d, GKC 117x; and see Cohen, “Subject and Object,” 21); compare and contrast עלוהי in v 9 and see n. 9.a.

7.a. 4QDana, OG (Pace, *The OG Text*,34) have an extra group, חרטמיא “diviners,” as in 2:10.

7.b. המונכא (Q המניכא), a Persian word perhaps denoting a collar on the garment rather than a chain; cf. the רבד of Gen 41:42 (and Gen 41:41–42 for this passage as a whole). Cf. Hittite mannin(n)i (so Kronasser, “Heth. mannin(n)i- 'Halsschmuck'.”). But Gk. μανιάκης denotes a bracelet (cf. Belardi, **“**Greco μανιάκης”).

7.c. תלתי has the word for “third” lying behind it; It might connect with the three overseers of 6:2 [3] (cf. OG), or suggest that Daniel would be third in rank within the kingdom (after Nabonidus and Belshazzar? or after Belshazzar and the Queen? cf. EVV). But perhaps, like BH שליש, it has lost its numerical meaning altogether. In form, it may combine Aram. תליתי and the Akk.-influenced תלתא of vv 16, 29 (see GBA 69, 71; Torrey, “Stray Notes on the Aramaic of Daniel and Ezra,” 232).

8.a-a. The phrase is resumptive after v 7b, to lead into the statement of the experts’ incomprehension; it is rather wooden to propose emendation because v 7b suggests the experts are already in the hall (against BHS).

8.b. מלכא is odd; some medieval mss have the more usual בבל, while BHS notes the proposal מלכותא.

9.a. עלוהי (literally, “upon him”)suggests the deepening of the king’s alarm.

11.a. See n. 4.8.c; here Th has “spirit of God,” Sym, Vg have “spirit of holy gods,” OG conflates the two references to “spirit” in vv 11-12.

11.b. ושכלתנו נהירו, perhaps hendiadys, “brilliant insight” (Hartman/Di Lella).

11.c-c. See on 2:2 and on 4:8.

11.d. מלכא ך אבו, perhaps a variant for מלכא נבכדנער אבוך “King Nebuchadnezzar, your father” (Ehrlich); Th, Syr lack it. But Belshazzar omits the reference to Nebuchadnezzar’s elevating Daniel when he recapitulates the queen’s words (vv 13–16) (Plöger); perhaps the words are repeated for emphasis here.

12.a-a. A parenthesis after the absolute שכלתנו “ability.” ר ש פ מ “interpreting” and משרא “resolving” need to be understood as verbal nouns, like אחוית “explaining,” which may not involve emending them if the participle can denote the action as such, without focusing on an agent: so Emerton, “The Participles in Daniel v 12,” noting that Syr, Th do not support emendation. NEB’s “unbinding spells” for קטרין משרא fits the Babylonian context, but it is not clear that the phrase would have been understood thus, and the literary context (v 16) implies that the ability referred to here relates to interpretive activity. The expression recurs from v 6 where it referred to muscles going loose.

14.a. Vg has “spirit of gods,” Th “spirit of God.” Some medieval mss and Syr also have קדשין “holy,” as in v 11. But such variation where phrases recur is common in Daniel. Keil thinks the omission is significant on the lips of Belshazzar.

16.a. אנה is emphatic (contrasting with v 14, after v 15).

17.a. נבזביתך: the form is odd (GBA 62) and may be a corruption of ביתך נבזבת “the gift of your house”; cf. Th, Syr (Kallarakkal, 84–85).

18.a. מלכא אנתה: the hanging nominative makes clear that what follows relates to him (Zoeckler).

18.b-b. Taking והדרה ויקרא ורבותא מלכותא “kingship, greatness, honor, and splendor” as a double hendiadys (Hartman/Di Lella).

21.a. K שוי is peil; Q and some medieval mss have שויו pael (3 pl. impersonal).

21.b. ערדיא; a few medieval mss read עדריא “flocks/herds,” perhaps to harmonize with what follows, “eating plants like an ox.”

22.a. NIVmg “descendant” or “successor” are possible renderings of ר ב; see *Comment* on v 2.

22.b. “Although” (EVV) For יד לקב כל is hard to parallel; the usual “because” is quite possible if the clause is linked with the verb rather than with the negative (Keil).

23.a-a. Th, Syr reverse these words to the more usual order.

23.b-b. Linking לה with what follows rather than with what precedes, with Th (cf. BHS) against MT accents (cf. rv).

25.a-a. מנא מנא. The lack of one מנא in G (OG in its introduction to chap. 5; Josephus, Antiquities 10.11.3 [10.243–44], does not quote the inscription itself) more likely reflects haplog./assimilation of the inscription to the threefold interpretation than dittog. in MT On differences between omen text and interpretation, see n. 2:34.b. Cf. rather Syr’s suggestion of a play on words, menê menâ (so Montgomery). The first מנא is then pass participle, the second a noun (Prince); with this use of the verb, cf. 2 Kgs 12:10 [11] (Eissfeldt, “Die Menetekel-Inschrift,” 109).

25.b. תקל. A homonym means “fall” (DTT), an appropriate idea in the context (König, “Mené, mené, teḳél upharsin,” 956). Zimmermann (“The Writing on the Wall”) translates “the Persian trap is set” on the basis of the related noun.

25.c. Again, s. פרס implied by G (Josephus, Antiquities 10.11.3 [10.243–44], is once more hardly relevant) more likely reflects assimilation to the interpretation (v 28) than MT expansion, since the pl. occurs only in v 25. I have taken פרסין as dual in meaning (cf. עדנין, 7:25; and see *Comment* on v 31, but it could indicate “some halves” (Nöldeke, “Mene tekel upharsin,” 415–16).

26.a. EVV have “brought to an end”; but שלם haphel suggests rather God’s original entrusting of the kingship to Belshazzar (Ezra 7:19; DTT), which gives a better sequence and more dramatic effect.

29.a. See BL 106e.

30.a. At the point of his death, the anomalous spelling בלאשער might suggest “Bel [in] the fire of an adversary” (Poole on 7:1).

31.a. קבל need not imply “took [by force],” though “grab” was apparently a favorite verb of Darius I [Cook, Persian Empire, 66]). Nor need it imply “received [from God or Cyrus]”: it may simply indicate that he succeeded Belshazzar (Young).

31.b. כ‍ denoting time at which; EVV “about” is unnecessary (GBA 78; GKC 118s-x).

## Form/Structure/Setting

### Form

Elements of court contest tale, legend, and midrash again interweave (see chap. 1 *Form*). The story’s background is a palace banquet; it concerns king, queen, and members of the administration. Once more a king receives an alarming omen, of evidently portentous significance and requiring interpretation. His experts are impotent, but finally the hero (now an old, forgotten adviser?) arrives, interprets the omen, and is rewarded. The queen’s reassurances and the king’s response to the message (vv 10, 29), both out of keeping with its contents, are court contest tale motifs. The writing on the wall has been seen as a folktale motif,[[808]](#footnote-808) though there are no very close independent parallels.[[809]](#footnote-809)

As in chaps. 1–4, the court tale is utilized in a religious setting; the story becomes a prophetic legend. The omen is provoked by an act of idolatrous sacrilege in a context of Bacchanalian excess. The omen is manifestly of supernatural origin and it elicits the response appropriate to an announcement of divine judgment. The story’s Judahite hero is able to interpret it because the spirit of holy deity is in him. The story closes with the confirming of his word by events that take place that very night; in contrast to chaps. 2 and 4, there is no acknowledgment of God by the hearer. The opening rebuke regarding the hearer’s wrong attitude to the prophet (v 17) is also at home in such stories. Although the message includes no “messenger formula” (“thus says Yahweh”), its form otherwise recalls the indictments of the prophets.[[810]](#footnote-810) It especially resembles ones in 1 Sam 2:27–36; 15:17–26; 2 Sam 12:7–12); like these examples, it will constitute the narrator’s idea as to what an appropriate prophetic word in this context would have been.[[811]](#footnote-811) It is literary prophecy.

After the repudiation of the offered reward, the message includes a developed reminder of the history behind the present situation (vv 18–21), which provides the background and grounds for a reproof (vv 22–23). There follows an introduction to the announcement of judgment (vv 24–25a, 26a), then the announcement itself (25b, 26b–28). The last is fairly brief; the heart of the message lies in the preceding indictment (vv 18–23), in the background to the omen rather than in the omen itself.[[812]](#footnote-812) The interpretation of the omen utilizes paronomasia, in the manner of a prophet (Jer 1:11–12; Amos 8:1–2) (see Structure), though it follows the pesher form, stating and interpreting the omen element by element. The utilization of the pesher form compares with chap. 2; in contrast, the importance of the Jonah-like “prophetic” indictment of the king[[813]](#footnote-813) distinguishes chaps. 4 and 5 with their focus on events in the kings’ own day from chap. 2 with its message relating directly to the readers’ time. Chap. 5 does resemble chap. 2 in containing no overt invitation to repentance on the king’s part.

The story has one or two midrashic or intertextual aspects. The attack on idolatry, the scorning of the experts, and the contrasting portrayal of a God able to declare his intentions and fulfill them, recalls Isa 41:21–29; 44:6–28; 46:1–7, with their focus on the fall of Babylon (also Job 34:16–30; 36:5–14; and further the idol polemic of Deut 4:28; Ps 115; 135:15–18).[[814]](#footnote-814) Belshazzar’s distraught response to the omen, and the fall of his dynasty to a Median king on a night of revelry, recall other prophecies of Babylon’s fall (Isa 21:1–10; also 13:17–19; 14:3–23; Jer 51, especially v 57). Indeed, the story has been called a “narrativization” of Isa 21; it has turned that prophecy into a story.[[815]](#footnote-815) The attack on idolatry resembles 4QPrNab, too, where Nabonidus acknowledges his mistaken worship of gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood, stone and clay. The story utilizes ultimately historical traditions about Belshazzar and his regency in Babylon and about the Persian conquest(s) of Babylon, and reflects the local color of Babylonian palace life, including folk tradition about the Queen Mother (cf. Herodotus, *Histories* 1.185–87). The omen itself might be a secular riddle.[[816]](#footnote-816)

The narrative as a narrative reveals little of the distinctive personalities of the characters; it mostly concerns Belshazzar, yet from it we learn little of the man himself as an individual. He fulfills a role, acting and being acted on, but he is in himself a cipher. Even the anxious fear attributed to him is a motif characteristic of such stories. His personal reaction to Daniel’s message is unrecorded because it is irrelevant. In the case of the queen, too, we learn only what relates to the dramatic function she fulfills in commending Daniel and incriminating Belshazzar. She is simply a voice. On the other hand, the speeches by the queen, Belshazzar, and Daniel are the means of more overt description of the characters’ personalities and qualities. The former two repeat and thus emphasize those personal gifts of Daniel which are relevant to the story. The queen’s speech also offers preliminary hints of Belshazzar’s shortcomings, which Daniel’s speech develops.

The distinctive and original element in the chapter is the omen and its interpretation (vv 25–28), around which a narrative context has been constructed, using remembered historical facts such as the regency of Belshazzar, the forms of court conflict tale and prophetic legend, the technique of midrash, and some of the characteristic structural, verbal, and theological features that appear elsewhere in the Daniel stories (see Setting). The narrative context adds to the omen’s impact, giving concrete expression to the king’s deserving of punishment, the helplessness of Babylonian expertise, and the contrasting insight found in the Judahite expert, by the gift of God.

### Structure

Contrasting with chap. 4, chap. 5 returns to the simple sequential narrative construction of chap. 3.[[817]](#footnote-817) It also resembles chap. 2 in that Daniel’s speech, dominating the latter part of the chapter, carries much of its freight. Narrative, however, provides the chapter’s framework. Vv 1–9 give the introductory setting for the speeches, describing the circumstances and the act of sacrilege (vv 1–4), the appearing of the omen and the king’s response (vv 5–7), then the failure of his initial attempt to discover its meaning and the consequent deepening and broadening of his dismay (vv 8–9). Tension develops steadily through this narrative introduction (which compares with 2:1–13): the Bacchanalian context already bodes ill, the act of sacrilege makes us look for some heavenly response, the omen’s contents are unrevealed but its effect on the king increases our concern regarding them, and the experts’ failure to read the omen deepens this concern.

The bulk of the chapter consists of speeches, in this brief narrative setting. The queen appears; she functions as a means of introducing the hero, announcing in anticipation the abilities he is shortly to be challenged to demonstrate, and introducing the theme of the king’s looking back from his reign to his father’s (vv 10–12; cf. Aryok’s role in 2:14–25). Daniel appears, to be addressed by the king (vv 13–16; cf. 2:26). There may be an irony about the king’s opening words, where his description of Daniel goes beyond anything the queen has told him, to facts from a past of which Belshazzar has not taken account in his act of sacrilege and in his neglecting to turn to Daniel earlier. Much of the king’s subsequent speech merely recapitulates what we have already been told, so that the effect of the two speeches is to promise resolution of the tension established by the narrative opening, but to heighten it in the short term by slowing the pace of the story. Daniel’s prophetic indictment (vv 17–28) carrying much of the burden of the chapter’s message (cf. his speech in 2:27–45) continues this effect. Finally, the narrative framework of the chapter reappears (vv 29-31) and the tension is resolved. The truth of Daniel’s interpretation is acknowledged, and confirmed by events. The reference to Darius in v 31 looks like part of the closure of chap. 5 (so EVV), denoting how power passes from the Babylonians to a Median, rather than the introduction to chap. 6, which relates a specific incident in Darius’s reign.

There are several instances of paronomasia. שרא and קטרין appear together in vv 6, 12, and 16, to denote the weakening of joints (Belshazzar’s problem) and the solving of enigmas (Daniel’s solution). Nebuchadnezzar was free to kill, elevate, and humble when he wished (שפל, רום ,קטל, ה ב צ, v 19); Belshazzar elevated himself like Nebuchadnezzar instead of humbling himself, and he learns that God enthrones whom he wishes (vv 19–23) when he himself is killed (v 30). קטל and תקל (sheqel/weigh, vv 25, 27) are thus juxtaposed .[[818]](#footnote-818) The paronomasia comes to a climax with the omen and its interpretation, which utilize the different significance of מנא, תקל, and פרס as nouns and as verbs and add further additional plays on מנא (repeating the word in different senses) and סיןפר (linked also to פרס “Persia”).

Differences between OG and MT are stronger in chap. 5 than in any other chapter. OG has a long introduction and a number of omissions, and has the name Artaxerxes or Xerxes (manuscripts vary) instead of Darius in v 31.[[819]](#footnote-819) “Apparently the story circulatedin several versions…. A comparison of the three accounts helps one see both how traditional stories tend to exist in variant versions and appreciate how the author of the MT carefully developed details.”[[820]](#footnote-820) MT’s version is more expansive and suspenseful, it puts more emphasis on Daniel’s expertise and his confrontation of Belshazzar, and on the contrast between Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar.

### Setting

Of the kings in Daniel, Belshazzar might most plausibly be viewed as a cipher for the sacrilegious Antiochus Epiphanes (see 1 Macc 1:20–64; also Heliodorus in 2 Macc 3), chap. 5 then being the youngest of the stories.[[821]](#footnote-821) The careers of Antiochus III and his son (cf. 11:10–19, 21–45) correspond to those of Nebuchadnezzar and his son, and the pattern of father and son in chaps. 4–5 may lie behind that in chap. 11.[[822]](#footnote-822) Yet in content chaps. 4 and 5 have also been seen as the oldest stories,[[823]](#footnote-823) and there is no concrete indication that chaps. 4–5 were written in light of the experience of Antiochus. The parallels are general, and sacrilege and idolatry were not a distinctively second-century phenomenon. For the worship of false gods, compare 4QPrNab. Antiochus only plunders the temple; he does not misuse vessels in a religious connection. The words for “proclaim” and “gold chain” (כרז, המונכא) appear in Greek (κηρύσσω, μανιάκης), but the latter is of Persian origin and even the former, if not a loan-word in Greek, is likely an early borrowing.[[824]](#footnote-824) Once again the dispersion and as likely the Persian as the Greek period is the story’s natural historical setting. As with other chapters, scholars have argued that chap. 5 as we know it came into existence by a process of redaction during different periods, though opinions vary as to the nature of this process.[[825]](#footnote-825)

In its literary setting, the story has a close relationship with chap. 4. Its picture of a sacrilegious king who finds no mercy compares and contrasts with the earlier picture of an overbearing king who did find mercy.[[826]](#footnote-826) Like chap. 2 as well as chap. 4, the narrative tells of a buoyant king disturbed by an omen; he summons his experts to interpret it and his promise of rewards parallels chap. 2, but they fail, and only then does Daniel appear on the scene. While paralleling Aryok’s role in chap. 2, the queen’s action also recalls 1:7, 17, 20; 2:48; and 4:8–9 [5-6], and the king’s speech refers back to 1:3; 2:25; and 4:9 [6], and thus, behind the queen’s words, to 1:17, 20. Daniel’s speech refers back to God’s dealings with Nebuchadnezzar in chap. 4 (and behind that to 2:21, 37). The sacrilege with the vessels, to which Daniel refers, recalls 1:2. As in 4:31, 33 [28, 30], judgment is declared instantly and implemented instantly (5:5, 30). The announcement of the consequent change of king leads into chap. 6. Meanwhile, “Daniel 5 completed the process of rethinking the Babylonian Empire. It certainly was no longer golden.” The chapter brings to a sad end its story as Dan 1—5 tells it.[[827]](#footnote-827)

## Comment

1–4 It is an abrupt start, like that of chap. 3.[[828]](#footnote-828) There is no hint that the historical situation has moved on spectacularly. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562, three kings reigned for a short time, and the last actual Babylonian king, Nabonidus, came to the throne in 556. For most of his reign he “entrusted the kingship” in to his son Bēl-šar-uṣur during a ten-year absence from Babylon, returning as the threat from Cyrus grew in 539. Belshazzar thus fulfilled the functions of kingship, though he was not called king nor did he play the king’s part in the New Year Festival.[[829]](#footnote-829) This latter may reflect more the religious conflict between the Marduk priesthood and Nabonidus’s regime than Belshazzar’s not technically being king.[[830]](#footnote-830)

If Dan 5 relates to the occasion when control in Babylon passed from a Babylonian king to a Median (5:30-31), the occasion must be the fall of Babylon to the forces of Cyrus.[[831]](#footnote-831) We have several other accounts of this event.

(a) According to the Cyrus Cylinder, “without any battle [Marduk] enabled [Cyrus] to enter his city Babylon, sparing Babylon any calamity. He delivered into his hands Nabonidus, the king who did not worship him…. When I [Cyrus] entered Babylon as a friend, I set up the seat of government in the royal palace amidst jubilation and rejoicing…. My numerous troops walked around in Babylon in peace.”[[832]](#footnote-832)

(b) According to the Babylonian Chronicle, in the last year of Nabonidus’s reign the New Year Festival was properly observed and the gods of other cities were brought into Babylon. “In the month of Teshrit, while Cyrus was attacking the Babylonian army at Opis on the Tigris, the people of Babylonia revolted, but he [Nabonidus] slew some of the people. On the fourteenth day, Sippar was taken without a battle. Nabonidus fled. On the sixteenth day [12 October], Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium, and the troops of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle. Afterwards Nabonidus was arrested when he returned to Babylon.” Religious ceremonies were not interrupted. “On the third of Marcheswan [29 October], Cyrus entered Babylon and they waved branches before him. Peace settled on the city and Cyrus proclaimed peace to Babylon. Gubaru, his governor, appointed local governors in Babylon…. On the night of the eleventh of Marcheswan [6 November] Ugbaru died. On the… th the… of the king died”;[[833]](#footnote-833) according to one reading, the king’s son was killed.[[834]](#footnote-834)

(c) According to Berossus, the third-century Babylonian historian, “when Nabonidus perceived [Cyrus] was coming to attack him, he met him with his forces, and, joining battle with him, was beaten, fled with a few of his troops, and was shut up within the city Borsippus. Thereupon Cyrus took Babylon, and gave order that the outer walls of the city should be demolished, because the city had proved very troublesome to him, and cost him a great deal of pains to take it.” When he went to besiege Borsippus, Nabonidus surrendered, and was exiled to Carmania (see Josephus, Against Apion. 1.151–53 [1.20]).

(d) According to Herodotus (*Histories* 1.190–91), Cyrus brought his siege of Babylon to a successful conclusion by temporarily diverting the course of the Euphrates, the city’s western defense, during a nocturnal festival.

(e) Xenophon has a similar story; he adds that the Persians killed the Babylonian king, a riotous, indulgent, cruel, and godless young man (see Cyropedia 4–7 on the fall of Babylon).

Of these sources, the Cyrus Cylinder and the Babylonian Chronicle are closest to the events, but they have their own slant; the former has been called “a propaganda exercise.”[[835]](#footnote-835) We can accept their account of Babylon’s falling to Persian troops without a battle in Nabonidus’s absence, Cyrus himself entering the city some days later. Herodotus’s account of the Persian forces gaining access to the city by temporarily diverting the Euphrates is entirely plausible.[[836]](#footnote-836) The picture of the city feasting when it was about to fall looks like a popular tale. In form and content, Dan 5 has more in common with the two Greek historians than with the Near Eastern sources, all being “traditional developments of the popular memory of the fall of Babylon.”[[837]](#footnote-837)

Belshazzar’s feast might have taken place after he had held out in a fortified location when the city had been taken, and he might have been killed there as a result of a night assault.[[838]](#footnote-838) It is perhaps more likely that Belshazzar was the commander of the Babylonian forces at Opis, and was not in Babylon when the city fell.[[839]](#footnote-839) However that may be, in Dan 5 there is no suggestion that the empire is about to fall. There is no hint that Belshazzar is holding a bizarre final banquet, aware that the enemy is at the gates; indeed, the portent he receives and his reaction to it presuppose that, like Nebuchadnezzar in chap. 4, he has no present reason for anxiety, while the message conveyed by the portent has its force removed if we presuppose that “the writing was on the wall” already. *B. Megillah* 11b nicely argues the opposite: Belshazzar thought that Jeremiah’s prophecy that the exile would last seventy years was not fuilfilled and that therefore he could relax. On this basis he is deliberately disdaining the God of Israel[[840]](#footnote-840)

Nor is there any suggestion that Belshazzar was playing games in promoting Daniel to the position of Deputy. The chapter describes an unexpected coup, not a surprise attack or the climax of a siege—or the judgment of an empire.[[841]](#footnote-841) It portrays God’s punishment of one man for his wrongdoing.The entirety of this man’s humanity is involved in his blasphemy and in his consequent predicament—thoughts, words, and actions.[[842]](#footnote-842)

Although the king would normally dine privately, banquets were a regular enough occurrence (cf. Esth 1). [[843]](#footnote-843) Custom varied regarding whether women were invited (contrast Esth 1 with 1 Esd 1); their presence here is perhaps part of the exoticness of the story for its Jewish listeners. There is no concrete indication that it was a religious occasion (so Xenophon), but it might have been the New Year Festival.[[844]](#footnote-844) But like the dedication festival in chap. 3, the banquet is simply the background to the story, the occasion of the revelry and excess that lead to sacrilege and idolatry. The suggestion that it was a festival to celebrate Belshazzar’s taking the throne on the defeat of Nabonidus by Cyrus seems implausible.[[845]](#footnote-845) It would nevertheless be a religious occasion, not simply a modern-style “secular” state banquet at which the drinking of libations from sacred vessels was an afterthought or an oddity.[[846]](#footnote-846)

Belshazzar’s actual father (v 2) was Nabonidus, who had come to the throne through a coup and did not belong to the royal line. There are two kinds of approach to the description of Belshazzar as Nebuchadnezzar’s son.[[847]](#footnote-847) Belshazzar might be so described because he was Nebuchadnezzar’s successor, or because he was his descendant—supposing that Nabonidus had married into Nebuchadnezzar’s line (cf. nivmg). Herodotus (*Histories* 1.188) makes Nabonidus the son of Nebuchadnezzar (he actually calls both Labynetos) by the otherwise-unknown Nitocris (cf. Megasthenes [Eusebius, *Praeparatio* 9.41.6]). But there is no other evidence of such descent, which would be surprising, and such an indirect relationship may hardly justify the story’s emphasis on the father-son relationship and on the obligations it placed on Belshazzar.

The other approach is to look behind the figures of Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar. If the story in chap. 4 actually relates to Nabonidus, Belshazzar is his son. Alternatively, given that Nebuchadnezzar’s actual son and successor Amel-Marduk (Ewil-merodak) did come to a violent end like Belshazzar, many commentators identified Belshazzar with him[[848]](#footnote-848) before Belshazzar’s identity and position as Nabonidus’s son became clear from cuneiform texts.

Which ever kind of approach is right, the two chief points in neo-Babylonian history are the empire’s rise under Nebuchadnezzar and its fall under Nabonidus/Belshazzar, so that “Nebuchadnezzar the father of Belshazzar” summarizes and reflects the general historical framework of the period.[[849]](#footnote-849)

5–9 On the palace, see on 1:3–4; 4:29-30 [26–27]. It included a plastered throne room 150 feet by 50 feet (though one thousand guests there would find themselves crowded). The candelabra made the writing clearly visible at least to the king; although we are told only of the king’s reaction to the portent (v 6), this need not suggest that only he saw it. The story implies that something happened, not that the king in his drunkenness placed a supranatural construction on something natural.[[850]](#footnote-850) There is perhaps some humor in the description of Belshazzar’s reaction to the portent, if it refers to his loosing control of his bodily functions,[[851]](#footnote-851) but it is a deadly serious comprehensive description of the physical manifestations of terror,[[852]](#footnote-852) the appropriate response to the prospect of divine judgment (cf. Isa 21:3; 45:1, both relating to the fall of Babylon; Ezek 21:6–7; Nah 2:10; Ps 69:23 [24]). “Theater of the absurd? Perhaps, but with a deadly serious subplot.”[[853]](#footnote-853) To wear purple and a gold chain, and to be given a position of authority close to that of the king himself (v 7), are typical expressions of honor from a king (Gen 41:42–43; Esth 8:15; 10:3; 1 Esd 3:6–7; 1 Macc 10:20; 14:43).

It is not specified what made the words unreadable as well as unintelligible (v 8). There is no suggestion that they were in code or were written in an odd way (against b. Sanhedrin 22a). Perhaps they were difficult because of their use of ideograms or their peculiar cuneiform. The story might reflect the existence of OP cuneiform, used less than Akkadian or Aramaic but favored—and invented?—by Darius I.[[854]](#footnote-854) Weights could be abbreviated, as in English, and perhaps the inscription consisted in a series of abbreviations that were not immediately recognizable as such.[[855]](#footnote-855) Perhaps they were written in digits not words.[[856]](#footnote-856) But most straightforwardly the story implies that the words were written as unpointed consonants. Being able to read out unpointed text is partly dependent on understanding it. In actuality, Daniel later reads the words out one way and interprets them in another.

10–16 “Queen” suggests not a mere consort (see v 2) but a political figure, presumably the queen mother, often a significant person in an ancient court; in the OT, see 1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Kgs 11:1–3; 24:12; Jer 13:18. As “senior counsellor to king and people,” she could “provide a stabilizing, moderating influence in the political system” and “circumscribe royal power to some extent and… represent the interests of people or court before the king.”[[857]](#footnote-857) She could take the initiative in coming into the king’s presence, unlike his consort (Esth 4:11). But “her unbidden entry” and “defiance of convention reinforces the picture of Belshazzar’s insecurity.” [[858]](#footnote-858)

The queen’s identity is uncertain. Nabonidus’s mother, Adadguppi, apparently lived through Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, and would thus have been in a position to address Belshazzar as the queen does here, were it not for the fact that she died in 547 bc (see ANET, 306, 560–62). Herodotus (*Histories* 1.185–88) talks at some length about the role in Babylon of Queen Nitocris, who he says was Nebuchadnezzar’s wife. The difficulty with this statement is that Nitocris was actively anti-Median, whereas Nebuchadnezzar was pro-Median and had a Median wife (see 4:29-30 [26–27] *Comment*).[[859]](#footnote-859)

The skills attributed to Daniel (vv 11–12) relate directly to the interpretation of a portent.[[860]](#footnote-860) “Insight” (נהירו) suggests illumination from God, who is the source of light (2:22). “Ability” (שכלתנו) indicates that Daniel not only possesses intellect or talent; he knows how to use it, by God’s gift (according to 1:17). “Expertise” (חכמה) denotes in Daniel the supernatural intuition of an interpreter of dreams or omens, that expertise which also belongs supremely to God (2:20) and which as his gift makes Daniel outstanding among experts (1:17; 2:21, 23). “Knowledge” (מנדע) here likewise denotes an interpreter’s God-given supernatural knowledge (1:17; 2:21). The reference to “the spirit of holy deity”/“a remarkable spirit” (see on 4:8 [5]) underlines the implication that Daniel’s extraordinary ability and his “keen mind”[[861]](#footnote-861) comes from God. The outworking of his gifts develops these points. Regarding “interpreting” (by magical means or by supernatural revelation) (פשר), see n. 2:4.c on the cognate noun. “Dreams” were the specific area of Daniel’s expertise in chap. 4, to which chap. 5 refers back, while an enigmatic puzzle is the specific concern of chap. 5 itself.[[862]](#footnote-862) “Puzzles” (אחידן) are, with dreams and visions, one of the somewhat opaque forms that supernatural revelation can take (cf. Num 12:6–8; Sirach 39:1–4).[[863]](#footnote-863) The Hebrew equivalent also refers to “allegory” (Ezek 17:2) and other expressions of verbal play and expertise. “Enigmas” (קטרין, literally “knots”) are complicated, knotty mysteries such as the writing on the wall, which require extraordinary insight to unravel. Belshazzar desires that the experts “spell out” the handwriting so that his “charmed” existence may continue unharmed.[[864]](#footnote-864)

The question why Daniel has not already been summoned if he is so gifted has been explained historically (he must now be eighty-five), psychologically (Belshazzar knows the kind of message he will get from him), and rhetorically (the successful interpreter appears after the others have failed). Belshazzar’s apparent lack of knowledge of him recalls the Pharaoh who did not know or acknowledge Joseph.[[865]](#footnote-865)

17–24 The repetitive nature of vv 13-16 has heightened suspense; Daniel now confronts Belshazzar like a prophet, as he did Nebuchadnezzar, though there his confrontation constituted a prophetic challenge to repent, whereas here it constitutes a lengthy prophetic critique and warning.

Why does Daniel go through the motions of refusing rewards that he has accepted before (2:48) and will accept later (v 29)? While he might be inviting Belshazzar to wait till he has heard the message before he decides whether he wants to reward the messenger,[[866]](#footnote-866) the abruptness of Daniel’s words (there is no salutation) suggests that they are more confrontational than this explanation would imply (cf. 2:27, and contrast 4:19 [16], at equivalent points in earlier chapters). More likely he is sidestepping any pressure to modify the portent’s message, pressure that derives from the assumption that financial considerations determine the content of a seer’s message (see Num 22:18 and Num 22–24 generally; Amos 7:12; Mic 3:5, 11).[[867]](#footnote-867) There is no danger of that sidestepping once the hard message has been given (v 29) (though contrast 2 Kgs 5:16). Further, as refusal at this point indicates his independence, acceptance later will enable his eminence to be revealed.[[868]](#footnote-868) There may also be a suggestion that Daniel’s refusal signifies his dissociating himself from the wrongdoing of the regime he is sent to indict (cf. 1 Kgs 13:7–9). Nebuchadnezzar’s power to kill, spare, elevate, or humbles compares with the power Eliphaz attributes to God—but even Eliphaz adds a note that God also saves and gives hope to the needy (Job 5:11-16).[[869]](#footnote-869) It seems that Nebuchadnezzar “had dared to usurp the power that belonged to God alone,”[[870]](#footnote-870) though at least in some sense he learned his lesson.

Nebuchadnezzar’s “spirit” (v 20) contrasts with Daniel’s, as Nebuchadnezzar’s wife describes it (v 12); see on 4:8 [5]. The “ways” of a person (v 23) are the course of life that they follow, which is seen as known by God and under God’s control—without implying that it is predetermined in such a way as to make human decision-making illusory (Cf. Job 8:13; Prov 3:6; 4:18; also דרך in, e.g., Job 22:28; 24:23; Ps 18:32 [33]; 37:5, 7, 23; 146:9; Prov 20:24; Isa 40:27; Jer 10:23.) The idea is prominent in books such as Proverbs and Job; the idea of God’s holding a person’s breath (נשמה or רוח) also appears there (e.g., Job 12:10; 34:14–15; cf. Gen 2:7; Ps 104:29).

Being sent out from God’s presence makes the hand a divine envoy like the spirits in 1Kings 22:20-22.[[871]](#footnote-871)

25–28 Each word in the inscription has several possible meanings (DTT). Like a dream, the portent has a surface meaning and one or more allegorical meanings, and Daniel’s act of interpretation follows the procedures of divinatory interpretation of dreams or omens.[[872]](#footnote-872) On the surface, מנא, תקל and פרס refer to three weights, a mina (about a pound), a sheqel (about 20 pounds), and a half.[[873]](#footnote-873) Elsewhere a “half” is a half-mina, though this meaning seems to be determined by the context, and the context here suggests a half-sheqel, פרס then being equivalent to Heb. בקע.[[874]](#footnote-874) The inscription thus represents something like a merchant’s shout (“Reckoned at a mina, a sheqel, and [two] halves!”), or his documentary record of this evaluation.[[875]](#footnote-875) Daniel has to explain what this puzzling phrase refers to. The only point implicit in the statement is that the sheqel suggests something very lightweight compared with whatever is symbolized by a mina. Whatever is symbolized by the half is even less significant than the former (if it is a half-sheqel) or more so (if it is a half-mina).

Allegorically the omen might have originally referred to Babylonian kings: e.g., Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus, Belshazzar;[[876]](#footnote-876) Nebuchadnezzar, Ewil-merodak, Belshazzar;[[877]](#footnote-877) Nabonidus, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus;[[878]](#footnote-878) Nabonidus, Belshazzar, Median and Persian kings generally;[[879]](#footnote-879) Babylonian, Median, and Persian kings.[[880]](#footnote-880) Further possibilities emerge if the first מנא is taken as part of the sequence, making a series of four: Neriglissar, Amel-Marduk, Labashi-Marduk, Nabonidus/Belshazzar;[[881]](#footnote-881) Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek kings generally.[[882]](#footnote-882) Whether or not the message started off as an allegory of this kind, what is explicit is that Daniel turns the merchant’s record into a message about history by playing on each of the three words, utilizing the meaning of the verbal root that underlies each noun. This approach to interpretation via paronomasia was applied to the scriptures in 1QpHab.[[883]](#footnote-883) Daniel uses it to make the statement refer to Belshazzar’s being appointed, evaluated, and punished.

מנא is used in the everyday sense of “count,” but it can also suggest “to appoint” or “to destine” (cf. the god Destiny, מני: see Isa 65:11–12); for the idea of “numbering one’s days” as applied to the individual, see Ps 90:12. Weighing (תקל) a person’s moral value is an uncommon image (see Job 31:6; Ps 62:9 [10]); more often the OT speaks of measuring it (תכן; see BDB). “Half” (פרס) receives a double interpretation; the noun [ין]פרס suggests first the verb פרס “broken in half,” then another noun פרס Persia. Median and Persian kings will receive the kingship in 5:31; 6:28 [6:1, 29]. Daniel need not mean that the empire will be divided between the two rather than that Belshazzar’s dynasty will be broken and his authority will pass to others. The terms “Median” and “Persian” are often not distinguished.[[884]](#footnote-884)

The paronomasia has power because words and things are related. “The interpreter’s construction of punning meaning was not a display of wit but a perception of hidden realities and, indeed, an act of power.”[[885]](#footnote-885)

29–31 Except for Xenophon’s account of the Persians killing the unnamed Babylonian king (see on v 1), we have no independent record of Belshazzar’s death, or of what happened to him when Babylon fell. In v 20 the implicit subject of the passive verb was God, which would suggest the same applies here.

No Median Darius (dārayavahuš, a Persian name: see OP 189) is otherwise known. Critical scholarship has regarded him as an imaginary construct built up from various separate historical and scriptural elements.[[886]](#footnote-886) Cyrus’ Persian empire did replace a Median empire, in areas north of Babylonia; Cyrus himself did not immediately assume the title “King of Babylon,” but ruled through a vassal king; Belshazzar’s successor as lord of the Babylonian empire (i.e., Cyrus) was about sixty-two and may have been part-Median himself; Babylon was captured and ruled by a Darius who appointed satraps (6:1 [2]) and who was related to Xerxes (9:1—but see Comment)—that is, Darius Hystaspis, Cambyses’s successor, Xerxes’ father.[[887]](#footnote-887) The prophets speak of a Median conquest of Babylon (Isa 13:17; 21:2; Jer 51:11, 28) and of a Darius as king when Jerusalem is being restored after the exile (Hag 1:1, 15; 2:10; Zech 1:1, 7; 7:1).[[888]](#footnote-888) “Median” might be an archaizing description of the Achaemenids.[[889]](#footnote-889)

Those who are inclined to take Daniel as historical point out that known history once contained no reference to Belshazzar.[[890]](#footnote-890) Darius might have been a throne-name for some ruler known to us by another name.[[891]](#footnote-891) Among the identifications proposed for this ruler are Xerxes or Artaxerxes (OG); Cyrus the Persian himself;[[892]](#footnote-892) Cyrus’ son Cambyses, who at some time was titular King of Babylon;[[893]](#footnote-893) the last Median king Astyages;[[894]](#footnote-894) his son Cyaxares II, referred to only by Xenophon (Cyropedia 1–8);[[895]](#footnote-895) Cyrus’ general Gobryas (Gubaru/Ugbaru, OP Gaubaruwa) who captured Babylon for the Persians, ruled there on Cyrus’ behalf for a period, and as governor of Gutium could be thought of as a Mede;[[896]](#footnote-896) and—on the hypothesis that this Gobryas/Ugbaru died very soon after the fall of Babylon (so one understanding of the Babylonian Chronicle)—Cyrus’ governor in Babylon, another Gubaru.[[897]](#footnote-897)

The significance of Darius the Mede for Daniel is first that he represents the beginning of the fulfillment of Belshazzar’s portent regarding the destiny of Belshazzar’s empire; 5:28; 6:28 [29] will bring a second stage. In the perspective of the stories as a whole, he is the third of the four rulers of Babylon envisaged by Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (see on chap. 2). Read in light of subsequent visions, he will become the embodiment of the second of Daniel’s four empires.[[898]](#footnote-898)

The precision of “sixty-two” makes it unlikely that Daniel is merely indicating that Darius was rather old and therefore reigned only a short time. Sixty-two years takes us back to the beginning of the exile, so the reference might suggest that the seeds of the downfall of Nebuchadnezzar’s dynasty were sown even then.[[899]](#footnote-899) More likely sixty-two relates to the omen. If the mina is the mina comprising sixty sheqels (not the more usual Palestinian mina comprising fifty sheqels), then a mina, a sheqel and (two) halves (of a sheqel) come to 62 sheqels.[[900]](#footnote-900) The years attributed to Darius “sum up” another aspect of the omen’s meaning: he is the person who brings its fulfillment upon Belshazzar.

## Explanation

1–4 Belshazzar’s story begins like Nebuchadnezzar’s, with a flourishing monarchy in royal majesty. But there was an ambiguity about this description of Nebuchadnezzar’s success. The description of things going so well, which did not mention God, already hinted that catastrophe might be imminent. There is a similar ambiguity about the story of Belshazzar’s state banquet. A banquet is a sign of honor appropriate to a king (1 Kgs 3:15), but the temperate streak in Jewish thinking is reserved about such occasions. They can bode ill. Things tend to go wrong at royal banquets (Gen 40:20–22; Esth 1; Mark 6:21–28).

A further contrast with the previous chapter likewise bodes ill. The story of Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation was prefaced by a testimony that revealed in anticipation that all turned out well in the end. Belshazzar’s story has no such preface. We are not getting Belshazzar’s testimony but a narrator’s story about him. And the story begins with a scene that can be read as one of ostentation, decadence, carousing, coarseness, wantonness, and self-indulgence, a scene that might have been designed to illustrate the warnings in Proverbs about power, sex, and drink (e.g., Prov 23:29–35).[[901]](#footnote-901)

From self-indulgence issue sacrilege and blasphemy. What is wrong with the banquet is not the event itself but where it leads. Daniel will in due course explicitly locate Belshazzar’s wrongdoing in his attitude to God and in his position before God (vv 22–23). We are not told why Belshazzar sent for these particular vessels. Perhaps they are assumed to be the most valuable he possessed. Theologically, they certainly were. To a pagan, drinking the customary libations with the vessels might mitigate any suggestion of sacrilege involved in utilizing temple vessels at a palace banquet. Like saying grace, it sets the celebration in the context of faith; it signifies that people know they were having their celebration before God. It might thus be seen as a way of honoring the deity. But these vessels are sacred to one who hates idolatry and they are being used for libations to idols, which compounds the offense instead. The exile might be thought to have established the power of Babylon’s gods over the God of Israel; therefore the exile produces all the stronger affirmations of this God’s sole authority and power and of the powerlessness of idols (Isa 40–41; 44). To offer libations to them in this way is to slight the deity of God. “Belshazzar’s blasphemy consisted in taking what belonged to the true and living God and using it for his own corrupt and decadent purposes in a context of contempt for God’s assumed powerlessness.”[[902]](#footnote-902) It is a “reckless gesture.”[[903]](#footnote-903) The extra note in v 3 which avoids the description being simple repetition underlines the point.[[904]](#footnote-904) The story is one of the many that indicate that the Bible comes from a multi-faith context; Daniel’s approach to multi-faith questions is among the ones that reflection on these questions has to take into account.

Belshazzar’s “father” had captured the temple articles and had learned to honor the God to whom they belonged, as has just been pointed out (4:37); Belshazzar remembers the one fact, but not the other. Belshazzar’s actual father, Nabonidus, had likewise learned to repent of his attachment to gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, according to the Prayer of Nabonidus (4QPrNab). In a sense, what Belshazzar does is in keeping with what Nebuchadnezzar did with them (1:2), but as far as we know Nebuchadnezzar simply left the articles laid up in the treasury; he did nothing of this kind with them.[[905]](#footnote-905) In bringing them out and using them at his banquet Belshazzar is going one better than his father.[[906]](#footnote-906)

The temple articles’ presence in Babylon is a reminder of something significant that had happened a few decades before in political history, but asserting the authority of Babylon and its gods over the exiles and their God succeeds in provoking the exiles’ God to send Belshazzar a portent that only an exile can interpret for him. It will prove that the God who is treated as powerless has power, and it will expose the gods who are manifestly powerless for what they are (cf. Ps 115:1–8 and, in the context of Babylonian exile, Isa 40:12–31; 41:1–7; 44:6–20).[[907]](#footnote-907) Belshazzar’s action is a mad gesture, and the story perhaps hints that it would only have taken place under the influence of alcohol (v 2).

5–9 To the listener, it is clear enough that there must be some divine response to the enormity that has been described. It comes instantly, like the judgment on Nebuchadnezzar (4:31) and that on Herod (Acts 12:23), to make its significance clear. Whether or not he recognizes it, Belshazzar and in him the whole Babylonian empire has issued a challenge that God must accept. There thus follows an item that did not appear on the program for the evening, yet one that had been wished into being by Belshazzar’s act; his worship of lifeless gods provokes a hidden theophany in the form of a living hand. Commentators like to observe that it is the hand which wrote at Sinai (Exod 31:18) but which now inscribes a more sinister message,[[908]](#footnote-908) though it is noteworthy that the story makes a point of calling it a human hand. It is manifestly preternatural but not manifestly divine, like the dream messages of chaps. 2 and 4, and it lacks the self-evident clarity of a direct prophetic message. God brings his clear message via an interpreter such as Daniel. Yet the combination of preternatural omen and clear message may have more chance of finding a hearing.

Although the narrative may imply that everyone could see the inscription, its message will concern Belshazzar more than the people he represents, and perhaps the hand, which appeared for the sake of one man, was visible to him alone. “The reader is placed in the position of the king, who knows neither where the hand came from nor what the writing says.” [[909]](#footnote-909) If Belshazzar alone could see the inscription, it would heighten the parallel with chap. 2, where the experts needed to be able to say what the king’s dream was as well as interpreting it.[[910]](#footnote-910) Initially it is Belshazzar who is devastated by a portent that replaces any sense of confidence and security by shaking and terror. Its content is not yet stated, but its implications are clear.

As in chap. 2, the king now gives a double task to his multiform experts. They must declare what the portent said, then explain what it meant or referred to—and, no doubt, what measures could be taken to evade its fulfillment. Whoever can fulfill this commission will receive a share in the king’s royal prestige and power in Babylon. Of course none of them can do so—not “of course” for Belshazzar, but “of course” for the hearer, who is familiar with this feature of previous chapters. Motifs in the stories recur to drive key points home more forcefully:[[911]](#footnote-911) alien expertise is helpless when God intervenes to speak and act. The king’s alarm deepens, and extends to the lords at his banquet.

10–12 But it is from within his own court that a witness to the God of the exiles comes to Belshazzar. This motif, too, parallels chaps. 1 and 2: the power of God at work among the exiles is clear enough for the king’s aides and family to see, even if the king cannot see it. The queen’s description of Daniel is yet more laudatory than statements about him in previous chapters. The extraordinary insight required to interpret dreams and portents comes through being subject to supernatural influence, and Daniel has proved himself as someone to whose mind God has access. The Bible sometimes envisages the spirit of God working through the human spirit by means of the ordinary analytic functioning of the human mind, but it more characteristically associates the spirit of God with the receiving of extraordinary insights that one might rather associate with intuition, creative imagination, or second sight. It assumes that such inspiration is not an everyday event, but that it does occur periodically, and it is then testimony to the activity of God through a particular person. It is capable of being described both theologically and anthropologically, as divine inspiration or as intuitive imagination, as a matter of the spirit of God being present (v 11) or as a matter of having a remarkable spirit (v 12).

13–16 Belshazzar’s words to Daniel refer back beyond Nebuchadnezzar’s recognition of him to Nebuchadnezzar’s having brought him from Judah in the first place. The mighty Babylonian kings acknowledge a Judahite exile as the one in whom the supreme God is active and in whom supreme discernment is found. The difference is that Nebuchadnezzar knows or acknowledges it (4:9 [6]), whereas Belshazzar has only heard tell of it.[[912]](#footnote-912)

17–24 Perhaps “Daniel has not missed the slight” in those words,[[913]](#footnote-913) and he is annoyed. But in any case he responds to the king like a prophet (and prophets do get annoyed), not like a mere adviser, with the same tone he had used to Nebuchadnezzar in chap. 4. There he offered a word of advice for which he had not been asked; here he preaches a sermon for which he had not been asked.[[914]](#footnote-914)

Being financially dependent on one’s listeners threatens constraints upon a speaker; Daniel refuses to allow any prospect of rewards to influence the nature of his message, and maybe the disappearance of that consideration makes it unnecessary for him to resist the recognition that comes later (v 29). He is characteristically confident that he can read and interpret the inscription, and direct in his confronting of the king, like Nathan before David, or Jonah at Nineveh. As in these cases, it is through a prophetic figure that God exercises his kingship, manifesting before the human king that God is king. As in these cases, the prophet issues no demand for repentance and offers no prospect of averting the disaster. Yet this omission does not mean God is not offering his grace to Belshazzar, any more than Nathan was to David or Jonah was to Nineveh; Daniel is still fulfilling “the pastoral office of the church.”[[915]](#footnote-915) David and the people of Nineveh did repent, and they found mitigation or cancellation of the threatened punishment. This path would be open to Belshazzar. It will not be taken, and Daniel’s words already hint at the fact, as does the absence of the invitation to repentance that Daniel had extended to Nebuchadnezzar (4:27). Belshazzar has shown that he was unwilling to learn from his father’s experience. He is unlikely, therfore, to respond to the preaching of his father’s counselor (cf. the argument of Heb 6:4–8).

The act of interpretation that Daniel undertakes is twofold: “firstly, he interprets the heart of Belshazzar, and secondly, he interprets the handwriting on the wall.”[[916]](#footnote-916) He begins (vv 18-21) by recalling the powerful position occupied by Nebuchadnezzar, though he does so in such a way as to underline the ambiguity of that position. Nebuchadnezzar possessed royal authority and glorious splendor: the terms correspond particularly closely to the description of God in 1 Chr 29:11; compare Dan 4:36; 2:37 (and the Explanation). Within his realm he had a power of life and death, of ennoblement and disgrace, which is also quasi-divine (cf. Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6–7; Ps 75:7 [8]; also Dan 2:21; 4:17). In reminding Belshazzar of Nebuchadnezzar’s experience, however, Daniel begins by drawing attention to the derivative nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s authority. The chapter had begun from what Nebuchadnezzar took (v 2); that would be the way Belshazzar spoke. Daniel invites him to think in terms of what Nebuchadnezzar was given, by one whose own royal authority and glorious splendor are a fortiori greater. All human authority and power is an echo and a servant of that divine authority and power from which it derives and on which it depends.[[917]](#footnote-917) Further, to attribute to Nebuchadnezzar a quasi-divine power over the people within his realm is to draw attention to the temptation with which people in power live. There is a link and a contrast between Nebuchadnezzar’s great power and his great fall. It was his area of strength that became his area of vulnerability. His power became his weakness. His power then had to become actual weakness before it could be restored.

Daniel makes Belshazzar the subject of a series of strong verbs: “You knew, you ignored, you exalted yourself, you desecrated, you committed idolatry, you disregarded” (vv 22-23). Daniel emphasizes Belshazzar’s responsibility for his attitudes and actions. His willful blindness makes him brazenly proud, just like his father (the same words are used), in the very presence of the one who is actually Lord of the heavens. This phrase comes only here; both elements in it suggest the almightiness of the one Belshazzar disdains. His willful blindness makes him sacrilegiously contemptuous of the sacred possessions of this God, who entrusted them to his father.The vessels that should have reminded him of the God who gave them into Nebuchadnezzar’s power (1:2) become the means of his self-indulgence. It makes him grotesquely idolatrous in worshiping senseless objects and ignoring the God who has power over his destiny; he fails to take God seriously, like his father—but with less excuse, because his father’s story has made clear to him that God has this power. Historically, Belshazzar may have fallen because he could not handle a political and military crisis; in this story, more profoundly he fell because of his irresponsibility before God.[[918]](#footnote-918) He has despised the riches of God’s kindness, forbearance and longsuffering (Rom 2:4) as he has seen them extended to Nebuchadnezzar; hence the psalm’s exhortation not to harden your hearts when you hear God’s voice (Ps 95:7-8).[[919]](#footnote-919)

25–28 Daniel recognizes that on the surface the inscription records the assessment of something in terms of monetary weights: “counted at a mina, a sheqel, and halves.” The three nouns also reflect three verbal roots (as, in English, “pound” and “halve” can be verbs as well as nouns). Under the surface of the inscription Daniel sees in these verbs a message for Belshazzar. They hint at three moments in God’s dealings with him as king, the past moment when he appointed him, the present moment when he is evaluating his performance, and the coming moment when he breaks off his dynasty because of its failure. All three are past from the perspective of the pronouncement; like many OT prophecies, it speaks of coming events as already actual, on the basis of God’s decision that they should take place. Belshazzar’s wrongdoing has exceeded Nebuchadnezzar’s, and so will his fall, a fall not merely to banishment in humiliation, but to death and to the end of his dynasty, without finding repentance.[[920]](#footnote-920) Belshazzar is a “lightweight interpreter”[[921]](#footnote-921) and a lightweight king.

At first sight, to say that Belshazzar’s days were numbered from the beginning of his reign suggests that the nature of his reign and the coming of judgment upon it were irreversibly predestined. If Daniel says that Belshazzar’s reign has been evaluated and found deficient, however, he implies that Belshazzar has not been an automaton; he is responsible for the way he has exercised his sovereign authority. Perhaps Daniel indicates that the “counting out” of Belshazzar’s reign had a provisional nature, establishing how long he could reign; in the event, his reign is to end earlier than it should. Or perhaps Daniel presupposes the alternative perspective that God’s being able to foresee the nature of Belshazzar’s reign also enables him to predetermine its length, without implying that Belshazzar’s responsibility is reduced or his judgment imposed independently of his character and actions. “All is foreseen, but freedom of choice is given” (*m. ˒Abot* 3:16).[[922]](#footnote-922) God’s sovereignty and human responsibility are both factors in history. Both are real.

God’s judgment also at first sight involves his acting in sovereign independence of ordinary processes of cause and effect rather than through them. Yet a historical study of the course of events would likely be able to describe them in terms of ordinary processes of cause and effect, as is the case with a process such as Babylon’s yielding to Persia. God’s purpose needs to be seen at work behind the ordinary process of cause and effect that the historian seeks to trace.[[923]](#footnote-923)

Belshazzar’s story further suggests that revolutionary or military violence is a means through which God works in history. Yet what it effects is not the final rule of God but the rule of Darius the Mede to replace that of Belshazzar the Babylonian.[[924]](#footnote-924) The fall of Belshazzar is a major historical turning-point, which comes about because the Babylonian king fails to recognize the God of the Judahite exiles, the God whose agents the Babylonians have unwittingly been. The worldly empire has had its opportunity, and has missed it. And elsewhere in the OT, the fall of Babylon is not merely the end of an era, but one realization of the Day of Yahweh. Daniel is interested in that Day, though he does not use the expression, but he does not see the fall of Babylon in this light. It is just the moment when power passes from one dynasty to another. The story warns against overestimating the significance of history and politics. Yet it also indicates that when God casts off one ruler for his arrogance, he does not thereby dissociate himself from all world events and exercise of power.[[925]](#footnote-925)

29–31 If chap. 5 were centrally concerned with Belshazzar’s personal relationship with God, as some readers may be inclined to assume, Belshazzar’s response to Daniel’s words would appear bizarre. Does Belshazzar refuse to accept an implicit invitation to repentance, or perhaps on the contrary accepts God’s judgment upon him and therefore accept the death coming to him?[[926]](#footnote-926) Yet the story offers no comment on Belshazzar’s response. It omits reference to his relationship with God (contrast Josephus, Antiquities. 10.10.4 [10.204]) because its concerns focus on the public vindication of Daniel and of his God. Belshazzar’s response parallels that of Nebuchadnezzar in 2:46–48, where similar considerations obtain. Belshazzar acknowledges Daniel, though not his God; but the story comes to a climax with the fulfillment of prophecy, not with the exaltation of Daniel.

Belshazzar’s story does show that for every person there is a sense in which “the limitation of human life” by birth and death is “a trace of the divine world-governance.”[[927]](#footnote-927) In the case of a Belshazzar, the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy comes with that common Middle Eastern phenomenon, a coup d’état involving the assassination of the present ruler—the process whereby Belshazzar’s actual father, Nabonidus, came to power. The historical and human factors that brought this revolution, and the means by which it was effected, are again ignored. Belshazzar was killed, by whom we are not told. Is it in effect by God? Certainly the sovereign purpose of God in the event is alone of interest in this story. When people act with violence, the story encourages us to believe that God can effect his purpose through them, and that we can trust him to fulfill his just purpose in events one way or another. Worldly empires are shown to be subject to the God of the Judahite exiles. The impression encouraged by Belshazzar at the beginning of the story, that Nebuchadnezzar was lord of history and that the God of Jerusalem was powerless, is controverted by the way the story ends. God brings calamity to the conquerors he once used (cf. Isa 10; Jer 25).[[928]](#footnote-928) Worldly power is real, but it is subservient to the will of God.[[929]](#footnote-929)

As the portent came while Belshazzar was yet committing his act of idolatry, the end comes the same night, to make explicit the sovereign power of Daniel’s God and the authority of his expert. “In a single night the brilliant revel is changed, first into terror and bewilderment, and then into disaster and death”;[[930]](#footnote-930) compare the warnings of Amos 6; Matt 24:38–39.[[931]](#footnote-931) The moment when God says “You fool” (Luke 12:20) is one that all have to fear, but it is a moment that leaders especially have to fear. They may seem to be the embodiment of order, destiny, power, and divinity. Yet death comes to them, too, an incontrovertible proof of their pretension to power and significance.[[932]](#footnote-932)

Both chap. 4 and chap. 5 tell of a portent and a personal calamity, but one story ends reasonably happily, the other end unhappily. “Whereas the fulfillment in chapter 4 occupied ten verses, in this chapter it is one short and dramatic sentence”[[933]](#footnote-933)—which also contrasts with the way suspense has been allowed to build up in the leisured narrative that leads to this climax. One is comedy, the other tragedy. One reveals the divine mercy, the other the divine judgment. Even in the heathen world can be perceived God’s election of some to a positive place in his purpose, of others to a negative one (Rom 9:13–14). In everyday events and in political affairs some find life, others find death. Human responsibility is real, and every experience tests by eliciting a response that either draws people towards God and his blessing, or draws them in the opposite direction. Behind the whole is the purpose of God, whose wisdom and sovereign acts are deep and mysterious (Rom 9:33), but ultimately trustworthy.[[934]](#footnote-934) Ps 2 talks about God laughing when nations and governments assert themselves against him and his purpose. He knows they always end up falling into the pit they dug. Hearing God’s laughter is important for the Belshazzars of the world; it is a way God may get through to them.[[935]](#footnote-935) It is important for their subjects, who can afford to sit lighter to them than they sometimes realize, and who may be able to stand up to them better when they do realize it. Dan 5 is not just about a one-time event in the sixth century; it is a theologoical reflection on divine justice in the history of the world and it contains a parable about a scale in which God weighs oppressors.[[936]](#footnote-936)

# God Vindicates His Power When Daniel Chooses the Lion Pit rather than Compromise (6:1–28 [2–29])

As noted in connection with chap. 5, I follow Luther’s chapter division. References in square brackets correspond to the medieval chapter division which appears in printed Hebrew Bibles, which treats 5:31 as the first verse of chap. 6. In both versions the chapter break at the end of chap. 6 corresponds to the petucha in MT.

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On Darius the Mede, see also chap. 5 *Bibliography*.

## Translation

*1*It seemed good to Dareyaweš to put satraps over his realm, 120 to be spread through the whole realm, 2and to put above them three heads,a Daniyye’l being one of them, to whom these satraps would be accountable, so that the king would not be troubled.b 3aThis man Daniyye’l distinguished himself above the other heads and satraps because of his remarkable spirit, and the king was mindedb to put him over the whole realm.

4aThe heads and the satraps looked for grounds for indictment of Daniyye’l in connection with the affairs of the realm, but they could not find any grounds for indictment on the basis of corruption,b because he was trustworthy. So no negligence or corruption was found in him. 5These men said, “We shall not find any grounds for indictment of this Daniyye’l unless we finda them against him in connection with the lawb of his God.”

6These heads and satraps mustereda to see the king, and said to him, “Long live King Dareyaweš! 7All the heads of the realm, the governors, the satraps, the advisers, and the commissioners, are of the opinion that the kinga should issue a statute and enforce an injunction that for thirty days anyone who petitions any god or man except you, your majesty, will be thrown into a lion pit. 8Now, your majesty, issue this injunction and signa the written regulation, so that as a law of *Maday and Paras* which shall not pass away, it can in no wayb be changed.” 9Accordingly, King Dareyaweš signed the written injunction.

10But Daniyye’l, when he got to know that the document had been signed, went home, where he had a room on the top of the house with windows facing towards *Yerušalem*. Three times a day he would kneela in prayer and thanksgiving before his God becauseb he had been doing so previously.

11 These men mustered and found Daniyye’l petitioning and seeking favor before his God. 12They approached the king and spoke before him aabout the royal injunction:a “You signed an injunction, didn’t you, that for thirty days anyone who petitioned any god or man except you, your majesty, would be thrown into a lion pit.” The king replied, “Yes, that decision stands absolute as a law of Maday and Paras, which shall not pass away.” 13They declared before the king, “Daniyye’l, one of the Yehudite exiles, has not taken any notice of you or of the injunction you signed, your majesty. Three times a day he makes his petition.” 14When the king heard of this, it seemed very disagreeable to him.a and he applied his mind to delivering Daniyye’l and worked on rescuing him until sundown.b

15These men mustered to see the king and said to the king, “Your majesty must recognize that it is a law of *Maday and Paras* that any statutory injunction which the king issues cannot be changed.” 16The king said to fetch Daniyye’l and throw him into the lion pit.a The king declared to Daniyye’l, “Your God, whom you honor so consistently, he mustb deliver you.” 17A rock was brought and put over the mouth of the pit, and the king sealed it with his signet and with thosea of his nobles, so that what was intendedb for Daniyye’l might not be changed. 18The king went off to his palace and spent the night without food;a nothingb was brought into his presence. But sleep eluded him. 19aWhen morning came,a the king got upb aat sunrisea and went back in agitationc to the lion pit. 20On approaching the pit he called to Daniyye’l in an anguished voice. The king averred to Daniyye’l, “Daniyye’l, servant of the living God, could your God, whom you honor so consistently, deliver you from the lions?” 21Daniyye’l spoke toa the king, “Long live the king! 22My God sent his aide and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not injured me, because aI was found innocenta before him—as also before you, your majesty, I have done nothing injurious.” 23The king—it seemed very good to him, and he said to lift Daniyye’l out of the pit. Daniyye’l was lifted out of the pit, and no injury was found on him, in that he had trusteda in his God. 24The king said to fetcha those men who had attacked Daniyye’l and throw them into the lion pit, they, their children, and their wives. They had not reached the floor of the pit whenb the lions were on top of them and had ctorn their bodies to pieces.c

25 King Dareyaweš wrote:a

“To the people of all races, nations, and languages who live in the entire world.b May your well-being abound! 26I am giving notice that in the entirea realm over which I am king, people are to tremble with fear before the God of Daniyye’l, in thatb

He is the living God;

he endures through the ages.

His realm will suffer no injury;

his rule will persist to the end.

27He delivers and rescues;

he performs signs and wonders

in the heavens and on the earth.

He delivered Daniyye’l

from the power of the lions.”

28So this Daniyye’l flourished during the reign of Dareyaweš anda during the reign of *Koreš* the Parsite.

## Notes

2.a. סרכין (OP); apparently not a technical term.

2.b. EVV generally refer נזק to a financial, military, or political burden, but Akk. nazāqu suggests “troubled/worried” (CAD; H. L. Ginsberg, “Lexicographical Notes,” HW 81); cf. Th ἐνοχλήται; JPSV. One can also read other passages (Ezra 4:13, 15, 22; Esth 7:4) either way.

3.a. The verse begins אדין (EVV “then”) and the chapter uses both באדין and אדין as linking particles, hardly requiring translation (cf. n. 5:3a).

3.b. עשית is passive (cf. Ehrlich “was inclined”).

4.a. It is not clear how the clause(s) in v 4 fit together; EVV vary. Th lacks the last sentence.

4.b. Literally “grounds [for indictment] and corruption.”

5.a. Perfect verb in an exceptive clause (cf. GKC 163c).

5.b. דת comes to signify “religion,” viewed as the keeping of a God-given rule of life (DTT; cf. neb, gnb). But the parallelism with state law (vv 8, 12, 15) suggests that this is not the meaning here, or at least that we should keep the translation “law” to point up the link and parallelism (Newsom, *Daniel*, 188-89). Rendtorff (“Esra und das ‘Gesetz,’” 166–69) questions whether דת is ever a synonym of תורה.

6.a. רגש (cf. vv 11, 15) has troubled translators since the ancient versions (cf. BHS). Montgomery notes that it occurs in parallelism with סוד “counsel/council” in Ps 55:14 [15]; 64:2 [3] (also with המה “growl/murmur” in Ps 2:1), and translates “acted in harmony.” But סוד also appears alongside המה “growl/bustle” in Ps 83:2-3 [3-4] (cf. המה in 46:4, 7; סוד in Jer 6:11; 15:17); cf. BDB “came thronging” for רגש. The objection that thronging is inappropriate to court etiquette (vv 6 and 15) and to catching a man unawares (v 11) misses the point that Daniel’s accusers do act in a peremptory way (vv 7, ?12, 15; also v 6, cf. v 15, where they speak to the king, not before him as court etiquette generally requires), and that Daniel’s commitment to his faith was open enough not to require espionage. The verb suggests a group acting by agreement but with the bustle that a crowd inevitably makes. But a different meaning might be required in v 11 from vv 6 and 15 (cf. G, Syr, Vg). The author of Daniel likes homonyms/paronomasia.

7.a. Taking מלכא as the subj of the verb, with MT accents. Th links it with the preceding noun, “about the issuing of a royal statute,” or about issuing a royal statute, if the passage suggests a peremptory attitude on the part of the group (cf. n. 6.a).

8.a. Or perhaps תרשם denotes “put your seal to.”

8.b. לא rather than אין with the inf. is emphatic (TTH 202).

10.a. הוּא probably needs repointing הֲוָא (neb, BL 81q); BHS reads הֲוָה, with some medieval mss. Van der Woude **(**“Zu Daniel 6,11”) argues for linking הוּא with א מ ו י “that day,” which gives good sense, but this adjectival use is unparalleled in BA.

10.b. EVV “as” (cf. BL 109n); but BA nowhere else uses די קבל כל in the weakened sense (cf. Bevan).

12.a-a. Cf. JPSV; not “about the injunction: ‘Your majesty . . .’” (EVV), which would require emphatic אסרא, not the absolute/construct אסר (Hartman/Di Lella). G, Syr take מלכא as vocative, but they omit אסר על (cf. BHS). Omiting the phase as a gloss reduces the jerkiness of v 13a, though one need not do so merely to make the conspirators’ speech begin in a less peremptory way (cf. n. 6.a). Syr adds the common “Long live the king” (cf. 3:9) with that effect (Taylor, *Peshitṭa*, 180).

14.a. BA/BH באש more naturally means “displeased” (cf. also BH רעע, e.g., Jonah 4:1 [BDB]) than “distressed” (EVV, cf. 1QapGen 21.7).

14.b. “High noon” is etymologically possible and would make good sense, leaving time for the events in vv 16–19 to take place in the afternoon (Mayer, “Iranischer Beitrag,” 128–29); but שמשא מעלי regularly means “sunset” (DTT).

16.a. On the understanding as purpose clauses, see BL 106e.

16.b. Hartman/Di Lella, noting, however, that ישיזבנך must be parsed as imperfect not jussive, otherwise the נ‍ would be elided (cf. GBA 108, 175). JPSV takes the verb as future, but this understanding ill fits Darius’s agitation in vv 14, 18–20, and some modal sense (could/might?) is appropriate; cf. 3:15.

17.a. עִזְקָת; but many medieval mss, Th point as s. עִזְקַת.

17.b. צבו seems to keep its original meaning “purpose” (cf. BDB).

18.a. Not “fasting” in a religious sense, for which the word is צום not טות.

18.b. דחון (Eastern Q דהון) is a puzzle. Ps-Saadia understands it to mean “girls,” perhaps relating it to לחנה (cf. 5:2; Marti emends to לחנן). This meaning has been supported by connecting the word with the root דחה “push (down)” which in Arabic eventually produces a noun meaning “woman” (hence neb?). Haphel הנעל suggests a personal object (Plöger). But this tertiary sense of דחה in Arabic is not otherwise known in Aramaic or Hebrew (Bevan). Ibn Ezra takes it in another sense derived from דחה, “music” (cf. rv), but this also seems forced (Driver), though it is said that at night 300 concubines were available to watch over the king with music and song by lamplight (see Cook, Persian Empire, 136): either of these meanings fits that picture. Related words denote revelry, feasting, and feast-tables (DTT; cf. Saadia). Th, Syr understand it to mean food; the clause thus expands on “spent the night without food.” The Elamite root dahyu might suggest “servant” (cf. Gershevitch, “Amber at Persepolis,”180); OP dahyav “land” could suggest “countrymen” or “vassals” (cf. Mayer, “Iranischer Beitrag,” 129–30).

19.a-a. Perhaps one of these expressions is a gloss, though the second, בנגהא, is slightly more specific than the first, בשפרפרא. See further Paul, “Daniel 6:20.”

19.b. יקום is imperfect, perhaps as following באדין (cf. BH usage after אז) (Montgomery); but the perfect is used elsewhere, and more likely the imperfect is used to throw emphasis on the main verb אזל (BL 78q).

19.c. Not merely “in haste” (rsv): see n. 2:25.a.

21.a. Not “with,” as if suggesting a conversation; the word for “with” is used for speaking “to” in Syriac (Bevan).

22.a-a. Lit., “innocence was found for me”: זכו comes to mean “deserve” and thus to imply “blessing/success” (DTT, cf. nebmg).

23.a. הימן: practically “had stood firm in his confidence” (cf. Wildberger, “Glauben”; A. Jepsen in TWAT on אמן).

24.a. See n. 16.a.

24.b. די עד: see BL 79i.

24.c-c. Hartman/Di Lella’s translation of הדקו גרמיהון כל “smashed all their bones.” Cf. the use of both גרם and עצם in BH (see BDB). neb “crunched them up, bones and all” highlights the piquant spirit of this story.

25.a. I follow Bentzen in treating the whole of v 26 as part of Darius’s letter, after the editorial כתב . . . באדין ([then] . . . wrote; the phraseology following this introduction is identical with that of Nebuchadnezzzar’s words at the opening of the letter in v. 1.

25.b. Wilson (“Darius the Mede,” 190) and Whitcomb (Darius the Mede, 38–39) translate ארעא “land” and refer it to Babylonia, over which a ruler of Babylon under Cyrus could be reckoned to rule (see Comment); cf. v. 1.

26.a. בכל; Th has “in every,” highlighting the hyperbolic nature of the command.

26.b. MT’s maqqeph links די with what follows, but this understanding makes for an implausible opening to the poetic lines, and cf. א ו ה in the poetic lines in 2:21-22.

28.a. nivmg “that is” takes the ו as explicative. For other examples, see 1:3; 4:13 [10]; 7:1; 8:10, 24; 11:38 (and notes): see Erlandsson, “Nȧgra exempel pȧ waw explicativum”; Baker, “Further Examples of the waw explicativum.” See Comment.

## Form/Structure/Setting

### Form

Like Dan 3, chapter 6 is a tale of court conflict and intrigue; more specifically, it is a story about the fall and rehabilitation of a minister of state, a common folkloric plot.[[937]](#footnote-937) A certain man has achieved prominence in the imperial administration and favor with the king. The other ministers of state plot to engineer his downfall by getting the king to issue a statute which he will not obey, but which carries a capital sentence. They watch for his disobedience, report it to the king, and insist that the death penalty be exacted. But he survives, and his accusers and their families are killed instead. The motifs of the story are larger than life: the thronging plotters, the implausible statute, the inexorable law, the extraordinary escape, the monumental requital. The story thus entertains, but it also reflects a desire to teach.[[938]](#footnote-938) Its characters, like ones in Esther and Ahiqar, “exemplify the traditional wisdom-triangle: the powerful, but witless dupe—the righteous wise—the conniving schemer.”[[939]](#footnote-939) Jealous conspirators attack a man of uprightness and insight; they are clever enough to fool a stupid king but in the end they pay the penalty for their own wicked folly, while the man of insight triumphs (Prov 6:12–19; 14:30, 32, 35; 24:16; 29:12).

The hero is not only a man of insight and uprightness, but a man of a remarkable spirit (a God-given spirit: cf. 5:11–12), a man of faithfulness to God in life and in prayer, and of trust in God in danger. His persecutors see where his vulnerability lies: he believes in obeying God rather than human beings when these obligations are made to conflict. For his insistence he will pay with his life. The court tale is thus also a confessor legend (though there is no confrontation between confessor and king or accusers). His fate is (literally) sealed; there is no escape. Even the king cannot rescue him. Yet the king is open to the possibility that God may do so; he spends the night anxiously wondering what Daniel’s fate will be, and prepares us for Daniel’s own testimony to God’s miraculous and complete deliverance, which turns the legend into an aretalogy. The wonder of his deliverance is underlined by the contrasting fate of his persecutors. The king enjoins his whole empire to recognize Daniel’s wonder-working God.

Darius’s injunction takes the form of a royal encyclical. It begins precisely like that at 4:1–3 (see chap. 4 Form), and its content is also similar. Like that example, however, the form is tailored to the context, and thus dovetailed into the narrative (see n. 25a). The form and content soon become those of hymnic praise (vv 26b–27a) and confessional praise (v 27b). The hymnic praise comprises three lines, of which the last is a tricolon; the confessional praise then comprises one bicolon. It is again a form utilized in a literary context and designed to bring the narrative itself to a climax, so that the confession relates to what God has done to a third party, not to the speaker himself. Earlier in the chapter, there are also reflections of the forms of petition, accusation, and petitionary prayer (vv 6–8, 12–13, 16).[[940]](#footnote-940)

The chapter has intertextual or midrashic aspects. In addition to illustrating aphorisms in Proverbs, the story about descent into a pit and about being threatened by lions illustrates experiences described metaphorically in these terms in Ps 22:13, 21 [14, 22]; 57: 4-6 [5–7]; 91:10–13, and later 1QH 5.1–19, the Qumran Thanksgiving Psalms;[[941]](#footnote-941) other OT passages about lions such as Ezek 19 seem less relevant. While there are parallels with mythical accounts of a hero/god’s descent to and escape from Sheol, and between the lions’ refusal to eat Daniel and folk-tales,[[942]](#footnote-942) any links likely come via the appropriation of such motifs in the Psalms. Babylonian texts (not least *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*: see chap. 4 *Form*) also speak metaphorically about being attacked by lions.[[943]](#footnote-943)

Like chap. 3, the story thus combines traditional motifs and factual allusions. Its historical background corresponds to aspects of the circumstances of the Babylonian period (lions kept in captivity, Jewish faith under pressure) and the Greek period (divinization of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kings, cf. Jdt 3:8). But it predominantly suggests the Persian period: the bureaucratic organization of the empire to avoid loss to the king (cf. Ezra 4:13–14), satrapies, the possibility of Jews’ being in responsible positions in the empire (cf. Nehemiah), the strict law of the Persians. The Babylonian name Belteshazzar is no longer used. At the same time, the story contains a number of historical difficulties. Satraps are most familiar as the governors of between twenty and thirty of the provinces into which the empire was organized by Darius I. The three “heads” (n. 2.a) are an otherwise unknown office. The content of the injunction, the treatment of Daniel and his accusers, and the requirement that the whole world worship Daniel’s God correspond ill with what we otherwise know of the liberal early Persian period, and it is difficult to envisage a pit big enough to contain the five hundred or more people apparently envisaged by v 24. In general the grounds for rehabilitating Darius as a historical figure probably make him viceroy of Babylon (see *Comment* on 5:31), whereas in this story he has the autocratic power and instinct of a later Persian emperor such as Darius I.

Combined with the use of narrative forms associated more with fiction than fact, these features suggest that the chapter does not present itself to the hearer as history. It may still have its ultimate origin in some amazing deliverance; it is perhaps implausible that such stories were created out of nothing. But some of the story’s apparently factual allusions may only give color to the fiction. The injunction is a means of lampooning the pagan powers and their religious pretension, which also makes it possible to portray a dispersion Jew under pressure to abandon his characteristic religious practice, and to portray the faithfulness and vindication of God that were confessed in Israel’s history, experienced in personal ways in the exile, and trusted even when current experience did not witness to them.

### Structure

The story follows a straightforward narrative sequence; there are 16 occurrences of אדין[ב] (“then,” omitted in the translation); cf. BH *ו*. But its structure can be expressed chiastically:

1–3 introduction: Daniel’s success

4–10 Darius signs an injunction but Daniel takes his stand.

11–15 Daniel’s colleagues plan his death.

16–18 Darius hopes for his deliverance.

19–23 Darius witnesses his deliverance.

24 Daniel’s colleagues meet with their death.

25–27 Darius signs a decree and takes his stand.

28 conclusion: Daniel’s success

The chiastic structure draws attention to the hope and the fact of Daniel’s deliverance, at its center, and at the end to the flourishing of Daniel, which both compares and contrasts with the beginning.

Introduction and conclusion in simple narrative form locate the story’s starting point in Daniel’s life, which is also its finishing point, though the intention declared in v 3 is not resumed—which reflects the fact that it is merely background. Vv 4-10 have Daniel’s colleagues getting Darius to sign the injunction that sets up the point of tension for the drama; vv 25-27 have Darius signing the decree that brings the drama to its climax. In both sections narrative is the framework for speech, though speech of varying kinds: that in vv 4-10 is entirely the scheming words of the plotters, that in vv 25-27 begins as the formal speech of a royal decree, then turns abruptly into the lyric parallelism of a psalm which in content arguably forms the chapter’s climax.[[944]](#footnote-944) Vv 11-15 and 24 are narrative, with dialogue in vv 11-15; death in a lion pit is first ensisaged by the potters then experienced by them. The middle two sections concern Darius and Daniel. The focus is first on Darius’s final words to Daniel, with their ambiguity, and then on his sleepless night, with its ambiguity. We are told nothing of Daniel’s words or feelings. With Darius we return to the pit to discover what has happened; with Darius, we learn from Daniel’s words the answer to the question about Daniel’s fate, when for the only time Daniel speaks; there is no direct description of the event.

The story offers three different studies in characterization. Daniel’s colleagues appear as simply (in both senses of the word) plotters. Most of the speech in the story is theirs, and they condemn themselves out of their own mouths. Every word they utter, as well as every move they make, concerns intrigue, manipulation, treachery, duplicity, and scheming. They have the arrogant boldness of a crowd bolstered by each other into bravado and folly. To “muster” (רגש) is their distinctive style (vv 6, 11, 15). They care nothing for truth, for the state, for the king, for religion, for law. Everything is subordinate to their desire to get rid of Daniel. Together they plot, but together they die. Daniel himself is labelled adjectivally in passing (vv 3, 4), then described in a telling verse of narrative (v 10) whose witness is summarized by the king himself (vv 16, 20). The story says nothing about his experience or feelings as he approaches the lion pit, and he is mostly silent. The narrative reserves his words for the climax in v 22; even here his words concern God’s act and his own innocence rather than his faith or his feelings. The king is caught between the conspirators and the confessor. He is the unspeaking victim of manipulation, opening his mouth only to confirm that he is their victim (v 12). In relation to Daniel, however, he is the mouthpiece of unqualified recognition but ambiguous hope, renouncing indulgence and losing sleep, hurrying back to the execution scene in anxious agitation, rejoicing to lift Daniel to life, quick to send his assailants to their death, and finally fervent in his confession of Daniel’s God.

Some points in the story are underlined by the words used. It concerns obedience to God’s law or to state law (דת, vv 5, 8). Daniel has done nothing injurious, he suffers no injury, and this shows that God’s realm will never suffer injury (חבל, vv 22, 22, 26). The satraps are to take notice of Daniel, they accuse Daniel of taking no notice of the king, the king gives notice that all peoples are to revere Daniel’s God (טעם, vv 2, 13, 26). Things seem very disagreeable to the king, then very good (באש and its antonym טאב, vv 14, 23). The king goes off to the palace and comes back next morning (אזל, vv 18, 19; cf. 2:17, 24). The conspirators can find nothing against Daniel until they find him praying, but he is found innocent before God and found unharmed by the lions (שכח, vv 4, 4, 5, 5, 11, 22, 23). They go in a crowd to see the king, to catch Daniel, and to tell the king he must impose execution (רגש, vv 6, 11, 15]). While the chapter does not repeat phrases such as the lists of officers and instruments in the companion narrative, chap. 3, it does repeat key words (King, Daniel, realm, seek/petition and find, lion, pit),[[945]](#footnote-945) and it includes a set of instances of hendiadys (vv 4, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15; cf. א ה ג נ ב. . . בשפרפרא “when morning came . . . at sunrise,” v 19).

OG again represents a different form of the chapter.[[946]](#footnote-946)

### Setting

The story contains no concrete pointers towards the Maccabean period; neither the motivation and aims of Daniel’s enemies, nor the harshness of Darius’s edict, nor his concern for Daniel suggest it. Observance of the sabbath law and of Jewish feasts was proscribed in the second century bc; private prayer was not. Darius’s insistence that petitions be made to him alone does not correspond to the irreligious actions of Antiochus depicted in 11:36–39; in a dispersion context, private prayer of the kind described here is important. The story might belong to any time in the Persian or Greek period. As with previous chapters, scholars have formulated varying hypotheses regarding earlier forms of the story and stages by which it reached the shape that we know,[[947]](#footnote-947) though in this case one of the scholars interested in such hypotheses has commented that “there is little point trying to identify earlier forms of the story.”[[948]](#footnote-948)

The chapter takes up from chap. 5, illustrating how Daniel continues to function during the reigns of the Median and Persian kings who succeed Belshazzar (5:28; cf. 5:31; 6:1, 28 [6:1, 2, 29]). But its special relationship is with chap. 3, which in a parallel way combines features of court conflict tale, confessor legend, aretalogy, and midrash, and holds together factual allusions, traditional motifs, and historical implausibilities. Both chapters are tales of two decrees. Both involve introduction, accusation, sentence, deliverance, and confession. Many words recur: קרציהון אכל “attack,” טעם “notice,” שלו “negligence,” שיזב “deliver,” צלח “flourish,” בהתבהלה “in agitation,” שלט “overpower.” In both, Jehudite exiles who have reached positions of authority in the empire are put in a position where a royal edict requires them to abandon a fundamental public concrete expression of their faith. In both, jealous colleagues gather to indict them for their stand, accuse them of slighting the king’s authority, and insist that he implement the unpleasant capital sanction required by the edict. In both, the king does so, ensuring that there is no way they can escape. In both, there is ambiguous talk of the possibility that God may deliver, then a description of the king rising in agitation to perceive that God has acted, as the Psalms promise in the context of such experiences, because of the confessors’ trust in him; he has sent one of his heavenly servants into the place of execution, so that the confessors are quite unharmed. In both, the king orders them to be released, and others die in their place. In both, the king declares that all peoples are to recognize the unique power of their God, and the story closes by noting how they continue to flourish. The stories are bracketed together in Heb 11:33–34.

Chap. 6 by no means simply repeats chap. 3. The setting is Persian, not Babylonian; Darius’s edict results from his being manipulated, not from his own initiative; Daniel’s accusers are other officials, not other experts; Daniel’s loyalty to the state is emphasized; Daniel’s area of testing is personal prayer, not public religion; it concerns what is forbidden, not what is required; his danger comes from the lion pit, not the furnace; Darius is concerned for Daniel, not enraged; he accepts Daniel’s religious practice, instead of seeking to persuade him; he allows for the possibility of God s delivering Daniel, rather than excluding it; Daniel makes no statement of his faith; Darius learns of what happens from Daniel, rather than witnessing it; he orders the punishment of Daniel’s attackers; he requires empire-wide worship of Daniel’s God, rather than mere tolerance of the Jews’ religion. Thus some motifs are heightened, some appear in varied form, some are reduced. The correlation between the two stories compares with that between the two cola in a line in OT poetry.

Similarities and differences enable us to perceive aspects of the stories’ respective significance. Recurring features may suggest recurring experiences, pressures, challenges, insights, and promises. As well as reflecting the diverse forms these recurrent features may take, distinctive features may highlight important themes: the exiles are to be willing both to maintain their “no” to public practices that are incompatible with their commitment to God, and to maintain their “yes” to personal practices that are essential to their commitment to God.

Daniel’s deliverance from death prefaces the promise of deliverance after death at the end of the vision sequence (chap. 12), and Darius’s confession recapitulates the affirmations that bring earlier stories to a climax (2:44; 3:28; 4:3, 34).[[949]](#footnote-949) Bringing the stories in Dan 1–6 to a close, the chapter offers a final example of the varying behavior of pagan kings, of the varied testing of God’s man, and of the wonderful deeds of his God. But the comparison and contrast with chap. 3 also makes clear that it does not bring the sequence to an unequivocal and positive climax. The pattern of the six chapters suggests that “harmonious resolution is forever provisional…. Conflict and resolution are thus cyclic.”[[950]](#footnote-950)

## Comment

1–2 Appointing satraps was apparently an aspect of Darius I’s organization of the realm at the beginning of his reign (522-485), but there were then 20 to 29 satraps/provinces (so Herodotus, *Histories* 3.89, Darius’s inscriptions, and the inscription on his tomb). The number 120 compares with the 127 provinces in the time of Darius’s successor, Xerxes (485–465), mentioned in Esth 1:1; 1 Esd 3:2 (to which OG assimilates Dan 6:1). In Darius’s time the satraps were the king’s viceroys in each of the provinces, responsible for security and for the collecting of tribute; “satrap” means “protector of the realm.” But here, “satraps” must denote officials in a looser sense, perhaps government officials generally. When control of Babylon passed to Cyrus’ governor Gobryas, most officials in the administration retained the posts they had held under the Babylonians. In Xenophon the word refers to officials appointed by Cyrus and to other rulers who were not satraps in the strict sense (e.g., Cyropedia. 8.11; Hellenica 3.1.10–12).[[951]](#footnote-951) It has already been used in Dan 3:2 with reference to the Babylonian period. The form of the word (אחשדרפניא) is closer to Median kšatrapan than OP kšaśapawan, which might suggest that it, with the office it denoted, was familiar in Aramaic before the Persian period.[[952]](#footnote-952)

There is no known parallel to the three “heads,” though compare 1 Esd 3:9; Dan 5:7; also the seven counselors/princes of, e.g., Ezra 7:14; Esth 1:14; Herodotus, *Histories* 3.71, 76, 83–84.[[953]](#footnote-953) As checks on the satraps, Darius I appointed two other officials in each province, a commandant and a civil servant, who reported to the king (Herodotus, *Histories* 3.128); he also had personal advisers at court.[[954]](#footnote-954)

3–9 Daniel’s “remarkable spirit” is assumed to be of supernatural origin (see on 4:8). No doubt the schemers’ claim to represent the entire administration (v 7) compares with the claim of politicians to represent the consensus of the entire American people.[[955]](#footnote-955) To put it more briskly, “the men are lying, of course.”[[956]](#footnote-956) An injunction of the kind proposed is otherwise unknown. In Persia the king was not regarded as divine in the Egyptian sense, though in court ceremonial, people did obeisance before him as one would to a god, and the general idea that the king is a manifestation or representative of deity and a key mediator with deity appears in Persian writings, as in Mesopotamian and Hellenistic ones (and, in a sense, Israelite ones).[[957]](#footnote-957) The injunction satirizes the link that many of Israel’s pagan overlords claimed between their monarchy and the godhead.[[958]](#footnote-958) The mockery compares with the disdain shown in Isa 14:13–14; 36–37 towards that link as claimed by Babylon and Assyria, and with the lampooning of the images of Babylonian gods in Isa 40–55, taking the implications of their manufacture to their ridiculous logical conclusion. Daniel lampoons the heads and satraps, too, in his repeated description of them “crashing on and off stage.”[[959]](#footnote-959) The satirical form of the story involves a mimicry or mockery that renders the empire ambivalent, and undermines it.[[960]](#footnote-960)

“Pit” (גב, v 7) is an ordinary word for an underground cistern, used for water storage or as a prison—or for keeping lions.[[961]](#footnote-961) Hunting continued to be a royal pastime in the Persian period.[[962]](#footnote-962) Access to the pit was by the top, into which people would be lowered and from which they would be lifted out (v 23; cf. Jer 38:6–13). There is no need to suppose that the pit would have a door in the side, like the furnace of chap. 3. The Persian kings were recognized to have the power of life and death, and known for their “almost exquisitely horrible” forms of execution.[[963]](#footnote-963)

The satire continues with the appeal to the permanence of Medo-Persian law (v 8), on which compare Esth 1:19; 8:8.[[964]](#footnote-964) The law of the state was designed to be proof against evasion or subversion by the king’s subordinates; here Darius will be portrayed as being unable to evade it himself. For the motif, compare the story of Darius III unable to undo the sentence of death on a man who turned out to be innocent (Diodorus 17.30; or is he unable to undo the actual execution?).[[965]](#footnote-965) “The one who is put on a (semi-)divine pedestal is at the same time shown to be naïve and conceited, and therefore open to manipulation by his courtiers.”[[966]](#footnote-966) Indeed, “While the officials seem to be concentrating all power in [the] king’s hands, the king… is actually falling into the power of the officials.”[[967]](#footnote-967) But “a weak, ineffective king—even a friendly one—can be as threatening as Nebuchadnezzar.”[[968]](#footnote-968)

10–15 The Torah does not expect a person to pray publicly three times a day. Daniel could easily have found a basis for not doing so. But this law is one that tells him how he cannot worship God.[[969]](#footnote-969) “At one level, this story is about the competing demands on Daniel of the ‘law of his God’… and the ‘law of the Medes and Persians.’”[[970]](#footnote-970) Daniel 6 provides a model of Jewish religious and political resistance.[[971]](#footnote-971) The talk of God’s law introduces a new note into Daniel,[[972]](#footnote-972) a note that will become inscreasingly important in connection with the vulnerability of the Jewish people to Gentile hostility, issuing from their being “different.”

Having an attic that could be used for a private meeting, for guests, or for prayer, would be unusual, suggesting a well-to-do-ness that is a sign of Daniel’s status (Judg 3:20; 2 Kgs 1:2; 4:8–11; Jer 22:14; Luke 22:12; Acts 1:13; 9:37, 39; 20:8). Ordinary people would have a makeshift shelter on the roof for these purposes (1 Sam 9:25; 1 Kgs 17:19; Jdt 8:5; Acts 10:9). Daniel’s practice of prayer is unusual not only for its bravery and its symbolic nature as an expression of commitment. We have no other reference to praying three times a day (Ps 55:17 is surely no more a guide to anyone’s regular practice than is the “seven times” of Ps 119:164) until *Didache* 8 and *m.* Berakot. 4:1. The times of morning and evening offerings were regular hours for prayer (1 Chr 23:30, cf. Exod 29:38–39; also twice-daily prayer in 1QS 10.1–3), especially the evening offering (Ps 141:2; Dan 9:21; Ezra 9:5; Jdt 9:1; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30). Facing the land, the city, and the temple during prayer is emphasized throughout Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kgs 8 but it is referred to rarely elsewhere (Ps 5:7 [8] [in the temple court!]; 1 Esd 4:58; cf. Tob 3:11). Daniel’s praying towards Jerusalem and thus towards the temple at the times when sacrifices were offered is another indication of the book’s emphasis on the temple and its worship.[[973]](#footnote-973) In expressions such as ומתחנן בעא “petitioning and seeking favor,” the first verb is a general one for (formal, liturgical) prayer, the second specifies the kind of prayer, a casting oneself on someone’s grace (חן) and a pleading (see n. 9:3.b). Further, whereas standing is the regular posture for prayer (1 Chr 23:30; Neh 9; Matt 6:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13), Daniel’s kneeling, which implies prostration, indicates a marked self-lowering, which elsewhere suggests circumstances of particular solemnity or need (1 Kgs 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5). “Before his God” also suggests meekness in the presence of authority: it is the term used for addressing the king (e.g., 2:9, 10, 11), though at the same time it indicates a literal standing in a real person’s presence.

“Deliver” and “rescue” are verbs of which God is the usual subject, so it is not surprising that Darius cannot “deliver” or “rescue” Daniel.[[974]](#footnote-974)

16–24 Kings and others commonly authenticated documents by a signet or other seal (v 17; 1 Kgs 21:8; Esth 3:12; 8:8, 10).[[975]](#footnote-975) Here, apparently cord or cloth was fastened across the rock with clay, which was then impressed with the seals (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.195).[[976]](#footnote-976) We are told nothing of what happened in the lion pit. In parallel with the story in chap. 3 and in contrast with the story of Bel and the Snake, the narrative does not follow Daniel into the lion pit but follows the king.[[977]](#footnote-977) There is also a contrast between the restraint of Daniel’s story and the extravagance of (e.g.) the second century AD *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 8–9.[[978]](#footnote-978) There is no suggestion that Daniel is exercising lordship over the animal creation in accordance with the purpose envisaged in Gen 1 and that promised in Isa 11:6–9; 65:25. Nor is there any suggestion that the animals had more sense than their master (cf. Num 22:26–33; 1 Sam 6:12) or lacked spirit (like some animals that Ignatius speaks of, Romans 5). It is God’s act via his agent that the story relates, not Daniel’s or the lions’. Once again an angel plays a key role in the story.[[979]](#footnote-979)

The narrative has implied that all the heads and satraps associated themselves with the attack on Daniel, so all 122 (plus wives and children) are apparently killed (v 24). This feature of the story raises logistical problems, among others: “there were hardly enough lions for such a shopful of meat.”[[980]](#footnote-980) Thus OG executes only the two heads,[[981]](#footnote-981) a characteristic realistic scaling-down of the story, but the narrative itself has rather declared that everyone was against Daniel (see vv 1–7), and MT’s account at this point corresponds to that earlier emphasis.

25–28 It might be possible to make these affirmations without being “converted” and abandoning the acknowledgment of heathen gods,[[982]](#footnote-982) but people listening to the story should not miss the significance of Darius’s confession. It goes far beyond the one at the end of chap. 3 in acknowledging the living, enduring, secure and active power of Daniel’s God (cf. 4:1–3, 34–37).

## Explanation

1–9 A state requires an administration if it is to hold together and if its various parts are to be required to contribute to the expenses of government, and the administration needs internal checks if it is to be protected from the very fissiparous and dishonest tendencies it is designed to safeguard against. Positions within the administration give people the opportunity to reveal their capacity for even higher responsibility. They also give those who reveal this capacity the opportunity to incur the sullen opposition of those who do not. If these malcontents then want to put the others down, a way to do so is to suggest that they are unfaithful or disloyal in their work. It is the more incumbent on them to be blameless in the exercise of their responsibility. One slip gives a hostage to fortune. “Wherever a Daniel comes to the palace of a king and gets honour, there is danger in the air”: the danger of incurring hostility but also the danger of compromise. In fact, “king’s palaces are far more dangerous for Daniel than lions’ dens.”[[983]](#footnote-983) Thus the deliverance in the lion pit is actually the third miracle in the story. The first is his protection from compromise in the palace, and second his protection from compromise in his house.[[984]](#footnote-984)

Daniel has nothing to fear from his colleagues’ close probing of how he executes his office. Why they decide to subvert his position is not explained. There is a hint of professional jealousy and/or resentment at their being unable to use their office to indulge their own rapacity. There is behind that possibility a hint of what we would now call anti-Semitism, developed in v 13. There is behind that phenomenon the mysterious, perverse antagonism towards what is good that people sometimes manifest.[[985]](#footnote-985) These are realities already illustrated in the Joseph story, and they will subsequently find mature expression in the cross and in the holocaust.

Daniel’s colleagues cannot catch him out, until they perceive that his vulnerability lies in his commitment to God. Daniel’s distinction derives from his remarkable spirit, which reflects God’s involvement in his life and in the shaping of the person he was (5:11–12). At one level there is nothing intrinsically religious about his colleagues’ hostility. The key factor is simply that religion is of key significance to Daniel, and therefore it constitutes his weak point. At another level the possibility of conflict over Daniel’s religious commitment is inherent in his position as a minister of state, for the state characteristically assumes it has quasi-divine significance. One can see this propensity in the Marxist state and in its opposition to religion, which invites people to accept a higher commitment than that to the state. It can be as real if more subtle in a “Christian” democracy. One can see it in the ancient monarchies’ inclination to claim varying forms of sacral significance. To put Daniel out of the way, jealousy, resentment, anti-Semitism, and the mystery of human hostility to the good, plot to utilize the state’s inclination to deify itself and the believer’s obligation to confess no god but God. The law of Daniel’s God (v 5) and the law of the Medes and Persians (v 8) are deliberately brought into conflict. God’s law makes an absolute demand. So does the king’s law, for he contributes to the state’s stability and to the authority of his own position by insisting on the irrevocability of his injunctions: once his decision is declared, it cannot be undone. Such firmness adds strength to good decisions but compounds the weakness of poor ones.

In Daniel “imperium is bound up with the individual figure of the monarch;… the conduct and character of the king both determines and is determined by the ‘kingdom.’”[[986]](#footnote-986) Darius’s civil servants’ words and actions imply that their calculating cynicism cares nothing for state, God, or truth. The empire does not know what is in its own interests: fancy stopping people praying, when the prayer of the saints is designed to release God’s peace and blessing in the world. Whether they are conscious of it or not, their mad edict contemns and blasphemes God more boldly and dangerously than Belshazzar’s libations did.[[987]](#footnote-987) The godless arrogance of the Assyrian king’s field-commander and that of the Babylonian king himself (2 Kgs 18–19; Isa 14:13–14; cf. Jdt 3:8; 6:2) reappear in the next of the Middle East’s succession of empires.

How much of all this dynamic Darius is assumed to perceive, the story leaves open. Perhaps he is the victim of his own vanity,[[988]](#footnote-988) or perhaps he colludes with his ministers because he realizes the advantages to the state of its having quasi-divine authority, or perhaps he is initially unaware of being manipulated as a puppet by his civil servants in a way which denies the divinity they overtly attribute to him.[[989]](#footnote-989) All three possibilities become actual in politics at one time or another.

10 Circumstantial evidence suggests that living in dispersion put pressure on distinctive Jewish practices such as observance of the sabbath, adherence to the food laws, and the rite of circumcision. In Daniel, the specific emphasis is on a public disavowal of idolatry (chap. 3) and sacrilege (chap. 5), and a personal commitment to purity (chap. 1) and prayer (2:17–23; 6:10; 9:3–20).[[990]](#footnote-990) Individual prayer is also prominent in other postexilic writings such as Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah and the Psalter, which no doubt reflects the prayer life of post-exilic Judaism even where individual psalms are of earlier date. Daniel’s response to the prohibition on prayer is to continue praying. There is no fuss or rush about his stand, such as characterizes every action of his assailants. Nor is he a man who has lost his true human freedom. He retains that freedom, while neither civil servants nor king behave as free men. He cannot hide the fact that he prays. When prayer is fashionable, it is time to pray in secret (Matt 6:5–6), but when prayer is under pressure, to pray in secret is to give the appearance of fearing the king more than God: one must render to Caesar, but also render to God (Matt 22:21; cf. Acts 4:18–20; 5:29).[[991]](#footnote-991)

In OG and Vg Daniel opens windows at this point, which makes his prayer more explicitly a deliberate act of active but peaceful resistance,[[992]](#footnote-992) though maybe MT implies the same assumption in drawing attention to the fact that his windows were in the upper floor of his house.[[993]](#footnote-993) Either way, Daniel’s “seemingly innocuous act” was “more… revolutionary than outright rebellion would have been. Rebellion simply acknowledges the absoluteness and ultimacy of the emperor’s power, and attempts to seize it. Prayer denies that ultimacy altogether by acknowledging a higher power.”[[994]](#footnote-994) Daniel assumes that awe for God is the beginning and the essence of insight (Prov 1:7).[[995]](#footnote-995) He is prepared to pay “the cost of discipleship.”[[996]](#footnote-996)

Daniel’s prayer follows his customary practice, but it is a practice that marks him out. People did not commonly have a special prayer room facing Jerusalem, or pray as frequently as Daniel, or adopt the prostrate posture he adopted. He is presumably set forward as a model to which, in at least some of these respects, other people might aspire. They too belong to another city (despite Jer 29) and they need outward ways of demonstrating that they live as strangers among the Babylonians and Persians, whether they feel secure or insecure there.[[997]](#footnote-997) The NT points to an application of this principle to the Christian community: see, e.g., Phil 3:20; Heb 13:14.

“Prayer and thanksgiving” suggests two major aspects of praying (cf. Phil 4:6). Daniel’s prayer might include intercession for the state in which he lives in exile, as commissioned by Jer 29:7, as well as prayer for Israel itself in exile (cf. Dan 9), also implied by Jer 29:11-14,[[998]](#footnote-998) and prayer on his own behalf in his situation of need (cf. Dan 2:17–23). The psalmist who prays three times a day (Ps 55:17 [18]) does so because of the urgency of personal need, interweaving plea with testimony to the conviction that God hears and answers. It is presumably this characteristic confession of the Psalms that is indicated by the “thanksgiving” with which Daniel’s prayer is accompanied (cf. Dan 2:17–23). Daniel is confident that the living God knows his situation and his peril and that he has already determined how he will preserve him through it. It is not unreasonable that Daniel becomes a model of prayer for Jews and Christians.[[999]](#footnote-999)

11–15 So Daniel is caught petitioning God when he is allowed to petition the king alone, and he is duly denounced. The accusation includes reference to Daniel’s Judahite origin (cf. 3:12 in a similar context, though also 2:25; 5:13). The other ministers may imply that as a foreigner he cannot really be trusted, or that as an exile his maintaining his alien religious practices is a political act, an act of rebellion; but the hint of anti-Semitism may be stronger here than it was in vv 4–5.

“Kings are powerful persons, but courtiers are skilled at controlling and manipulating royal power.”[[1000]](#footnote-1000) The king is now displeased: perhaps with Daniel, for ignoring his injunction; perhaps with the ministers, for engineering his downfall; perhaps with himself, for being manipulated by them into becoming the victim of his own power and authority; perhaps with the situation in general into which he is now cornered (cf. Herod, Mark 6:26). But the law is the law is the law. If the king accepts it, he has to accept unacceptable constraints and unfairness when the law is an ass; if he suspends it, he risks the collapse of the social order, and ultimately of the state itself.[[1001]](#footnote-1001)

16–23 There are parallels and contrasts between the words that take Daniel’s three friends to the furnace (3:15–18) and those that take Daniel to the lion pit. There the king asked, “Who ever is the god who could deliver you from my power?” Here the king declares, “Your God, whom you honor so consistently, he must deliver you” (compare his acknowledgment of “the living God” in v 20). There, the king’s challenge requires a response and draws forth a magnificent confession from the three men. Here the king has said all that needs to be said, and it is his prayer that resounds in our ears until Daniel testifies to God’s saving power the next day (v 22). Thus Darius is the one who comes into focus at this point in the story, not Daniel. Yet both confessions manifest ambiguities. Even if it is right that the friends themselves believe that their God can and will rescue them (in 3:17–18), they nevertheless have to grant that only events will demonstrate whether God will. Darius, in turn, uses a form of the verb that leaves open whether God must, will, may, or can rescue Daniel (see n. 16.b). Like other ambiguities in Daniel, the unclarity over whether Darius offers a challenge to God, or a statement of faith, or a wistful hope, functions to invite the hearer to decide what he or she would mean in a situation of this kind. On the other hand, perhaps “the royal prayer is revealed for what it is—a washing of hands. Poor divided man!”[[1002]](#footnote-1002)

Daniel’s fate is sealed. He is destined for a night in a five-star lion pit.[[1003]](#footnote-1003) It will neither be possible for his friends to feed the lions or engineer his survival in some other way, nor for his enemies to kill him if the lions do not.[[1004]](#footnote-1004) Furtjer, there is a deeper matter at issue than the conflict between Daniel’s foes and his friends. The king has spoken of the possibility of God’s delivering Daniel, and the sealing will make it necessary for God to prove himself in an extraordinary way if he is to act at all. “In testing Daniel, the king knows… that he is testing God.”[[1005]](#footnote-1005)

Darius is unable to eat, relax, or sleep as he awaits the outcome of the action forced on him. Perhaps he is even praying against the effectiveness of his action[[1006]](#footnote-1006) or expressing his penitence for his foolish injunction.[[1007]](#footnote-1007) Perhaps we are to recall the Babylonian custom whereby a prisoner who was tortured but survived overnight was then pardoned.[[1008]](#footnote-1008) When daylight comes, Darius returns to the lion pit in turmoil and trepidation instead of in the stately dignity and composure of a monarch. By addressing Daniel so as to ask whether he has survived the ordeal, he builds up our expectation that actually he has done so. By enquiring whether the “living God” has been able to preserve Daniel, he speaks of that God in terms that contain the seeds of the answer to his question: this rich OT title for God suggests not merely that God is alive rather than dead but that he is active and powerful, awesome and almighty, involved in bringing judgment and blessing. The title is appealed to when human beings are inclined to slight him or to doubt him in situations of pressure and weakness (Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26; 2 Kgs 19:4; Jer 10:10; 23:36; Hos 1:10 [2:1]; Ps 42:2 [3]; 84:2 [3]; oaths are taken “by the living God”—that is, at the risk of his intervening in case of default). So Darius’s confession of “the living God” also builds up our expectation regarding what we are about to discover.

Daniel’s calm and polite reply, observing courtly protocol, underlines by contrast the king’s anxiety and agitation. At the same time his “Long live the king” strikingly affirms Darius’s kingship. It is the first time the phrase has occurred on the lips of Daniel or his friends (cf. Neh 2:3). If to be the living God implies activity and power, to be the living king implies having a share in God’s life and power.[[1009]](#footnote-1009) Daniel’s prayer that Darius may do so both honors and relativizes Darius’s kingship by the interweaving of references to the living God with those to the living king (vv 6, 20, 21, 26), as have his earlier affirmations of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingship as God-given (2:37; 5:18).

As Daniel’s friends were not preserved from the furnace, so Daniel has not been preserved from the lion pit; as the divine aide entered the furnace to stand with Daniel’s friends, so God has sent his aide into the pit to stand with Daniel; as Daniel’s friends were preserved in the furnace, so is Daniel in the lion pit. The first generation of Christian believers sometimes had similar experiences. They refused to obey human beings rather than God and found themselves in prison: but the Lord’s aide opened the prison doors and released them (Acts 4:18–20; 5:19–20; 12:1–10; 16:19–26). So “what happens when a state executes those who are praying for it?” Even if God does not rescue them, it is “demonstrating the emperor’s powerlessness to impose his will even by death. The final sanction had been publicly robbed of its power. Even as the lions lapped the blood of the saints, Caesar was stripped of his arms and led captive in Christ’s triumphal procession. His authority was shown to be only penultimate after all.”[[1010]](#footnote-1010) Daniel 6 is “a tale of two empires.” But in this tale, evening stands for the sun setting on Persian dominion, night is a time of trial, and sunrise stands for the rising of God’s dominion.[[1011]](#footnote-1011) One might indeed see the casting into a lion pit (like the casting into the furnace in chap. 3) as a trial by ordeal rather than a simple execution.[[1012]](#footnote-1012)

The message of Dan 6 is not that the innocent, believing confessor can always expect to be saved from martyrdom. “On occasion, and for a time only, and even then rarely, the just are protected from suffering and death at the hands of a brigand authority.”[[1013]](#footnote-1013) Although the promise of Ps 91:10–13 generalizes the experience of Daniel ,and/or although “Daniel’s reply is a commentary on Psalm 91:9-13,”[[1014]](#footnote-1014) the psalmist and the author of Daniel know that life often does not turn out thus. The promise may more often hold in a metaphorical sense (cf. Ps 22:13, 21 [24, 22]; 124:6; Rom 8:36–37; 2 Tim 4:17), and the listeners are no doubt entitled to rejoice in the story’s implicit promise of such divine protection. God does grant a victory of life over death, of innocence over guilt, of justice over enmity, of hope over fear. People who lose their life will save it. In Daniel’s day, in that of the early Christians, and in our own, the lions that are set upon the children of God often do devour them. They experience not only the pit (and are rescued from death) but the Pit itself. Thus in closing one of his lectures on Dan 6, Calvin prays, “Grant, Almighty God,… that we may be prepared to live and to die for you and not seek anything else than to maintain the pure and sincere service of your Godhead.”[[1015]](#footnote-1015)

For Jews and Christians, the stories of Daniel and his friends who were prepared to go to martyrdom have been important to faithful confessors who did go to martyrdom.[[1016]](#footnote-1016) The story affirms that occasional experiences of divine intervention are more important than regular experiences of divine non-intervention. That affirmation invites us to a more God-centered perspective: the fulfilling of God’s purpose, whether by my deliverance or by my death, is what matters, not the fulfilling of what is most comfortable to me (cf. Phil 1:12–20). The story recognizes, however, that our deliverance matters to us. We are not expected to manifest a heroism that cares nothing for our own destiny. The book of Daniel sets the individual’s experience of attack by wild beasts and of being thrown into the pit into a wider and at first more threatening context, but one which is then comforting. In Dan 7, a lion-like animal will be the first to typify the gentile world-powers, more threatening now than they were pictured in chap. 2, but destined for defeat. Dan 12 then encourages us to look to deliverance after death if not before it, and Christ’s resurrection is the proof that such a deliverance is not fanciful hope (thus Phil 1:21–26 continues Paul’s reflection).

Daniel’s deliverance from the pit in this age anticipates and promises a more general deliverance from the Pit into a new age; there, too, God’s aide comes to deliver those who have obeyed God rather than Caesar, so that they may yet look in triumph on their attackers and testify to the power of the living God.[[1017]](#footnote-1017) But the story also witnesses to the reality that the powers of the age to come can be operating now.[[1018]](#footnote-1018) Even though its form invites us not to take it as a straightforward narrative of historical events, its logic requires that some concrete experience of God acting in marvelous ways in this age underlies it, and its implication is that we may occasionally look for such experiences in this age.

Daniel’s adversaries have attempted to make it impossible for him to remain innocent before God and loyal to the state, but they have failed. He has obeyed God rather than the human king, but he has done no injury to the state. He has not been guilty of rebellion or treachery. By putting loyalty to God above loyalty to the state he has been loyal to the truth and thus more loyal to the state than those who make of it more than it is—and certainly than those who use it to serve their own ends, as his adversaries have. It is appropriate for the king to be glad that his attempt at execution has failed.

Darius’s state of mind has been in focus for some while. We have not been told what Daniel was feeling. Lest we had not assumed it, however, we are assured that Daniel’s ability to shut the lions’ mouths derived from his standing firm in his trust in God (Heb 11:33). He himself prefers to speak of God shutting their mouths; and we should not even assume that God is limited to delivering those who are innocent and trusting.[[1019]](#footnote-1019) That assumption would mean falling into an error akin to that of Job’s friends. Daniel’s trust in God did not imply that he was confident of a miraculous deliverance; his trust will have been like Job’s and like that of his three friends (3:17-18).[[1020]](#footnote-1020)

24 That Daniel’s adversaries should be executed in his place is in keeping with Deut 19:16–21; Prov 19:5, 9; 21:28; Esth 7:10. It is more broadly in keeping with the prophetic promise that as Israel is saved, her oppressors will be turned upon themselves and annihilated (Isa 41:11–12; 49:25–26). That their families should suffer with them is in keeping with Num 16:27–33; Josh 7:24–25; Esth 9:25; Isa 13:15–16; though it contrasts with Deut 24:16; 2 Kgs 14:6. “Are we to applaud the deaths of the innocent in this passage, or, as at the traditional Passover seder, do we set aside a moment to remember the death of innocent Egyptians in the liberation of Israel?”[[1021]](#footnote-1021) We may of course do so, though the instinct of Jews and Christians at this point differs from that of the text. MT is more interested in the way judgment is the other side of the coin of deliverance (as is regularly the case),[[1022]](#footnote-1022) and in the promise that wickedness gets it comeuppance. It recognizes that the destiny and the fate of families is tied up for good and for ill with that of the head of the family, and that guilt and innocence are not simply individual matters. Perhaps the story implies no moral judgment on the event beyond the implication that “life is like that (so watch it).” It very well illustrates maxims in Proverbs (see especially 26:27; 28:10; cf. Ps 7:15 [16]; 9:15 [16]; 57:6 [7]). Perhaps we need again to recall that this narrative is not a piece of history but a dramatized warning and promise of God’s judgment on wickedness. Josephus has Daniel’s accusers saying that the lions fail to eat Daniel because they have been fed; the lions’ appetite for their subsequent victims then proves that Daniel’s escape was a miracle (Ant. 10.11.6 [10.262]).

25–28 From the beginning, Darius has been more sympathetic to Daniel and his faith than Nebuchadnezzar was to Daniel’s friends; at the end, he acknowledges Daniel’s God more fully. Through his entire empire, Daniel’s God is not merely to be tolerated but to be worshiped with reverence and awe. The other side to the vision of the Prophets comes true (Isa 42:1–12; 49:1–7; Zech 2:15 [11]; 8:20–23); Daniel has himself functioned as a light to enlighten the Gentiles.[[1023]](#footnote-1023) While heathen powers suffer if they oppose God and his servants, they do have the opportunity to find God through his servants and themselves to serve God. Nations were created by God (cf. Gen 10, at the end of the creation story), they rebelled against him as the individual men and women did (Gen 11), but they are destined to worship (Rev 15:4; 21:26; 22:26). The worship called for here is an anticipation of that which they will give at the End—even though in the meantime, rebellion will more often characterize them.[[1024]](#footnote-1024) The pagan king brings the story to its climax as he expresses the wonder to which the hearers are invited as they enter into Daniel’s story. The chapter is the story of two decrees:[[1025]](#footnote-1025) Darius revokes his irrevocable decree and replaces it by another.

Perhaps his second decree is as foolish as his earlier injunction and his order to kill Daniel’s adversaries. Compulsion or violence cannot be effective on God’s behalf any more than in opposition to him.[[1026]](#footnote-1026) Daniel has “an explicit yet sophisticated ideology of empire and a philosophy of history,” but an ideology that is “characterized by ambivalence.”[[1027]](#footnote-1027) This ambivalence is illustrated by the subtle two-way implications of Darius’s encyclical. On one hand, like Nebuchadnezzar’s encyclical, Darius’s encyclical presupposes and expresses Darius’s own authority. “Subversion of imperial power in the name of divine power, far from demonstrating their incompatibility, in fact helps secure the continued vitality of imperial power. Darius may be made to give voice to the subversive notion that his power is evanescent, but he does so only in the context of a robust exercise of his own power.”[[1028]](#footnote-1028) “God is reduced to an ordinance.”[[1029]](#footnote-1029) Daniel 6 describes the conflict of two systems of worship. The false worship of the state abolishes the true worship of God by enforcing exclusive worship of the state as embodied in the emperor. Daniel maintains fidelity to the true worship, with its ties to the Jerusalem temple and its liturgy, and so is forced to recapitulate in himself the experience of the psalmist. However, the result is that the true worship is endorsed and promoted by the very head of the false worship, the emperor himself.[[1030]](#footnote-1030)

Such considerations highlight the symbolic significance of each of these elements in the story. They witness to the fact that pagan powers do put believers under pressure, but that these powers are destined to be defeated, and ultimately to bow before the name that is above every name (Isa 45:23; Phil 2:10–11). Dan 6 is not merely a story about a miraculous escape from martyrdom, but about all human claims to immutability yielding to God’s abiding law and will (there is simply no contest between the two) and about the miracle of the king himself acknowledging the fact.[[1031]](#footnote-1031) The encyclical does underline the higher authority of the one to whom it bears witness. The world powers testify to the sovereign authority of God, which they have seen at work. Once more the familiar affirmations of Israel’s hymns issue from unexpected lips and express a new message. The impossible legal requirement that people tremble with fear before Daniel’s God gains part of its significance from the fact that its author is the person before whom people have earlier trembled with fear (5:19). Something similar happens when Darius once again describes God as the living God and testifies to his being the one who endures for ever. Daniel has just greeted him with that standard wish “Long live the king” (literally, “May the king live forever”): the courtly homage is relativized by the royal confession. To be living is to be active and powerful: the living God is enthroned as King forever (Ps 10:16; 29:10), and he can therefore also be his people’s savior. Even if the divine victory that the chapter portrays will be consistently demonstrated only in the age to come, the story portrays God demonstrating his power in this age, and on this basis Darius acknowledges a power that persists through the ages.

And Daniel, far from being put out of the way, is established in a position that he retains through Darius’s reign and into the next. As dynasties pass (Babylonian, Median, Persian), the Judahite presence persists and grows in importance. Darius’s earlier plan to give Daniel a special position is more than fulfilled. It is possible for the faithful Judahite not only to survive but to triumph.

The story as a whole has a series of motifs parallel to Ps 2. Heathen rulers have mustered and devised their plot, but God has acted on behalf of his servant, giving him the power to have them torn to pieces, to rule over their realm, and to compel them to serve God with trembling fear. They are to heed the decree of which his servant speaks, to learn a wisdom they do not yet possess, and to put their trust where he puts his. The first Christians saw this psalm recapitulated in the story of Jesus (Acts 4:26–28), and they might also have seen Daniel’s experience recapitulated there.[[1032]](#footnote-1032) Jesus, too, is the victim of conspiracy and betrayal by people whose position is threatened by him and who seek occasion to manipulate higher authorities into executing him, professing that they have no king but Caesar. They, too, will eventually pay for their hostility, along with their children. He, too, is arrested at his customary place of prayer. These higher authorities, too, find no fault in him and labor to free him, but are reminded that the law forbids it. He, too, has to rely on God to deliver him as his tomb is sealed. Indeed, he actually dies, and injury can be found on him after he comes back from the dead: more extraordinary is it, then, that very early, at sunrise, he is discovered to be alive after all, too.

Daniel is a new kind of Jewish hero.[[1033]](#footnote-1033) At the conclusion of the stories, we might look back and sum up the picture of their hero that we have been given. He is one who

• acts with conviction (1:8-14)

• is given “knowledge and skill” from Gd, in literature and insight (1:17)

• is exceptionally wise and understanding (1:20)

• can speak with “prudence and discretion” (2:14)

• turns to God when confronted with difficulty (2:18)

• attribute to God not to his own insight wisdom his receipt of revelation (2:30)

• is recognized by Nebuchadnezzar’s as “endowed with a spirit of the holy, divine gods” (4:8, 18)

• is willing to speak truth to power even when the prospect distresses and terrifies him (4:19-26)

• counsels Nebuchadnezzar to break off his wrongdoing by doing right (4:27)

• is possessed of “an excellent spirit” according to thequeen mother (5:12)

• has a reputation for enlightenment, understanding, and insight (5:14)

• refuses to accept rewards for his interpretive work (5:17)

• is distinguished in his work in Darius’s government because he has “an excellent spirit” (6:3)

• is beyond reproach in terms of his work: neither negligent nor corrupt (6:4)

• values prayer more highly than obedience to the (civil) law (6:10)

• trusts in God (6:23).[[1034]](#footnote-1034)

1. Quoted from Horace’s *The Art of Poetry* 386-90 by Cowe, *The Armenian V ersion of Daniel*, ix. Maecius Tarpa was a drama critic. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Calvin, *Daniel* 2:242. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Yephet, *Daniel*, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See e.g., DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature*; ———, “Daniel, Apocalypses of”; ———, **“**4Q Pseudo-DanielA-B (4Q243 –4Q244) and the Book of Daniel”; Kraft, “Daniel outside the Traditional Jewish Canon.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. On the relationship of Daniel’s Aramaic to other forms of Aramaic, see Stefanovic, *The Aramaic of Daniel in the Light of Old Aramaic*; also Polak**, “**The Daniel Tales in their Aramaic Literary Milieu.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Rosenthal, *Die aramäistische Forschung*; Kitchen, “Aramaic”; Kutscher, “Aramaic”; Coxon (see *General Bibliography*); against Baumgartner, “Das Aramäische im Buche Daniel”; Rowley (see *General Bibliography*). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, 108–95 [ET 1:58–106]; also, e.g., Coxon, “Greek Loan-words.” Niskanen (*The Human and the Divine in History*) argues more generally for the influence of Herodotus’s historiography on Daniel. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Marti, *Daniel*, ix-x; Zimmermann, *Biblical Books Translated from the Aramaic*. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Beckwith argues more broadly that the contents of the Jewish scriptures were finalized soon after the Antiochene crisis (“Formation of the Hebrew Bible”; ———,*The OT Canon of the NT Church*)*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Ulrich, *Biblical Qumran Scrolls,* 755-75; more detail in Baillet et al., *Les 'petites grottes' de Qumrân*; Barthélemy/Milik**,** *Qumran Cave 1***;** Ulrich et al., *Qumran Cave 4.XI.* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See e.g., *DSS* 2:352-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Vermes, “Josephus’ Treatment of the Book of Daniel,” 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See e.g., Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Developmental Composition of the Bible*, 265-308. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. García Martínez, “Parabiblical Literature from Qumran and the Canonical Process.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Cf. Hasel, “The Book of Daniel Confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls”; “New Light on the Book of Daniel from the Dead Sea Scrolls.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See E. Ulrich, “Orthography and Text in 4QDana and 4QDanb and in the Received Masoretic Text”; Pfann**,** "The Aramaic Text and Language of Daniel and Ezra in the Light of Some Manuscripts from Qumran.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See e.g., Pace, *The Old Greek Text of Daniel 7–12*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. See e.g., Knibb, Flint, Stuckenbruck, Eshel, Hobbins, and Ulrich in Collins/Flint (eds.), *The Book of Daniel*; Earlier, Flint, “The Daniel Tradition at Qumran,” in Evans/Flint, *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dea Sea Scrolls*, 41-60; Collins, “New Light on the Book of Daniel from the Dead Sea Scrolls”; Stuckenbruck, “The Formation and Re-Formation of Daniel in the Dead Sea Scrolls”; Bernstein/Koller**,** “The Aramaic Texts and the Hebrew and Aramaic Languages at Qumran,” 169-77; García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*; Debel**,** “Retracing Authoritative Traditions behind the Scriptural Texts.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See Meyer, *Das Gebet des Nabonid*; Milik, “‘Prière de Nabonide.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See Flint, “The Daniel Tradition at Qumran,” in Collins/Flint (eds.), *The Book of Daniel* 2:331-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. So Kuhn**,** “The ‘One like a Son of Man’ Becomes the ‘Son of God.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Hogeterp, “Daniel and the Qumran Daniel Cycle.” [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. So Reynolds, “Ádjusting the Apocalypse.” [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Cf. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts*, 27, 63–67, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Mertens, *Das Buch Daniel im Lichte der Texte vom Toten Meer*, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the NT*, 251; Collins, “The Book of Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. See Delcor, “L’hymne à Sion,” 84–88; Baillet, “Un recueil liturgique de Qumrân,” 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Beckwith, “The Significance of the Calendar for Interpreting Essene Chronology and Eschatology,” 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Hartman, “The Functions of Some So-called Apocalyptic Timetables,” 5–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. For different views, see Stuckenbruck**,** “Daniel and Early Enoch Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls”; Beckwith, “Early Traces of the Book of Daniel”; Stokes**,** “The Throne Visions of Daniel 7, *1 Enoch* 14, and the Qumran *Book of Giants* (4Q530)”; Trotter, “The Tradition of the Throne Vision”; Kvanvig**,** “Throne Visions and Monsters.” [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. This understanding parallels one which has been found in 4Q246 with its verbal links with Dan 7 and its reference to “the Son of God” (see *DSS* 2:492-95; Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 171-214). On Messiah and Son of Man in the apocalypses, see e.g., Koch, “Messias und Menschensohn”; Beyerle, “‘Der mit den Wolken des Himmels kommt.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. So McLay, *The OG and Th Versions of Daniel*, 146-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Less incomplete than it used to be: see Cathcart, “Daniel and Chester Beatty-Cologne Papyrus 967.” [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Cf. Geissen/Hamm, *Der Septuaginta-Text des Buches Daniel*; Roca-Puig, “Daniele: Due semifogli del codice 967”; Ziegler/Munnich, *Susanna – Daniel – Bel et Draco*; and for studies, see e.g., McLay**,** *The OG and Th Versions of Daniel*; Bogaert**,** “Daniel 3 LXX et son supplément grec.” [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. So e.g., McLay, *The OG and Th versions of Daniel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See Tov, “Three Strange Books of the LXX.” [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See Lust, **“**The Septuagint Version of Daniel 4—5”; Albertz, *Der Gott des Daniel*; Charles, *Daniel*; Meadowcroft**,** *Aramic Daniel and Greek Daniel*; Ulrich, “The Parallel Editions of the OG and MT of Daniel 5”; Munnich, “Les versions grecques de Daniel et leurs substrats sémitiques.” [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Cf. also Rösel**,** “Theology after the Crisis” and Spangenberg**,** “The Septuagint Translation of Daniel 9: Does It Reflect a Messianic Interpretation?” (his answer is “No”). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See the discussion in Di Lella, “Textual History of Septuagint-Daniel and Theodotion-Daniel,” 591; Lust, “Daniel 7, 13 and the Septuagint”; Hofius**,** “Der Septuaginta-Text von Daniel 7, 13-14.” [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ashley, *Daniel 1–6*, 289–93; cf. Bruce,”The Oldest Greek Version of Daniel”; “Prophetic Interpretation in the Septuagint.” [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See his *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. See *The OG Text of Daniel 7–12*. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. “Les versions grecques de Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 44–54, 119–20 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. So Schmitz, “Die Juditerzählung.” [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See PL 28: 1357c (ET 492). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Cf. Barthélemy, *Les devanciers d’Aquila*; Schmitt, Stammt der sogenannte “θ”-Text bei Daniel wirklich von Theodotion?; Schmitt, “Die griechischen Danieltexte (‘θ’ und o′) und das Theodotionproblem”; Jellicoe, “Some Reflections on the καιγε Recension”; Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted,* 76–83; McLay, “Daniel: To the Reader”; McLay, *The OG and Th Versions of Daniel*; ———, “It’s a Question of Influence: The Theodotion and OG Texts of Daniel”; Swart**,** “Divergences between the OG and Th Versions of Daniel 3”; Di Lella, “Textual History of Septuagint-Daniel and Theodotion-Daniel”; Bodenmann, *Naissance d’une Exégèse*, 10-106; Tilly, “Die Rezeption des Danielbuches”; Koch, **“**Die Herkunft der Proto-Theodotion-Übersetzung des Danielbuches”; Kellenberger**,** “Textvarianten in den Daniel-Legenden.” See the exchange between Jobes, “Comparative Syntactic Analysis,” McLay, “Syntactic Profiles,” and Jobes, “Karen Jobes Responds to Tim McLay”; McLay, “The Relationship between the Greek Translations of Daniel 1—3”; and the survey in Bledsoe, “The Relationship of the Different Editions of Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Di Lella, “Textual History of Septuagint-Daniel and Theodotion-Daniel,” 604. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. All dates up to the modern period are approximate even if they look precise. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. See Busto Saiz, “ El texto teodociónico de Daniel y la traducción de Símaco.” [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Kallarakkal, *The Peshitto Version of Daniel*; Taylor**, “**The Book of Daniel in the Bible of Edessa”; ———,*The Peshiṭta of Daniel*; contrast Wyngarden, *Syriac*. See the survey in Jenner, “Syriac Daniel”; he also notes the significance of the liturgical use of Daniel. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. See Cowe**,** *The Armenian Version of Daniel*; ———**,**”The Reception of the Book of Daniel in Late Ancient and Medieval Armenian Society.” [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. See e.g., Black, “Aramaic barnāshā and the ‘Son of Man’”; Yarbro Collins, “The Influence of Daniel on the NT”; Dunn**,** “The Danielic Son of Man in the NT”; Koch**,** “Der ‘Menschensohn’ in Daniel”; Shepherd,“Daniel 7:13 and the NT Son of Man”; Müller**,** *The Expression “Son of Man”**and the Development of Christology*; Snow**,** “Daniel’s Son of Man in Mark”; Hurtado and Owen(eds.). *Who Is This Son of Man?* ; Casey, *Son of Man*; ———, *The Solution to the “Son of Man” Problem*; Angel**,** *Chaos and the Son of Man*; Meadowcroft**,** “‘One Like a Son of Man’ in the Court of the Foreign King.” [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Cf. Farrer, *Mark*, 271–74. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. See Perrin, “The Son of Man in Ancient Judaism and Primitive Christianity”; ———, “The Interpretation of a Biblical Symbol”; Bock, **“**Did Jesus Connect Son of Man to Daniel 7?”; Horbury, “The Messianic Associations of ‘the Son of Man.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See Stuckenbruck, “‘One Like a Son of Man’”; Zacharias, “Old Greek Daniel 7:13-14.” [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. See Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*; Schäfer**,** *The Jewish Jesus*; Boyarin, “Beyond Judaisms.” [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Cf. Boyarin, **“**Daniel 7, Intertextuality, and the History of Israel’s Cult.” [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Yarbro Collins, “The Influence of Daniel on the NT,” 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. See Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 75-196. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Käsemann, “Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie,” 180; Adler, “Introduction,” to VanderKam/Adler (eds.),*The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, 1-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. P. W. Flint in Smith-Christopheret al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” 99; cf. Wenham, “The Kingdom of God and Daniel”; Evans, “Daniel in the NT.” [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Laurentin, *Luc*, 45–63, following Burrows, *Gospel of the Infancy*, 41–42. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Cf. Schreiner, “Peter the Rock.” [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 158; see table, 172–74; cf. Gundry, OT *in Matthew*; du Toit, “Die Danielrezeption in Markus 13.” Theophilos (*The Abomination ofDesolation in Matthew 24*) suggests that, ironically, the desolating sacrilege which originally referred to an Israelite abomination and then to the action of Antiochus now applies again to the action of the people of God. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. See Grimm in Betz**/**Grimm**,** *Jesus und das Danielbuch.* [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Betz in Betz**/**Grimm**,** *Jesus und das Danielbuch*, 121–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Cf. Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 154–305; Sims**,** *Comparative Literary* *Study of Daniel and Revelation*. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. See further Hieke, “The Reception of Daniel 7 in the Revelation to John.” [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Van Henten, “The Reception of Daniel 3 and 6 and the Maccabean Martyrdoms in Hebrews 11:33-38”; more broadly, van Henten ,“Daniel 3 and 6 in Early Christian Literature,” in Collins/Flint (eds.), *The Book of Daniel* 1:149-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Beale**,** “The OT Background of the ‘Last Hour’ in 1 John2,18.” [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. See Munoa III,*Four Powers in Heaven*. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Kee, “‘The Man’ in Fourth Ezra,” 203; Lacocque, “The Vision of the Eagle in 4 Esdras,” 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See Koch, “Die jüdische und christliche Kanonisierung des Danielbuchs als Rezeption unter verändertem geschichtlichen Horizont.” [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. See Glessmer, “Die ‘Vier Reiche’ aus Daniel in der targumische Literatur.” [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. So Bietenhard, “Menschensohn.” [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 131–39. On interpretations of the stone, see Pfandl**,**“Interpretations of the Kingdom of God in Dan 2:44.” [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. See Bruce, “Josephus and Daniel”; Daube, “Typology in Josephus,” 28–33; Satran, “Daniel,” 36–39; Vermes**,** “Josephus’ Treatment of the Book of Daniel”; Gnuse**,** “The Jewish Dream Interpreter in a Foreign Court”; Feldman**,** “Josephus' Portrait of Daniel”; Begg, “Daniel and Josephus”; Höffken**,** “Eine Reichsteilung bei Josephus Flavius.” [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Mason, “Josephus, Daniel, and the Flavian House,” 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. On this aspect of Josephus, see Fischer, *Eschatologie und Jenseitserwartung im hellenistischen Diasporajudentum*, 180–83; Dexinger, “Ein ‘messianisches Szenarium’ als Gemeingut des Judentums in nachherodianischer Zeit?” 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel* 2:9–64; Audet, “A Hebrew-Aramaic List of Books of the OT in Greek Transcription,” 145–46; Koch, “Is Daniel Also among the Prophets?”; Finley, “The Book of Daniel in the Canon of Scripture”; Warhurst**,** “The Associative Effects of Daniel in the Writings.” [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Cf. Milán, “¿Un Daniel *polifónico?”*  [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. It is the work of Samuel Masnuth, usually dated in the thirteenth century: see e.g., Ferch, *The Apocalyptic “Son of Man*,” 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. See Moskowitz, N.“The Book of Daniel,” 175-82. The painting expressing the themes of Daniel, to which the article refers, is accessible at <http://www.nahumhalevi.com/BookofDaniel.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. See Stemberger, “Die jüdische Daniel rezeption,” 140-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. For examples see G. Stemberger in Smith-Christopheret al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” 100-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Cf. Ego**,** “Daniel und die Rabbinen”; Breed, “History of Reception,” 53-54; Oegema**, “**Back to the Future in the Early Church.” [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. E.g., Chazan**, “**Daniel 9:24-27”; Dunn**,** “*Probabimus venisse eum iam”*; ***———*, “**Tertullian and Daniel 9:24-27.” [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. See e.g., Dulaey**,** “Daniel dans la fosse aux lions”; **———,** “Les trois Hébreuxdans la fournaise.” [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. See Bodenmann, *Naissance d’une exégèse*; Endresz, “Daniel”; Graham**,** “Early Christian Understandings of the ‘Abomination that Causes Desolation’”; Oegema, “Danielrezeption in der Alten Kirche.” [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. See e.g., Dunbar**,** “Hippolytus of Rome and the Eschatological Exegesis of the Early Church.” [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Cf. Bodenmann, *Naissance d’une Exégèse*, 273-307. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Augustine, *City of God* 20:23. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Cf. Casey, *Son of Man*, 55–59; van der Kooij**,** “The Four Kingdoms in Peshitta Daniel 7”; van Peursen,“Daniel’s Four Kingdoms in the Syriac Tradition.” [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. *Daniel*, 200-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. See Jerome, *Daniel*, 139; cf. e.g., Mayer, *Commentary upon All the Prophets*, 579-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Cf. Casey, “Porphyry”; and on the relationship between Christian writers and Porphyry’s thinking, see Magny, “Porphyre, Hipplyte, et Origène commentent sur *Daniel*”; **———,** “Porphyry against the Christians”; Reaburn, “St Jerome and Porphyry Interpret the Book of Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Letter 93, to Vincent (*Letters* 2:56-106 [95]). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Cf. the survey in Koch, *Europa, Rom und der Kaiser*, 37-78; and Breed, “History of Reception,” 85-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Markus, *Saeculum*, 54-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Fraidl, *Exegese*, 30–98. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Volp, “Hippolytus of Rome,” 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Bardy, “Introduction”; Bracht**,** *Hippolyts Schrift* In Danielem. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. See Royer, “The Ancient of Days.” [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Cf. Trakatallis**,** “Λογος Αγωνιστικος: Hippolytus’ Commentary on Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. See Valenti, *Similes*; Tucker**, “**Early Wirkungsgeschichte of Daniel 3.” [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Tucker, **“**Early Wirkungsgeschichte of Daniel 3*,”* 297; cf. Bracht, “*Logos parainetikos:* Der Danielkommentar des Hippolyt.” [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. *Exhortatio* *ad martyrium* 33 (*PG* 11:603-6); ET in *Prayer; An Exhortation to Martyrdom*. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Goez, “Die Danielrezeption im Abendland,” 185. See further Courtray, “Der Danielkommentar des Hieronymus”; ***———,*** *Prophète des temps derniers*; Larriba**, “**Comentario de San Jerónimo al libro de Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. *Daniel*, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. See Braverman, *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*; Kritzinger**,** “St Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel 3.” [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. See Stander**,** “Chrysostom’s Interpretation of the Narrative of the Three Confessors.” [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. See Botha, “The Interpretation of Daniel 3 in the Syriac Commentary Ascribed to Ephrem the Syrian”; ***———,*** “The Relevance of the Book of Daniel for Fourth-Century Christianity According to the Commentary Ascribed to Ephrem the Syrian.” [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Morrison**,** “The Reception of the Book of Daniel in Aphrahat’s Fifth Demonstration,” 79. See further Tübach**,** “Die syrische Danielrezeption,” with substantial bibliography. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Cf, Goez, “Die Danielrezeption im Abendland,” 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. See Henze**,** “Nebuchadnezzar’s Madness (Daniel 4) in Syriac Literature.” [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. See Hill, “The Commentary on Daniel by Theodoret of Cyrus; ***———,*** *Reading the OT in Antioch*. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. *Daniel*, 6-7; see his commentary on 9:24-27 (*Daniel*, 238-61). [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. See K. Bracht in Smith-Christopher et al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” 112-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. See Denis, *Introduction aux Pseudépigraphes grecs d’AT*, 309–14. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. See Barkhuizen, “Romanos Melodos.” [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. See Schmoldt, “Die Schrift ‘Vom jungen Daniel’ und ‘Daniels letzte Vision’”; Brock**,** “'The Young Daniel'“; Henze**,** *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. See *OTP* 1:755–70; Berger, *Die griechische Daniel-Diegese*. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. See Casey, “Porphyry and the Origin of the Book of Daniel,” 25; Van der Kooij,“The Four Kingdoms in Peshitta Daniel 7”; Taylor, *The Peshiṭta of Daniel,* 200-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Koch, “Spätisraelitische Geschichtsdenken am Beispiel des Buches Daniel,” 1–2; cf. Marsch, *Prophetie*; **———,** Gellinek, “Daniel’s Vision of Four Beasts in Twelfth-Century German Literature”). [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. See van Peursen**,** “Daniel’s Four Kingdoms in the Syriac Tradition.” [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. See M. Sel, “Daniel—In Arabic Literature,” *The Jewish Encyclopedia* 4:429; Bobzin, “Bemerkungen zu Daniel in der islamischen Tradition”; **———,** “Die islamischen Danielrezeption”; Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran*, 280-83; J. Hämeen-Anttila in Smith-Christopheret al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” 121-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. See e.g., Farrell**,** *Daniel and Azarias***;** Portnoy, “*Daniel* and the Dew-Laden Wind”; George**,** “Repentance and Retribution.” [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Hill**,** “Apocalyptic Lollards?” 7, referring to Gradon/Hudson (eds.), *English Wycliffite Sermons*. On Daniel in the visual arts, see B. Kress in Smith-Christopheret al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” 128-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. See Webb**,** “Knowledge Will Be Manifold.” [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. See Krey**,** “Nicholas of Lyra’s Commentary on Daniel”; Zier, “Nicholas of Lyra on the Book of Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. See Chazan, *God, Humanity, and History*, 176-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. See Smith-Christopheret al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” 104-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. See Morrow/Clarke, “The *Ketib/Qere* in the Aramaic Portions of Ezra and Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. See the comments in Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Mann, “Early Ḳaraite Bible Commentaries”; Shaked, “Fragments of Two Karaite Commentaries on Daniel”; Wieder, “Dead Sea Scrolls Type of Biblical Exegesis among the Karaites.” [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Rosenthal, “Don Isaac Abravanel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Silver, *History of Messianic Speculation in Israel*, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. See Lawee**,** “On the Threshold of the Renaissance,” 310-11; Schorch, “Die Auslegung des Danielbuches in der Schrift ‘Die Quellen der Erlösung’ des Don Isaak Abravanel,” 183-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. See Stemberger, “Die jüdische Danielrezeption,” 150-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Cf. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition*, 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Cf. Silver, *History of Messianic Speculation in Israel.* [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. See Casey, “Porphyry and the Origin of the Book of Daniel,” 25, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. See Miegge**,** “‘Regnum quartum ferreum’ und ‘lapis de monte”; Pitkin, “Prophecy and History in Calvin’s Lectures on Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Parry, “Desolation of the Temple,” 526 [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Cf. Backus, “The Beast.” [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Cf. Pitkin, “Prophecy and History in Calvin’s Lectures on Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. See Lloyd Jones, *The* *Influence of Mediaeval Jewish Exegetes on Biblical Scholarship*. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 124 [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Bauckham, *Apocalypse*, 91–94 [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Müntzer, *Collected Works*, 230-52; cf. Rowland**,** “Daniel and the Radical Critique of Empire,” 448-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Cf. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 234–50; and see Röcke, “Die Danielprophetie als reflexionsmodus revoltionärer Phantasien im Spätmittelalter.” [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. See Luther, *Heerpredigt wider dem Türken*, 160-79; cf. Buchanan, “Luther and the Turks 1519–1529,” 157–59. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. See Wengert, “The Biblical Commentaries of Philip Melanchthon,” 57-59; cf. Scheible, “Melanchthons Verständnis des Danielsbuch.” [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. See Strohm, “Luthers Vorrede zum Propheten Daniel”; Vogel, “The Eschatological Theology of Martin Luther.” [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Cf. also his earlier treatment in “That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew,” 221-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. See e.g., Rashi in גדולות מקראות on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. See also Koch, “Daniel in der Ikonografie des Reformationszeitalters.” [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. See Bullinger, *Daniel sapientissimus Dei propheta*. On his writings on Daniel, see Goeing**,** *Storing, Archiving, Organizing*, 86; Krüger**,** “Heinrich Bullinger als Ausleger des ATs am Beispiel seiner Predigten Daniel 1 und 2”; Campi**,** “Über das Ende des Weltzeitalters.” [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Butterworth/Chester, *Joye*, 235–44. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Bauckham, *Apocalypse*, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. See Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland* 1:84-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. See Rosenthal, ‘Edward Lively,” *Studia Semitica* 1:152–54. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. On Brightman, see Gribben**,** *The Puritan Milllennium*. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Cf. Capp. “The Fifth Monarchists”; *The Fifth Monarchy Men*; Reventlow**,**”The Saints of the Most High und die Rätsel der Chronologie,” and on parallel developments in Germany and France, extending into the nineteenth century, Koch, “Europabewusstsein und Danielrezeption.” [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. B. S. Capp, “Extreme Millenarianism,” in Toon, *Puritans*, 68, 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Hill, *Antichrist*, 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Cf. Rowland**,** “Daniel and the Radical Critique of Empire,” 453-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. See his *The Whole Prophecie of Daniel Explained*. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, with the quotation from John Howe (1630-1705), 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. So Méchoulan, “Révélation, rationalité et prophétie”; cf. Spinoza, *Theological-Poltical Treatise*, chaps. 2 and 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. See Valdez**,** *Historical Interpretations of the Fifth Empire***; *———,*** “Rethinking the Fifth Empire”; and on Iberian interpretation of the four empires generally, Delgado, “Der Traum von der Universalmonarchie: Zur Danielrezeption in den iberischen Kulturen nach 1492.” [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. See Newton**,** *Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*; Mandelbrote**,** “Isaac Newton and the Exegesis of the Book of Daniel”; and for a more sympathetic account, Snobelen**,** “‘A Time and Times and the Dividing of Time’: Isaac Newton, the Apocalypse, and 2060 A.D.” [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. See Newport**,** “Charles Wesley’s Interpretation of Some Biblical Prophecies”; ***———,*** *Apocalypse and Millennium*, 119-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Newman, *Discussions and Arguments*, 46-108; cf. Miceli, *The Antichrist*, 102-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. See Carey, *Bullinger*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Seeley in *The Atlas of Prophecy* (1849). [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (1897). On Daniel and the French revolution, see further Koch, *Europa, Rom und der Kaiser*, 147-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel* (1885). [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Graves,*Daniel’s Great Period of “Two Thousand and Three Hundred Days*” (1854), [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Guinness, *The Approaching End of the Age* (cf. Walters**,** “The World Will End in 1919”); Horne, *Divine Clues to Sacred Prophecy*. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Miller**,** *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, about the Year 1843;* cf. Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium*, 150-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails*, 13–23; cf. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 4; Yarbro Collins, “The Book of Truth.” [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. See his *Daniel and the Revelation*; for a similar more recent exposition Gregor, “Daniel’s Message to a Modern Man.”. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. See e.g., Alomía**,** *Daniel* 2:366, 377; survey in Leatherman**,** “Adventist Interpretation of Daniel 10—12.” [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Baris, “The American Daniel,” 173–85. On Daniel in literature, see M. Brummitt in Smith-Christopheret al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” 124-28. On themes from Daniel in German literature and thought, see Würffel, “Reichs-Traum und Reichs-Trauma.” [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Liptzin, *Biblical Themes in World Literature*. On Daniel in music, see N. H. Petersen in Smith-Christopheret al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” 131-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. See Hall, *Post-exilic Theological Streams and the Book of Daniel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, was esp. significant in this connection. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Collins, “Currents Issues,” 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. See Mandelbrote**,** “Isaac Newton and the Exegesis of the Book of Daniel,” 353, referring to Whitla**,** *Sir Isaac Newton’s Daniel and the Apocalypse*. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Greidanus,*Preaching Christ from Daniel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. E.g., Tanner, “Is Daniel’s Seventy Weeks Prophecy Messianic?” [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. E.g., Filmer, *Daniel’s Predictions*. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. See e.g., Tanner**,** “Do We Owe an Apology to Russia?”; Knox,“The Watch Tower Society and the End of the Cold War.” The Russian Christian interpretation of Daniel was rather different: see Tamcke**,**“Die byzantinisch-russische Reichseschatologie.” And in the aftermath of the fall of the USSR, East German scholar Rainer Stahl (*Von Weltengagement zu Weltüberwindung*) relates Daniel to Russia in a quite different way. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. See e.g., Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*; Nel**,** “The Second Coming of Christ as the Golden Key to Unlock the Book of Daniel”; Lightner, *Last Days Handbook*, “revised and updated” in light of the turn of the millennium; Barker**,** “Premillennialism in the Book of Daniel”; Walvoord,"Prophecy of The Ten-Nation Confederacy”; ———. “Revival of Rome.” [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. See Camping, *1994?*; cf. Longman, *Daniel*, 211-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. See Vetne**,** “A Definition and Short History of Historicism as a Method for Interpreting Daniel and Revelation”; Paulien**,** “The End of Historicism?” [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Millar, “Hellenistic History in a Near Eastern Perspective: The Book of Daniel,” 94-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Cf. Collins, “The Book of Truth,” 397-400; Gosling**,** “Is It Wise to Believe Daniel?” Van Deventer**,**  “Did Someone Say ‘History’?” provides an interesting example from Africa. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Cf. J. Davis in Smith-Christopheret al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Cf. Collins, “The Book of Truth,” 400. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. The analysis here compares with Kirkpatrick’s distinction between oracular, historical, and literary approaches (*Competing for Honor*, 5-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. E.g., Koch, *Daniel 1—4,* Collins, *Daniel*, Redditt, *Daniel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Collins/Flint (eds.), *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (italics added in the main text above). [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Koch**,** *Europa, Rom und der Kaiser vor dem Hintergrund von zwei Jahrtausenden Rezeption des Buches Daniel***;** Delgado/Koch/Marsch (eds.), *Europa, Tausendjähriges Reich und Neue Welt*; Bracht/du Toit (eds.),*Die Geschichte der Daniel-Auslegung in Judentum, Christentum und Islam.* See also Smith-Christopher et al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” in the monumental *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. E.g., Smith-Christopher, “Daniel,” Newsom, *Daniel*, which includes the most substantial systematic treatment of Daniel’s reception history in English by B.W. Breed. Study of reception-history also provides a different way into the study of the development of the canon: see Koch, “Die jüdische und christliche Kanonisierung des Danielbuchs als Rezeption unter verändertem geschichtlichen Horizont.” [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. For the general context of this question, see Collins **(**ed**.),** *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. See further Goldingay**,** “Story, Vision, Interpretation.” [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. See Nel, “A Literary-Historical Analysis of Daniel 2.” [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*. In effect MerrillWillis, *Dissonance and the Drama of Divine Sovereignty*, is also a deconstructionist reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Valeta, “Court or Jester Tales?” **———,** *Lions and Ovens and Visions.* [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. E.g., Arnold**, “**The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible.” [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Van Deventer, “Literary Lions with Real Bite,” 844. See further Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*,441-543;Henze, “The Use of Scripture in the Book of Daniel”; Wesselius, “The Literary Nature of the Book of Daniel”; Scheetz, *The Concept of Canonical Intertextuality*; Shepherd, *Daniel in the Context of the Hebrew Bible*; Teeter**,** “Isaiah and the King of As/Syria in Daniel’s Final Vision”; Lester**,** *Daniel Evokes Isaiah*; Mason**,** “The Treatment of Earlier Biblical Themes in the Book of Daniel.”. In his commentary *Daniel*, Buchanan systematically lists the books “intertexts.” Kim’s dissertation on *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Daniel*, focuses on Gen 10—11 and Ezek 1—3. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. For a survey, see DiTommaso, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism in Antiquity,” 250-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Chia**,** “Occupy Central: Scribal Resistance In Daniel”; ***———,*** “On Naming the Subject”; Kirkpatrick, *Competing for Honor*; Valeta**,** “Polyglossia and Parody”; Sang Tin Uk**,** “Daniel: A Counter Paradigm to the Hellenistic Imperialism vis-à-vis Burmanization in Chin State”; Thomas**,** “The Book of Daniel: The Apocalypse with a Distinct Charter for Liberative Praxis and Theological Vision”; Smith**-**Christopher**,** “Gandhi on Daniel 6”; Smith**-**Christopheret al., “Daniel (Book and Person),” 92-94; Portier**-**Young**,** *Apocalypse against Empire*; Davies**,** “Reading Daniel Sociologically”; Frisch**,** *The**Danielic Discourse on Empire*;Jones**,** “Resisting the Power of Empire”; Appler**,** “Digging in the Claws”; Sweeney**,** “The End of Eschatology in Daniel?” [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Reid**,** “The Theology of the Book of Daniel and the Political Theory of W. E. B. DuBois,” 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Suh, *Korean Minjung in Christ*, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. See Lederach**,** *Daniel*, 23-27; Smith-Christopher, “Daniel”; Berrigan**,** *Daniel***.** [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Pyper, “Looking into the Lions’ Den,” 69. See also Padley**,** “‘Declare the Interpretation,’” for the interpretation of Daniel in earlier children’s Bibles; and Briggs**,** “Reading Daniel as Children’s Literature.” Nolan Fewell rather argues for “Resisting Daniel” (*The Children of Israel*, 117-30). [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Van Deventer**,**“Another Wise Queen (Mother)”;Newsom, “Daniel”; Brenner (ed.), *Feminist Companion to Prophets and Daniel*; Todd, “Negotiating Daniel’s Masculinity.” [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Leung Lai, “Aspirant Sage or Dysfunctional Seer?”; ***———***, “Word Becoming Flesh”; Sun, “Response [to Leung Lai]: Reflections on Self and Survival.” [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Strømmen**,** “The Book of Daniel: from Biblical Archive to Posthuman Prophecy.” [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Collins, “Currents Issues in the Study of Daniel,” 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Childs*, Introduction to the OT as Scripture*, 613 [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Cf. Goldingay, “Daniel in the Context of OT Theology.” [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Sumner, “Daniel,” 111. Hebbard, *Reading Daniel as a Text in Theological Hermeneutics*, is a more ingenious expression of such an approach. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. On its philosophy, see Hendel, *Steps to a New Edition of the Hebrew Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. On the issues raised here, see further Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint*; ***———*,***Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. See Towner, “Were the English Puritans ‘the Saints of the Most High’?” [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. So, e.g., Towner, *Daniel*, 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. *Daniel, the Prophet*, 1-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Metzger, “Literary Forgeries and Canonical Pseudepigrapha”; Collins, *Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 67–74; Meade, *Pseudonymity* *and Canon*; against Baldwin, “Is There Pseudonymity in the OT?” [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Cf. Niditch, “The Visionary,” 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Valeta, *Lions and Ovens and Visions*, 63-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. Valeta, *Lions and Ovens and Visions*, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Valeta, “Court or Jester Tales,” 309. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. See Woodard, “Literary Strategies and Authorship in the Book of Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. See e.g., Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 159-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. See Newsom, *Daniel*, 16-17; Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 291-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. See Good, “Apocalyptic as Comedy.” [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Cf. Mills, *Biblical Morality*, 194, 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Wills, *The Jewish Novel*, 1. Wills himself sees Daniel as a novel; cf. Talmon, “Daniel,” 535-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. See Wills**,** *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King*. The “wisdom court legend” is “a legend of a revered figure set in the royal court which has the wisdom of the protagonist as a principle motif” (37). [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. Humphreys, “A Life-style for Diaspora”; Davies, *Daniel*,51; Wahl**,** “Das Motiv des ‘Aufstiegs’ in der Hofgeschichte.” [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. On which see Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen im NT,” 1218–31. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Mitchell (“Shared Vocabulary in the Pentateuch and the Book of Daniel”) notes further links. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Heaton, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. See e.g., Wahl, “Noah, Daniel und Hiob”; though there the name is spelled דנאל K, דָּנִיאֵל Q (also the form here in a Cairo geniza ms) not דָנִיֵּאל as here. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. *ANET* 149–55; *DOTT* 124–28. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Young, *Daniel,* 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Cf. Newsom, *Daniel*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. So recently Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 16-18; contrast Van Deventer, “Testing-Testing.” [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. DeBruyn**, “**A Clash of Gods,” 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Cf. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 12. MT pointedly omits the term is v. 18; OG, Syr, and Vg provide it. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Cf. Arnold, “Word Play,” 236-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Cf. Nolan Fewell, *The Children of Israel*, 117-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Walters**,** “Daniel: Book for All Seasons,” 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Barr, “Daniel,” and Porteous, *Daniel*, on the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, 34-36; against Steck, “Weltgeschehen und Gottesvolk im Buche Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. Gowan, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Mills, “Household and Table,” 409. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Cf. Berquist**,** “Resistance and Accommodation in the Persian Empire.” [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Cf. Henze, “The Narrative Frame of Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. But see Patterson**, “**Holding onto Daniel’s Court Tales.” [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Wacholder, *Dawn of Qumran*, 212–15; Frye, *Heritage of Persia*, 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, 346-47, 460. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Hall, *Post-exilic Theological Streams and the Book of Daniel*, 159, 154-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Plöger, *Daniel*, and Hartman/Di Lella, *Daniel*,on the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. On the stories as a collection against the background of a “story-collection genre” in the medieval and ancitn world, see T. L. Holm**,** *Of Courtiers and Kings*; more briefly, **———,** “Daniel 1-6,” in Brant et. al, *Ancient Fiction*, 149-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. Cf. Yamakazi-Ransom’s study of “Gentile Rulers in the Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish Literature,” in *The Roman Empire in Luke’s Narrative*, 17-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Bruce (“Discourse Theme and the Narratives of Daniel”) sees God’s sovereignty as *the* theme of the book as a whole. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Collins, *Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. See further Haag, “Israels Exil im Lande Schinar.” [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. See Lacocque, *Daniel*, andPlöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. See Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. See, e.g., Hobbs, *2 Kings,* on 2 Kgs 24; Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East* 2:590-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. Cf. Bruce, “Chronology of Daniel 1:1”; Wiseman, *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, 16–18. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Plöger, *Daniel,* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. See Segal, “Numerals in the OT.” [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. But further on ways of making the chronology work, see Wilson**,** *Studies in the Book of Daniel;* Mercer**,** “Daniel 1:1”; Hill, “Daniel,” 45-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Cf. Bruce, “The Oldest Greek Version of Daniel,” 27–28. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Cf. Larssen, “When Did the Babylonian Captivity Begin?” [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. So Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Bergsma**,** “Cultic Kingdoms in Conflict,” 48; cf. Vogel, “Cultic Motifs and Themes in the Book of Daniel,” 27; **———,** *The Cultic Motif in the Book of Daniel*, e.g., 72-77; Bohnet**,** “Kultbezüge in Danielbuch.” [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Buchanan, *Daniel*, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. See Güterbock, “Sargon of Akkad,” 3; Zadok, “The Origin of the Name Shinar.” [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. S. M. Paul compares the process of induction portrayed in one of the Mari letters (“The Mesopotamian Background of Daniel 1—6,” in Collins/Flint (eds.), *The Book of Daniel* 1:55-68 [62-65]). [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Cf. Newsom, *Daniel*, and her references. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Towner, *Daniel*, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. See Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the OT*, 101–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. *ANET* 427–30; Hays, *Hidden Riches*, 97-112. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Collins notes that the use of “Chaldean” to refer to Aramaic was based on a misconception (*Daniel*, 138). [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Cf. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Against Rowley, “The Chaldaeans in the Book of Daniel,” 425–26 [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. On the scholars and their work, see, e.g., *La divination en Mésopotamie ancienne*; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia;* also “A Babylonian Diviner’s Manual”; Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*; Sachs, “Babylonian Horoscopes”; Lambert, “Dingir.š̀.dib.ba. Incantations”; Leichty, *The Omen Series* *Šumma Izbu*. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 105, 104, 101; Kuhrt provides a more recent general picture in *The Ancient Near East* 2:603-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. *ANET*, 308b; *DOTT*, 84–86. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Against Gammie, “Intention and Sources of Daniel i—vi,” 283; Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Cf. Eissfeldt, “Renaming in the OT.” [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. On this discussion, see Towner, “Daniel 1 in the Context of the Canon.” [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. Cf. Bentzen, *Daniel*, on the passage. On everyday food and on sacrifices in Babylonia, see Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*, 172–76, 351–54; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 42–45, 188–93. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Bevan, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Cf. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, 387 (ET 1:213); cf. Cranfield, *Romans*, 694. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. See J. Behm, *TWNT* 2:687–88 (ET 690). [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Cf. Russell, *Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, 169–73) [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. Baldwin, *Daniel*, on the passage; cf. Soesilo, “Why Did Daniel Reject the King’s Delicacies?” [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Smith-Christopher, “Daniel,” 40: see further 40-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. Cf. Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. See Venter**,** “A Study of Space in Daniel 1.” [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Cf. Wallis’s account of a slave’s failure to gain his liberty in Babylon, “Aus dem Leben jüdischen Sklaven in Babylon.” [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. Cf. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. See Newsom, *Daniel*, 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Against Bentzen, *Daniel*, on the passage; he refers to Rev 2:10, but it is surely dependent on Dan 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. See Brongers, “Die Zehnzahl in der Bibel und ihrer Umwelt”; P. Hauck, *TWNT* 2:35–36 (ET 36–37). [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. Hill, “Daniel,” 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Müller, “Magisch-mantische Weisheit und die Gestalt Daniels,” 86; see the comments on *Streams of Tradition behind Daniel* in the Conclusion to this commentary.

     . On dream interpretation, see further chapter 2 *Comment*. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Against Montgomery, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Young, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Cf. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Cf. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 78. See further Grabbe, “Daniel: Sage, Seer... and Prophet?” [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Hammer (*Daniel*, on the passage)suggests he was in retirement at 10:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. Poole, *Annotations*,on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. See Ackroyd, “The Temple Vessels.” [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. On Nebuchadnezzar, see e.g., Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. On the binary relationship of Judah-Babylon and Jerusalem-Shinar, see Nel**,** “Function of Space in Daniel 1”; and Mills’s comments on “border crossing” (“Household and Table,” 412). [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Longman, *Daniel*, 43; cf. Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Hebbard, *Reading Daniel*, 55, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel*, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. Sumner, “Daniel,” 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Theodoret, *Daniel*, 18-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. Miller, *Daniel*, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Alomía, *Daniel* 2:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel*, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Berrigan, *Daniel*, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. Koch, “Die Weltreiche im Danielbuche,” 830. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Cf. Newsom, *Daniel*, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. Cf. Hebbard, *Reading Daniel*, 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Chia, “On Naming the Subject,” 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Sang Tin Uk**,** “Daniel,” 37-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Seow, *Daniel*, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. Kirkpatrick, *Competing for Honor*, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Alomía, *Daniel* 2:21: nicely though misleadingly, the Spanish is bagaje cultural. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. Cf. Hippolytus, *Daniel* 1.9 [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. See his *Christ and Culture*. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. Cf. Pace, *Daniel*, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Pace, *Daniel*, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Cf. Berrigan, *Daniel*, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. Towner, *Daniel*, 23, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Cf. Lucas, *Daniel*, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. Sumner, “Daniel,” 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Collins (*Daniel*, 146) thus refers to Douglas, *Purity and Danger*. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. Cf. Meadowcroft, “‘Belteshazzar, Chief of the Magicians.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Cf. Michael**, “**Daniel at the Beauty Pageant and Esther in the Lion’s Den.” [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. Porteous, *Daniel*,on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. See Novak, “Abandoned in a Toxic Culture”; cf. Longman, *Daniel*, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. Horsley**,** *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea*, 173 (though “all about” is an exaggeration). [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. Smith-Christopher, “Daniel*,” 45.* [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. Valeta, “Polyglossia and Parody,” 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. Calvin, *Danie 1—*6, 34-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. Chia, On Naming the Subject,” 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. Cf. Jerome, *Daniel,* 22; contrast Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. Cf. Hippolytus, *Daniel* 1.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. Against Lebram, “Nachbiblische Weisheitstraditionen,” 234–37 [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. Cf. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, on the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. Lüthi, *The Church to Come*,24. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. Seow, “The Rule of God in the Book of Daniel,” 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. Cf. Boehmer, *Reich Gottes und Menschensohn im Buch Daniel,* 62–63. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. Reid(“The Theology of the Book of Daniel and the Political Theory of W. E. B. DuBois”) compares DuBois’s stress on the leadership role of “the ‘talented tenth’ of the Negro race. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. Smith-Christopher, “Daniel,” 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. Cf. Theodoret, *Daniel*, 32-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. Gnuse (““From Prison to Prestige”). adds Herodotus. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. Cf. Redford, *Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph*, 94–97; Humphreys, “Life-style for Diaspora”; Niditch/Doran, “The Success Story of the Wise Courtier.” [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. Cf Nel, “Daniël 2 as Satire.” [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. Humphreys, “Life-style for Diaspora,” 221. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im AT*, 112 [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, 205–6 [ET 1:111–12]; cf. Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen im NT,” 1210–31 and references. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. Davies, *Daniel*,52. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. So Farrar, *Daniel,* and Lacocque, *Daniel* on the chapter. Wesselius sees a broader influence of the Joseph story on the book of Daniel (“Discontinuity, Congruance and the Making of the Hebrew Bible,” 67). But Labonté (“Genèse 41 et Daniel 2”) argues that they come from the same period, and Koch (*Daniel 1—4*, 123) sees the designation “midrash” as involving an “inflationary” use of that idea. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. On the parallels and contrasts with the Joseph story, see further on *Structure* below. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. Barr, “Daniel,” on the passage; and Kim, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Daniel*, 77-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. Cf. Fröhlich**,** “Daniel 2 and Deutero-Isaiah.” [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. Fröhlich**,** *“Time and Times and Half a Time,”* 47 (Fröhlich dates an earlier form of Dan 2 in the time of Isa 40—55). [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. Towner, “The Poetic Passages in Daniel 1–6,” 318–24; cf. Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship* 2:104–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. Venter (“The Function of Poetic Speech in the narrative in Daniel 2,” 1011) analyses the lines slightly differently, dividing the 4-stress cola; Lee (*Aramaic Poetry in Qumran*, 70-84) takes three of the six lines as tricola. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. Cf. Calvin’s comment (*Daniel 1—6*, 67-68) that the thanksgiving does not really fit the occasion, and Haag’s conclusion (“Weisheit und Heilsgeschichte”) that it was composed later than its context. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. See further Towner, “Blessed be YHWH and Blessed art thou, YHWH”; Westermann, *Lob und Klage in den Psalmen*, 61–102 (ET 81–135). [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. See Oppenheim, ““Interpretation of Dreams”; J. S. Hanson, “Dreams and Visions.” [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. Brooke, “Qumran Pesher”; Finkel, “The Pesher of Dreams and Scriptures”; Silberman, “Unriddling the Riddle.” [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
404. Mertens, *Das Buch Daniel*,117; cf. n. 34.b. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
405. See *ANET* 449–51 (cf. 605–6), 623–26. [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
406. See *NERT* 118–22; Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*; Grayson and Lambert, “Akkadian Prophecies”; Biggs, “More Babylonian Prophecies”; Borger, “Gott Marduk und Gott-König Šulgi als Propheten”; Ringgren, “Akkadian Apocalypses”; Baldwin, “Some Literary Affinities of the Book of Daniel”; Hunger and Kaufman, “A New Akkadian Prophecy Text”; Lambert, *Background* *of Jewish Apocalyptic*; Ellis**,** “Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts”; Lucas, *Akkadian Prophecies, Omens and Myths*;Nissinen comments in a paper of this title that they are “Neither Prophecies Nor Apocalypses.” [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
407. See Hengel, *Judentum* *und Hellenismus*, 386–89 (ET 1:184–86); McCown, “Hebrew and Egyptian Apocalyptic Literature”; Osswald, “Zum Problem der *vaticinia ex eventu.*” See further chaps. 10–12 *Form*. [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
408. So Collins, *Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 36–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
409. So Davies, “Daniel Chapter Two,” 399-400. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
410. See *ANET* 309–11, 606; Oppenheim, “Interpretation of Dreams”; Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams*. [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
411. E.g., von Soden, “Eine babylonische Volksüberlieferung von Nabonid,” 84–85; McNamara,”Nabonidus and the Book of Daniel,” 145–148. [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
412. References in Kuhl, *Drei Männer im Feuer*, 6–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
413. Pope and Tigay, “A Description of Baal,” 127; *ANEP* 481–84. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
414. Cf. Flusser, “Four Empires,” 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
415. See Bentzen, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
416. See Fritz**,** “Weltalter und Lebenszeit”; and on the broader background, Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
417. See the discussion in Hellholm (ed.), *Apocalypticism*. [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
418. See Niskanen, *The Human and the Divine in History*, 27-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
419. See Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 6–37. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
420. Cf. J. J. Collins in *OTP* 1:381–89. Collins elsewhere (*Daniel* 166-70) *.*has a substantial excursus on the background of the four-empire scheme; cf. also Lucas**,** “The Origin of Daniel's Four Empires Scheme.” [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
421. But see Hallo, “Akkadian Apocalypses,” for an eschatological reading of Akkadian prophecies; also Höffken, “Heilszeitherrschererwartung im babylonischen Raum.” [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
422. Hengel, *Judentum* *und Hellenismus*, 331 (ET 1:181). [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
423. Hasel, “The Four World Empires of Daniel 2,” 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
424. Baldwin, “Some Literary Affinities of the Book of Daniel,” 92–99. [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
425. Gianto, “Notes from a Reading of Daniel 2,” 59, 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
426. Cf. Jerome, *Daniel*, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
427. And cf. Koch’s analysis, *Daniel 1—4*, 106-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
428. Cf. Rindge**,** “Jewish Identity under Foreign Rule.” [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
429. Cf. Newsom, *Daniel*, 65; Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 118-22; ***———.*** *Le songe et la parole*, 248-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. Jones, *Ideas of History in the Book of Daniel*, 86–88, commenting on von Rad. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
431. Against Niditch and Doran, “The Success Story of the Wise Courtier.” On the comparisons and contrasts, see e.g., Widder**, “**The Court Stories of Joseph (Gen 41) and Daniel (Dan 2) in Canonical Context.” [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. See further Olojede**,** “Sapiential Elements in the Joseph and Daniel Narratives.” [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. Wildavsky, *Assimilation versus Separation*, 119, 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im AT*, 103). [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
435. See e.g., van der Woude**,** “Die Doppelsprachigkeit des Buches Daniel,” and his references. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
436. Cf.Snell**,** “Why Is There Aramaic in the Bible?” [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
437. See Arnold**, “**The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible.” [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
438. Hebbard, *Reading Daniel*, 54. For the broader context, see Gzella, *A Cultural History of Aramaic*, esp. 205-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
439. Cf. the analogous questions raised by the use of Hebrew at Qumran (e.g., Bernstein/Koller**,** “The Aramaic Texts and the Hebrew and Aramaic Languages at Qumran,” 189-91). [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
440. Valeta, *Lions and Ovens and Visions*, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
441. Portier-Young,“Languages of Identity and Obligation,” 104, 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. Sérandour**, “**Hébreu et Araméen dans la Bible*,”* 345. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
443. Lederach, *Daniel*, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
444. Gowan, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
445. Cf. Smith-Christopher, “Prayers and Dreams.” [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
446. Cf. Niditch and Doran, “The Success Story of the Wise Courtier,” 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
447. So Hartman/Di Lella, *Daniel*, on the chapter; Davies, “Daniel Chapter Two”; Steck, “Weltgeschehen und Gottesvolk im Buche Daniel,” 53–62; Schreiner, “‘…wird der Gott des Himmels ein Reich errichten,’” 133–37”; Segal**,**”From Joseph to Daniel”; Milán**,** “El concepto de revelación en el libro de Daniel”; Segal, *Dreams, Riddles, and Visions*, chap. 2; Husser**,**“La fin et l’origine”; Kratz, *Translatio Imperii*.Koch (*Daniel 1—4*, 110-15) links at least part of the redaction to the translation of vv. 1-4a from their original Hebrew. [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
448. Ginsberg (*Studies in Daniel,* 7–9) seeks to specify the date more precisely. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
449. Cf. Eissfeldt, “Daniels und seiner drei Gefärten Laufbahn.” [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
450. Cf. Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
451. Cf. von der Osten-Sacken, *Apokalyptik in ihrem Verhältnis zu Prophetie und Weisheit*, 23–25; Gammie, “The Intention and Sources of Daniel i-vi,” 287–91; Collins, *Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 44–45. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
452. Hammer, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
453. Nel, “A Literary-Historical Analysis of Daniel 2,” 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
454. Cf. Driver, *Daniel*, on the passage; and the *Comment* on 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
455. Cf. Hebbard, *Reading Daniel*, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
456. So e.g., Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
457. See further Oppenheim, “Interpretation of Dreams”; Gnuse, “Dreams and Their Theological Significance in the Biblical Tradition”; Resch, *Der Traum im Heilsplan Gottes*; Ehrlich, *Der Traum im AT*; Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams*. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
458. See e.g., J. Sweek, “Inquiring for the State in the Ancient Near East,” in Ciraolo/Lee, J. (eds.),*Magic and Divination in the Ancient World,* 41-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
459. But Cryer**,** *Divination in Ancient Israel and Its Near Eastern Environment*, notes the importance of divination in Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
460. See Oppenheim, “Interpretation of Dreams,” 238; Müller, “Der Begriff 'Rätsel' im AT,” 473. [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
461. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 289–305; Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*, 303–28. [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
462. See MacLaurin, “Joseph and Asaph.” [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
463. Cf. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, 28-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
464. See Müller, “Magisch-mantische Weisheit und die Gestalt Daniels,” 79–85. [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
465. Cf. *HALOT*. [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
466. Dupont-Sommer, “Exorcismes et guérisons dans les écrits de Qoumrân,” 256–58. [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
467. Carmignac, “Un équivalent français de l’araméen ‘gazir.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
468. On which see Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 81–82; Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*, 346–48; Driver, *Daniel*,12–16. [↑](#footnote-ref-468)
469. On the motif of the forgotten dream, see Heller, “Das Traumerraten im Buche Daniel”; Ehrlich, *Der Traum im AT,* 93–100; *b. Berakot* 55b. [↑](#footnote-ref-469)
470. Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams*, 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-470)
471. *ANET*, 312–15. [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
472. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
473. See Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
474. Against Delcor, É*tudes bibliques et orientales*, 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
475. See Andrews, “Yahweh the God of the Heavens”; Eissfeldt, “Ba‘alšamēm und Jahwe.” [↑](#footnote-ref-475)
476. So Nel, “Pentateugtradisies en -temas in Daniël.” [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
477. So Oden, “Ba‘al šāmēm and ’El.” [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
478. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 94. But OG then apparently thinks it okay when addressing the Gentile king (see vv. 28, 37, 44). [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
479. See further Beyerle, “The God of Heaven.” [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
480. E. Vogt, “‘Mysteria’”; Brown, “The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of ‘Mystery’”; Willi-Plein, “Das Geheimnis der Apokalyptik”; Gladd**,** *Revealing the* Mysterion, 17-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
481. Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 159, who notes that Th renders the verb ἀπεκαλύφθη [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
482. See J. Gamberoni in *TWAT* on ברך). [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
483. Gladd**,** *Revealing the* Mysterion, 32, 33-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
484. Cf. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-484)
485. Cf. Licht, “...ם י ת ע ה תורה.” [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
486. *CAD* A, 1:194. [↑](#footnote-ref-486)
487. On “the end of the days,” see H. Seebass in *TWAT* on אחרית ; Willis, “The Expression be’acharith hayyamim in the OT”; Staerk, “Der Gebrauch der Wendung הימים באחרית im at. Kanon”; Buchanan, “Eschatology and the ‘End of Days’”; Carmignac, “La notion d’eschatologie dans la Bible et à Qumrân”; Kosmala, “At the End of the Days”; van der Ploeg, “Eschatology in the OT”; Rinaldi, “Nota”; Jones, *Ideas of History in the Book of Daniel*, 220–39; Hoffmann, “’הואה םויב’ו ‘הימים אחרית.‘“ [↑](#footnote-ref-487)
488. See Singer, *Die Metalle Gold, Silber, Bronze, Kupfer und Eisen im AT*. [↑](#footnote-ref-488)
489. Against Collins, *Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-489)
490. Koch (*Daniel 1—4*, 198) traces this “minority view” back to Hermann von der Hardt, *De Quatuor Monarchiis Babyloniae* (Helmstadt: Hommius, 1708). [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
491. Oppenheim, *Ancient* *Mesopotamia*, 46–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
492. Müller, “Magisch-mantische Weisheit und die Gestalt Daniels,” 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-492)
493. See e.g., Torrey, “Notes on the Aramaic Part of Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
494. See J. Wiesehöfer, “Vom ‘oberen Asien’ zur ‘gesamten bewohnten Welt,’” in Delgado/Koch/Marsch (eds.), *Europa, Tausendjähriges Reich und Neue Welt*, 66-84; Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 116-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
495. See e.g., Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East* 2:597-603. [↑](#footnote-ref-495)
496. See Eerdmans, “Origin and Meaning of the Aramaic Part of Daniel,” 198–202; Beek, *Danielbuch*, 38–54; Davies, “Daniel Chapter Two.” [↑](#footnote-ref-496)
497. So Löwinger, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream.” [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
498. So Schedl, *Geschichte des ATs* 5:79–80. [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
499. So Gammie, “Classification, Stages of Growth, and Changing Intentions in the Book of Daniel,” 197–202. [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
500. Cf. Stevenson, “The Identification of the Four Kingdoms”; Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible*. 61–63 [↑](#footnote-ref-500)
501. Cf. Jepsen, “Bemerkungen zum Danielbuch,” 388; Schreiner, “…wird der Gott des Himmels ein Reich errichten,” 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-501)
502. Cf. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East* 2:603. [↑](#footnote-ref-502)
503. Van Hoonacker, “The Four Empires of the Book of Daniel,” 422–23. [↑](#footnote-ref-503)
504. Davies, “Daniel Chapter Two,” 401. On interpretations of the rock, see Pfandl***.*** “Interpretations of the Kingdom of God in Dan 2:44.” [↑](#footnote-ref-504)
505. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-505)
506. Against Ginsburg, Studies in Daniel, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
507. See Millard, “Incense,” 120-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
508. Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage; Cf. Olmstead, *History* *of the Persian Empire*, 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-508)
509. Mastin, “Daniel 2:46 and the Hellenistic World.” [↑](#footnote-ref-509)
510. Cf. Jerome, *Daniel*, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-510)
511. Cf. Baldwin, *Daniel*, on the passage; and Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-511)
512. Smith-Christopher, “Daniel,” 49, quoting from Lacocque, *Daniel*, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-512)
513. Resch, *Der Traum* *im Heilsplan Gottes*, 129–37; Gnuse, “Dreams and Their Theological Significance in the Biblical Tradition.” [↑](#footnote-ref-513)
514. Berrigan, *Daniel*, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-514)
515. Ehrlich, *Der Traum in AT*, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-515)
516. Cf. Theodoret, *Daniel*, 38-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-516)
517. Kirkpatrick, *Competing for Honor*, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-517)
518. Cf. Hebbard, *Reading Daniel*, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-518)
519. Towner, *Daniel*, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-519)
520. Cf. Müller, “Märchen, Legende und Enderwartung,” 340–41. [↑](#footnote-ref-520)
521. Smith-Christopher, “Daniel,” 51; Koch (*Daniel 1—4*, 156-57) compares with the speech of prophets, such as Amos 1—2. [↑](#footnote-ref-521)
522. Cf. Di Lella, *Daniel*, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-522)
523. The Latin tag is “quod libet, licet” (Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 54). [↑](#footnote-ref-523)
524. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-524)
525. Cf. Kirkpatrick, *Competing for Honor*, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-525)
526. Cf. Lawson**,** “‘The God Who Reveals Secrets.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-526)
527. Against von der Osten-Sacken, *Die Apokalyptik in ihrem Verhältnis zu Prophetie und Weisheit.*, 18–34. [↑](#footnote-ref-527)
528. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-528)
529. Kirkpatrick, *Competing for Honor*, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-529)
530. Cf. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-530)
531. Hippolytus, *Daniel* 2.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-531)
532. Berrigan, *Daniel*, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-532)
533. Pinker, “A Dream of a Dream,” 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-533)
534. Lederach, *Daniel*, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-534)
535. See Downing, *Has Christianity a Revelation?* [↑](#footnote-ref-535)
536. See Lenzi**,** “Secrecy, Textual Legitimation, and Intercultural Polemics in the Book of Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
537. Kirkpatrick, *Competing for Honor*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-537)
538. Cf. Noegel**,** “Dreams and Dream Interpreters in Mesopotamia and in the Hebrew Bible.” [↑](#footnote-ref-538)
539. See Jerome, *Daniel*, 30; Steck, “Weltgeschehen und Gottesvolk im Buche Daniel,” 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-539)
540. Cf. Anderson, *Signs and Wonders*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
541. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*,67. [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
542. Cf. Venter, “The Function of Poetic Speech in the Narrative in Daniel 2”; Watts**,** “Daniel’s Praise”; Prinsloo, “Two Poems,” 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
543. Grelot, “Histoire et eschatologie dans le livre de Daniel,” 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
544. Towner, *Daniel*, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-544)
545. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-545)
546. Lucas, *Daniel*, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-546)
547. Grelot, “Histoire et eschatologie dans le livre de Daniel,” 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-547)
548. Müller, “Märchen, Legende und Enderwartung,” 338, 350; Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-548)
549. Cf Hebbard, *Reading Daniel*, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-549)
550. Cf. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 177-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-550)
551. Di Lella, *Daniel*, 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-551)
552. Against Montgomery, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-552)
553. Newsom, *Daniel*, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-553)
554. Cf. Anderson, *Signs and Wonders,* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-554)
555. Koch, “Spätisraelitische Geschichtsdenken am Beispiel des Buches Daniel,” 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-555)
556. Against Noth, “Das geschichtsverständnis der alttestamentlichen Apokalyptik,” 262 (ET 206). [↑](#footnote-ref-556)
557. Jones, *Ideas of History in the Book of Daniel*, 250–52; Murdock, “History and Revelation in Jewish Apocalypticism,” 170–71. [↑](#footnote-ref-557)
558. Hall**,** *Revealed Histories,* 82-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-558)
559. Koch, “Spätisraelitische Geschichtsdenken am Beispiel des Buches Daniel,” 25–32. [↑](#footnote-ref-559)
560. Cf. Seow, **“**From Mountain to Mountain,” 366; *Daniel*, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-560)
561. Berrigan, *Daniel*, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-561)
562. Cf. Olojede**,**  “Daniel ‘more than a prophet’?” [↑](#footnote-ref-562)
563. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-563)
564. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 190, 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-564)
565. *The Church to Come*, 34; cf. Sumner, “Daniel,” 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-565)
566. Steck, “Weltgeschehen und Gottesvolk im Buche Daniel.” 57–58. [↑](#footnote-ref-566)
567. Atzerodt, “Weltgeschichte und Reich Gottes im Buch Daniel,” 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-567)
568. So Flusser, “The Four Empires,” 166–68. [↑](#footnote-ref-568)
569. Merrill Willis *Dissonance and the Drama of Divine Sovereignty*, 59 (she make an comparision with Sirach which is illuminating even if one does not accept her views on redaction and dating). [↑](#footnote-ref-569)
570. Noth, “Das geschichtsverständnis der alttestamentlichen Apokalyptik,” 263–65, 272–73 (ET 207–8, 214). [↑](#footnote-ref-570)
571. Atzerodt, “Weltgeschichte und Reich Gottes im Buch Daniel,” 248, 249. [↑](#footnote-ref-571)
572. *Theologie* *der Hoffnung*, 120 (ET 133–34). [↑](#footnote-ref-572)
573. “Der Anfang der Geschichtsschreibung im alten Israel,” 148–54 (ET 166–71); cf. Jones, *Ideas of History in the Book of Daniel*, 91–92. [↑](#footnote-ref-573)
574. Kvanvig, “The Relevance of the Biblical Visions of the End Time,” 47; cf. Kruschwitz/ Redditt,“Nebuchadnezzar as the Head of Gold,” 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-574)
575. So Pannenberg, “Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte,” *KD* 5 [1959] 220 = *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie*, 25 (ET 18). [↑](#footnote-ref-575)
576. So Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-576)
577. Jones, *Ideas of History in the Book of Daniel*, 102, 113–18. [↑](#footnote-ref-577)
578. Barth, *Diesseits und Jenseits im Glauben des späten Israel*, 93–100; Jones, *Ideas of History in the Book of Daniel*, 253–56. [↑](#footnote-ref-578)
579. Merrill Willis, *Dissonance and the Drama of Divine Sovereignty in the Bookof Daniel*, 36 (she specifies a redaction and a reading in the early Seleucid period, but the point is not dependent on this this assumption). [↑](#footnote-ref-579)
580. Cf. Sappington, “The Factor of Function in Defining Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” 97-98. [↑](#footnote-ref-580)
581. Barth, *Diesseits* *und Jenseits im Glauben des späten Israel*, 97, 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-581)
582. See e.g., Siegman, “The Stone Hewn from the Mountain,” 375–79; Schreiner, “Peter, the Rock.” [↑](#footnote-ref-582)
583. Collins, “Nebuchadnezzar and the Kingdom of God,” 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-583)
584. So Chrysostom, *Daniel*,on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-584)
585. See Dietrich, “Gott als König.” [↑](#footnote-ref-585)
586. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*,101-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-586)
587. Cf. Coppens, *Messianisme* *royal*, 27–28. [↑](#footnote-ref-587)
588. Jerome, *Daniel*, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-588)
589. Hippolytus, *Daniel* 2.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-589)
590. Towner, *Daniel*, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-590)
591. Cf. Lucas, *Daniel*, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-591)
592. Lebram, “Nachbiblische Weisheitstraditionen,” 234–37. [↑](#footnote-ref-592)
593. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im AT*, 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-593)
594. Müller, “Mantische Weisheit und Apokalyptik,” 275–77. [↑](#footnote-ref-594)
595. Newsom, *Daniel*, 17. Newsom’s pluperfect verb presupposes the traditional understanding of the regimes as empires and the view that the dream in its present form is a later addition to the story, but her point also holds on the interpretation adopted in the present commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-595)
596. Schreiner, “…wird der Gott des Himmels ein Reich errichten,” 141–49. [↑](#footnote-ref-596)
597. Grelot, “Histoire et eschatologie dans le livre de Daniel,” 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-597)
598. Seow, **“**From Mountain to Mountain,” 356. [↑](#footnote-ref-598)
599. Cf. Gunn/Nolan Fewell, “Nebuchadnezzar and Three Jews,” 185-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-599)
600. Cf. Newsom, *Daniel*, 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-600)
601. Lucas, *Daniel*, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-601)
602. See Kuhl, *Die drei Männer im Feuer*. [↑](#footnote-ref-602)
603. So Peters, “The Three Children in the Fiery Furnace.” [↑](#footnote-ref-603)
604. Kuhl, *Die drei Männer im Feuer*, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-604)
605. See Coxon, “The ‘List’ Genre and Narrative Style in the Court Tales of Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-605)
606. See Avalos**,** “The Comedic Function of the Enumerations of the Officials and Instruments in Daniel 3.” [↑](#footnote-ref-606)
607. Gunn/Nolan Fewell, “Nebuchadnezzar and Three Jews,” 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-607)
608. Haag (“Die drei Männer im Feuer”) sees Isa 43 as suggesting key aspects to the original form of the story, which was then reworked in the Antiochene period and in other contexts. [↑](#footnote-ref-608)
609. See Heaton, *Daniel*, on the passage; Gammie, “On the Intention and Sources of Daniel i-vi,” 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-609)
610. Cf. Ron, “Rescue from Fiery Death.” [↑](#footnote-ref-610)
611. Kuhl speaks of its “naive storytelling” technique (*Die drei Männer im Feuer*, 18). [↑](#footnote-ref-611)
612. Adapted from Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-612)
613. Cf. Dulaey**,** “Les trois Hébreuxdans la fournaise,” 36-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-613)
614. Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel*, 128-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-614)
615. See Auscher, “Les relations entre la Grèce et la Palestine avant la conquête d’Alexandre”; Coxon, “Greek Loan-words and Alleged Greek Loan Translations in the Book of Daniel”; and the works of Yamauchi (see *Pericope Bibliography*). [↑](#footnote-ref-615)
616. So Shea, “Daniel 3.” [↑](#footnote-ref-616)
617. So von Soden, “Eine babylonische Volksüberlieferung von Nabonid in den Danielerzählungen,” 85–86. [↑](#footnote-ref-617)
618. Against e.g., Wallace, *Daniel*. [↑](#footnote-ref-618)
619. So Hippolytus, *Daniel* 2.15. [↑](#footnote-ref-619)
620. Cf. Meadowcroft**,** “Metaphor, Narrative, Interpretation and Reader in Daniel 2—5,” 265-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-620)
621. Cf. Montgomery, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-621)
622. Young, *Daniel*, on the passage; cf. *ANET*, 313. [↑](#footnote-ref-622)
623. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*, plate 21b. [↑](#footnote-ref-623)
624. Cf. Keil, *Biblischer Kommentar*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-624)
625. Cf. Pace, *Daniel*, 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-625)
626. So Di Lella, *Daniel*, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-626)
627. Cf. Rashi in גדולות מקראות on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-627)
628. On such divine images, see Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 183–89. [↑](#footnote-ref-628)
629. Cf. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East* 2:619-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-629)
630. Sumner, “Daniel,” 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-630)
631. See Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 172-83. [↑](#footnote-ref-631)
632. See the discussion in Mitchell/Joyce, “The Musical Instruments in Nebuchadrezzar’s Orchestra”; Mitchell, “The Music of the OT”; **———** “And the Band Played On”; Dyer**,** "The Musical Instruments in Daniel 3”; and the series of illustrations in Alomía**,** *Daniel* 2:87-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-632)
633. Cf. VanDeventer**,** “‘We Did Not Hear the Bagpipe.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-633)
634. See e.g., Baldwin, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-634)
635. See Beaulieu, “The Babylonian Background of the Motif of the Fiery Furnace”; earlier, Alexander, “New Light on the Fiery Furnace.” But Holm (“The Fiery Furnace in the Book of Daniel”) argues that it has a more substantial Egyptian background. [↑](#footnote-ref-635)
636. Cf. Bickerman (*Four Strange Books of the Bible*,89); Sanders, “The Burning Fiery Furnace.” [↑](#footnote-ref-636)
637. Hill, “Daniel,” 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-637)
638. See Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 284-95. Pace (*Daniel*, on the chapter) emphasizes parallels between this story and Esther. [↑](#footnote-ref-638)
639. Cf. Newsom, *Daniel*, 108-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-639)
640. Cf. Kirkpatrick, *Competing for Honor*, chap. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-640)
641. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-641)
642. Cf. Newsom, *Daniel*, 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-642)
643. Jerome, *Daniel*, 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-643)
644. See the positive reading of Nebuchadnezzar in Coxon, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Hermeneutical Dilemma.” [↑](#footnote-ref-644)
645. Cf. Byington, “Hebrew Marginalia iii,” 353. [↑](#footnote-ref-645)
646. *Daniel*, 465-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-646)
647. Also *The Book of Biblical Antiquities* (Pseudo-Philo) 6:15-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-647)
648. Cf. Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel*, 131-32; Newsom, *Daniel*, 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-648)
649. See Eichrodt, *Theologie* *des AT* 1:88 (ET 181–82). [↑](#footnote-ref-649)
650. Mayer, *Commentary upon All the Prophets*, 526 (cf. Beckwith, *Ezekiel, Daniel*, 267). [↑](#footnote-ref-650)
651. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-651)
652. Theodoret, *Daniel*, 68-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-652)
653. Hebbard, *Reading Daniel*, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-653)
654. Cf. Ps-Saadia’s comments in גדולות מקראות on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-654)
655. Coxon, “The Great Tree of Daniel 4,” 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-655)
656. Lüthi, *The Church to Come*, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-656)
657. Longman, *Daniel*, 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-657)
658. On these expressions, see Gowan, *Daniel,* in his “Theological and Ethical Analysis” of the chapter, though I have reworked his use of the phrases. [↑](#footnote-ref-658)
659. Seow, *Daniel*, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-659)
660. Porteous, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-660)
661. Cf *Leviticus Rabbah* 33:6; and Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible*,87–88. [↑](#footnote-ref-661)
662. Cf. Alomía**,**, *Daniel* 2:90. [↑](#footnote-ref-662)
663. Cf. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel*, 66; and 2:46-49 *Explanation*, above. [↑](#footnote-ref-663)
664. Kirkpatrick, *Competing for Honor*, 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-664)
665. Smith-Christopher, “Daniel,” 66, 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-665)
666. See Wallace, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-666)
667. *The Times* (London), 29 July 1936; cf. Lang, *Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, 42–43. [↑](#footnote-ref-667)
668. *Israel and the World*, 200; quoted by Wink, *Unmasking*, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-668)
669. Towner, *Daniel*, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-669)
670. Cf. Baldwin, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-670)
671. Cf. Theodoret, *Daniel*, 72-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-671)
672. Avalos**,** “The Comedic Function of the Enumerations of the Officials and Instruments in Daniel 3,” 586. [↑](#footnote-ref-672)
673. Cf. Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 48-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-673)
674. Lüthi, *The Church to Come*, 48; cf. Towner, *Daniel*, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-674)
675. Frost, *OT Apocalyptic*, 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-675)
676. Cf. Seow, *Daniel*, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-676)
677. Cf. Kennedy, “Daniel,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-677)
678. Cf. Hippolytus, *Daniel* 2.36. [↑](#footnote-ref-678)
679. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-679)
680. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-680)
681. Philip, *By the Rivers of Babylon*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-681)
682. Yephet, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-682)
683. Kennedy, “Daniel,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-683)
684. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-684)
685. Lang, *Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-685)
686. Prinsloo, “Daniel 3,” 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-686)
687. Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-687)
688. Augustine, Letter 93, to Vincent (*Letters* 2:56-106 [65]). [↑](#footnote-ref-688)
689. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-689)
690. Philip, *By the Rivers of Babylon*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-690)
691. Di Lella, *Daniel*, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-691)
692. Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 194; Lucas, *Daniel*, 96. On the substantial afterlife of the story in Jewish and Christian contexts, see Breed, “History of Reception,” 113-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-692)
693. Cf. Pace, “Diaspora Dangers, Diaspora Dreams.” [↑](#footnote-ref-693)
694. See Fitzmyer, “Aramaic Epistolography”; also Doty, “The Classification of Epistolory Literature”; Alexander, “Remarks on Aramaic Epistolography in the Persian Period.” [↑](#footnote-ref-694)
695. Barr, “Daniel,” on the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-695)
696. Cf. Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 401. [↑](#footnote-ref-696)
697. Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible*, 98–99; see further Gurney, “The Cuthaean Legend of Naram-Sin.” [↑](#footnote-ref-697)
698. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 7; see Longman, *Fictional**Akkadian Autobiography*. [↑](#footnote-ref-698)
699. See further chap. 2 *Form* on 2:20–23. [↑](#footnote-ref-699)
700. Towner, “The Poetic Passages in Daniel 1–6,” 317. [↑](#footnote-ref-700)
701. Oppenheim, “Interpretation of Dreams,” 187. [↑](#footnote-ref-701)
702. Examples in Oppenheim, “Interpretation of Dreams.” [↑](#footnote-ref-702)
703. See Coxon, “The Great Tree of Daniel 4.” [↑](#footnote-ref-703)
704. Wilkie (““Nabonidus and the Later Jewish Exiles”) sees Nabonidus behind both Isa 14 and Dan 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-704)
705. See also the Aramaic apocalypse 4QFour Kingdoms (4Q552-553) (Reynolds,“Symbolic and Non-Symbolic Visions of the Book of Daniel,” 223-25). [↑](#footnote-ref-705)
706. Gammie, “On the Intention and Sources of Daniel i-vi,” 284 [↑](#footnote-ref-706)
707. See Di Lella, “Daniel 4:7–14”; Kim, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Daniel*, 125-66; Doukhan**,**“Allusions à la création dans le livre de Daniel.” But Metzger **(**“Der Weltenbaum in vorderorientalischer Bildtradition) sees the OT references as independently taking up the image from its ancient Near Eastern context. [↑](#footnote-ref-707)
708. See Schrader**,** *“*Die Sage vom Wahnsinn Nebukadnezar's.” [↑](#footnote-ref-708)
709. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 87–92; cf. Hasel, “The Book of Daniel,” 41–42. [↑](#footnote-ref-709)
710. Ball, “Daniel and Babylon; Ferguson, **“**Nebuchadnezzar, Gilgamesh, **a**nd the ‘Babylonian Job.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-710)
711. Gadd, “The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus”; Röllig, “Erwägungen zu neuen Stelen König Nabonids.” [↑](#footnote-ref-711)
712. Oppenheim, “Interpretation of Dreams,” 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-712)
713. See *Pericope Bibliography*; and on Nabonidus, see Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*, 145–52; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 152–53; Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus*; Koch, . Steinmann **(**“The Chicken and the Egg”) argues that the Qumran prayer is based on Dan 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-713)
714. Newsom, *Daniel*, 130; cf. Newsom, “Why Nabonidus?” [↑](#footnote-ref-714)
715. See Mertens, *Das Buch Daniel im Lichte der Texte vom Toten Meer*, 37–40; more recently Segal, *Dreams, Riddles, and Viisions*, chap. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-715)
716. For example, Bickerman (*Four Strange Books of the Bible*, 74-77)nicely suggests that the message lying behind Dan 4 gives the real divine response to Nabonidus, in contrast to the one in the Harran inscriptions. [↑](#footnote-ref-716)
717. *Aramaic Poetry*, 84-130. Di Lella (“Daniel 4:7–14”) analyzes the literary devices in those verses; see also Richter, “Daniel 4,7-14.” [↑](#footnote-ref-717)
718. Wesselius (“The Writing of Daniel”) sees the structure of Daniel as modeled on that of Ezra. [↑](#footnote-ref-718)
719. Meadowcroft, “Point of View in Storytelling,” 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-719)
720. Cf. Meadowcroft, “Metaphor, Narrative, Interpretation and Reader in Daniel 2—5,” 270-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-720)
721. Meyer, *Das Gebet des Nabonid*, 111–12. [↑](#footnote-ref-721)
722. Hippolytus, *Daniel* 3.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-722)
723. Cf. Keil, *Daniel*, 140–42. [↑](#footnote-ref-723)
724. See Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 444-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-724)
725. On these questions, see e.g., Collins, *Daniel*, 216-21; Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 377-80, 387-401; Haag, *Die Errettung Daniels*; Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King*; Albertz, *Der Gott des Daniel*; Schlenke**,** *Gottes Reich und Königs Macht*; Henze**,** *The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar*, 14-49; Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel*, 31-56; McLay, “The OG Translaton of Daniel iv—vi”; **———.** “Double Translations in the Greek Versions of Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-725)
726. Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen im NT,” 1274. [↑](#footnote-ref-726)
727. Goldwurm, *Daniel*, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-727)
728. See F. Van Liere, “The Latin Bible, *c.*900 to the Council of Trent 1546,” in J. C. Paget et al. (eds.), *The New Cambridge History of the Bible* 2:93-109 (106). The text of the Gutenberg Bible is accessible at http://www.bl.uk/treasures/gutenberg/record.asp. [↑](#footnote-ref-728)
729. See Luther, “Der Prophet Daniel,” 144; cf. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-729)
730. Cf, Jeffery, “Daniel,” on the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-730)
731. Kirkpatrick, *Competing for Honor*, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-731)
732. Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 221; Pace, *Daniel*. 124-25; Newsom, *Daniel*, 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-732)
733. So Ps-Saadia, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-733)
734. See Lys, *Ruach*, 252–55. [↑](#footnote-ref-734)
735. See G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, chap. 5.3; Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, chap. 8; Cook**,** “Mythological Discourse In Ezekiel and Daniel.” Bunta (“The *Mēsu*-tree and the Animal Inside”) sees a background in the Mesopotamian *mēsu*-tree. [↑](#footnote-ref-735)
736. Langdon, *Building Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, no. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-736)
737. See Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 25–30; Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life*, 42–58; further references in Koch, *Daniel 1—4*, 424-26; and on the iconography, see Koch**,**“Gottes Herrschaft über das Reich des Menschen.” [↑](#footnote-ref-737)
738. Buschhaus, “Anunnakkū und Igigū im Buch Daniel,” notes the need for some clarification of the terms. [↑](#footnote-ref-738)
739. See further Collins, *Daniel*, 224-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-739)
740. Cf. Murray, “The Origin of Aramaic *‘îr*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-740)
741. Against Eichrodt, *Theologie* 2:105 (ET 199). [↑](#footnote-ref-741)
742. Cf. Jerome, *Daniel*, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-742)
743. See *ANET*, 538; cf.Grelot, “Nabuchodonosor changé en bête.” [↑](#footnote-ref-743)
744. Rabinowitz, “A Legal Formula in the Book of Daniel”; Hurvitz, “The History of a Legal Formula”; and references. [↑](#footnote-ref-744)
745. Smith-Christopher, “Daniel,” 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-745)
746. See their commentaries in גדולות מקראות on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-746)
747. See Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-747)
748. See Vattioni, “Aspetti del culto del signore dei cieli,” esp. 498, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-748)
749. See Appler**,** “Digging in the Claws,” 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-749)
750. Meadowcroft**,** “Metaphor, Narrative, Interpretation and Reader in Daniel 2—5,” 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-750)
751. Appler**,** “Digging in the Claws,” 136, quoting from Brueggemann, “At the Mercy of Babylon,” 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-751)
752. See Langdon, *Building Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*; excerpts in Driver, *Daniel*,xxiv–xxv. [↑](#footnote-ref-752)
753. See Koldewey, *The Excavations at Babylon*; Parrot, *Babylon and the OT*; Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*; Langdon, *Building Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*; Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East* 2:593-97; for other ancient testimony to his achievements both as soldier and as builder, quotations in Josephus, *Antiquities* 10.11.1 [10.219–28]; *Against Apion* 1.19 [128–41]; and for the motif of the proud king risking divine judgment, Herodotus, *Histories* 7.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-753)
754. Newsom, *Daniel*, 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-754)
755. See Ps-Saadia on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-755)
756. So Baldwin, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-756)
757. See Hays, “Chirps from the Dust”; quotation from 324. Jerome reports and dismisses the view that Nebuchadnezzar himself stands for Satan (*Daniel*, 46-47). [↑](#footnote-ref-757)
758. So Basson**,**“‘A King in the Grass.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-758)
759. See Young, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-759)
760. See Bentzen, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-760)
761. Cf. Hippolytus, *Daniel* 3.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-761)
762. Brueggemann, “The Non-negotiable Price of Sanity,” 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-762)
763. Cf. Saadia, *Daniel*, 484. [↑](#footnote-ref-763)
764. Lucas, *Daniel*, 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-764)
765. So Barth, *CD* iii, 3:460–63 on the rule of the heavens and the ambassadors of God is relevant to Dan 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-765)
766. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 119. I take Wink to be referring to Alfred North Whitehead’s *Religion in the Making*. [↑](#footnote-ref-766)
767. Cf. Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignt*y*, 67.* [↑](#footnote-ref-767)
768. Cf. Hebbard, *Reading Daniel*, 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-768)
769. Cf. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-769)
770. Aukerman, *Darkening Valley*, 99; cf. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 115–16. [↑](#footnote-ref-770)
771. On the relationship between Gen 11 and Dan 4, see further Frisch**,** *The**Danielic Discourse on Empire in Second Temple Literature*, 113-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-771)
772. Lüthi, *The Church to Come*, 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-772)
773. Kennedy, “Daniel,” on the passage. For the words’ attribution to Andrew Melville, see e.g., Tranter, *The Story of Scotland*, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-773)
774. Cf. Pace, *Daniel*, 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-774)
775. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel,* 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-775)
776. Cf. Montgomery, *Daniel*, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-776)
777. Cf. Lucas, *Daniel*, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-777)
778. See Jerome, *Daniel*, 51-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-778)
779. See Langdon, *Building Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*. [↑](#footnote-ref-779)
780. Towner, *Daniel*, 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-780)
781. Aukerman, *Darkening Valley*, 50–51. [↑](#footnote-ref-781)
782. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel,* 99-100. [↑](#footnote-ref-782)
783. See Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-783)
784. Cf. *DTT* on ק ר פ. [↑](#footnote-ref-784)
785. Cf. Pace, *Daniel*, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-785)
786. So Theodoret, *Daniel*,124-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-786)
787. Cf. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel,* 89 [↑](#footnote-ref-787)
788. Rashi in גדולות מקראות on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-788)
789. Rupert ofDeutz**,** *De Trinitate: in Danielem*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-789)
790. Cf. Theodoret, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-790)
791. Sumner, “Daniel,” 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-791)
792. Cf. Pascal’s *Pensées*, 331 (*Thoughts of Blaise Pascal,* 129*).* [↑](#footnote-ref-792)
793. Towner, *Daniel*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-793)
794. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel,* 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-794)
795. Brueggemann**,**“The Non-negotiable Price of Sanity,” 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-795)
796. Barth, *CD* iii, 3:461–62. [↑](#footnote-ref-796)
797. Alomía**,**, *Daniel* 2:120, 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-797)
798. Cf. Theodoret, *Daniel*,on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-798)
799. Burkholder**,** “Literary Patterns and God's Sovereignty in Daniel 4,” 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-799)
800. Cf. Theodoret, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-800)
801. See Newsom, *Daniel*, 33-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-801)
802. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-802)
803. Cf. Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-803)
804. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-804)
805. Pace, *Daniel*, 117-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-805)
806. Lederach (*Daniel*, 120) sees an advantage in keeping a link between the comment on Darius’s accession and his first act as king. [↑](#footnote-ref-806)
807. Cf. Goswell, “The Divisions of the Book of Daniel,” 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-807)
808. Gunkel, *Das Märchen im AT*, 142 (ET 153). [↑](#footnote-ref-808)
809. See Krappe, “La vision de Balthassar”; Baumgartner, “Ein Vierteljahrhundert Danielforschung,” 134–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-809)
810. Westermann, *Grundformen prophetischer Rede* = *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*; Koch, *Was ist Formgeschichte?* = *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition*, chaps. 15–18. [↑](#footnote-ref-810)
811. Cf. Wilson, “Form-Critical Investigation of the Prophetic Literature,” 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-811)
812. So Plöger, *Daniel*,on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-812)
813. Cf. Bentzen, *Daniel*, on the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-813)
814. See Gammie, “On the Intention and Sources of Daniel i-vi,” 287–89. [↑](#footnote-ref-814)
815. So Segal, *Dreams, Riddles, and Visions*, section 3.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-815)
816. Cf. e.g., Ginsberg, *Studies in Daniel*, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-816)
817. Cf. Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-817)
818. Cf. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-818)
819. For approaches to the relationship between the two versions, see e.g., Ashley, *Daniel Chapters 1–6*; Grelot, “Le chapitre v de *Daniel* dans la Septante”; Pannkuk, “The Preface to OG Daniel 5”; Young**,** “The Original Problem”; Collins, *Daniel*, 241-43; Albertz, *Der Gott des Daniel*; Wills**,** *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King*, 87-152. [↑](#footnote-ref-819)
820. Newsom, *Daniel*, 161-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-820)
821. So Davies, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-821)
822. See e.g., Towner, *Daniel*, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-822)
823. Sp Müller, “Magisch-mantische Weisheit und die Gestalt Daniels,” 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-823)
824. See Montgomery, *Daniel*, on the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-824)
825. See, e.g., Hall, *Post-exilic Theological Streams and the Book of Daniel*, 136-85; Haag, *Die Errettung Daniels aus der Löwengrube*; Schreiner, “‘. . . wird der Gott des Himmels ein Reich errichten, das in Ewigkeit nicht untergeht,’”132; Schlenke**,** *Gottes Reich und Königs Macht*; Wills**,** *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King*, 87-152. [↑](#footnote-ref-825)
826. Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-826)
827. Redditt, *Daniel*, 100-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-827)
828. Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-828)
829. See the “Nabonidus Lampoon,” *ANET* 313; the Harran stelae, *ANET* 560–63; other material in Dougherty, *Nabonidus*. *and Belshazzar*; cf. Millard, "Daniel and Belshazzar in History." [↑](#footnote-ref-829)
830. So Lambert, “Nabonidus in Arabia,” 59–61. [↑](#footnote-ref-830)
831. For a current historical account, see e.g., Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 40-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-831)
832. See *ANET* 315–16; *DOTT* 92–95. [↑](#footnote-ref-832)
833. See *ANET* 306; *DOTT* 81–83; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-833)
834. Cf. Driver, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-834)
835. Cook, *The Persian Empire*, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-835)
836. Though see Cook, *The Persian Empire*, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-836)
837. Montgomery, *Daniel*,72. [↑](#footnote-ref-837)
838. See Driver, *Daniel*,xxxi: but see Rowley, “The Historicity of the Fifth Chapter of Daniel,” 26–30. [↑](#footnote-ref-838)
839. Rowley, “The Belshazzar of Daniel and of History,” 258–62. [↑](#footnote-ref-839)
840. Cf. Hilton, “Babel Reversed,” 100; also Jerome, *Daniel*, 56; and Yephet, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-840)
841. So Keil, *Biblischer Kommentar*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-841)
842. Kirkpatrick, Competing for Honor*,* 129-37*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-842)
843. On banquets in the Persian period, see Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 286-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-843)
844. So Wolters**, “**Belshazzar's Feast and the Cult of the Moon God Sîn,” following Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus.* [↑](#footnote-ref-844)
845. Shea, “Darius the Mede,” 142; see the critique in Grabbe, “The Belshazzar of Daniel and the Belshazzar of History.” [↑](#footnote-ref-845)
846. Cf. Newsom, *Daniel*, 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-846)
847. See further Stefanovic**,** “Like Father, Like Son.” [↑](#footnote-ref-847)
848. E.g., Keil, *Biblischer Kommentar*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-848)
849. Prince, *Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-849)
850. See Prince, *Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin*, 12; contrast Gibson, “Belshazzar’s Feast”; Baldwin, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-850)
851. So Wolters, “Untying the King’s Knots”; cf. Rashi in גדולות מקראות on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-851)
852. Cf Towner, *Daniel*, 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-852)
853. Berrigan, *Daniel*, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-853)
854. See Frye, *Heritage of Persia*, 74–75. [↑](#footnote-ref-854)
855. Cf. Alt, “Zur Menetekel-Inschrift.” [↑](#footnote-ref-855)
856. So Kirchmayr**,** “Mene-tekel-uparsin.” [↑](#footnote-ref-856)
857. Andreasen, “The Role of the Queen Mother in Israelite Society,” 191, 194; for Babylon, cf. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 104; for Persia, see Montgomery, *Daniel*, on the passage; and on this example, VanDeventer**,** “Another Wise Queen (Mother).” ———.“Would the Actually ‘Powerful’ Please Stand?” [↑](#footnote-ref-857)
858. Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel*, 68-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-858)
859. Rowley, “The Belshazzar of Daniel and of History,” 193–95. [↑](#footnote-ref-859)
860. Ashley, *Daniel Chapters 1–6*, 147–54. [↑](#footnote-ref-860)
861. Miller’s paraphrase of “remarkable spirit” (*Daniel*, 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-861)
862. See Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-862)
863. See Müller, “Der Begriff 'Rätsel' im AT.” [↑](#footnote-ref-863)
864. Paul**,** ”Decoding a ‘Joint’ Expression in Daniel 5:6, 16” [↑](#footnote-ref-864)
865. Lacocque, *Daniel*, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-865)
866. So Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-866)
867. So Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-867)
868. Cf. Anderson, *Signs and Wonders*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-868)
869. Smith-Christopher, “Daniel,” 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-869)
870. Seow, *Daniel*, 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-870)
871. Collins, *Daniel*, 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-871)
872. Cf. Broida**, “**Textualizing Divination.” [↑](#footnote-ref-872)
873. So since Clermont-Ganneau, “Mané, thécel, pharés.” Wolters (“The Riddle of the Scales”) argues that the image of weighing on scales runs through all the levels of interpretation of the riddle. [↑](#footnote-ref-873)
874. Eissfeldt, “Die Menetekel-Inschrift,” 111–12. [↑](#footnote-ref-874)
875. Cf. Brown, “Proverb-Book, Gold-Economy, Alphabet,” 187; Eissfeldt, “Die Menetekel-Inschrift,” 109–111. [↑](#footnote-ref-875)
876. So Freedman, “The Prayer of Nabonidus.” [↑](#footnote-ref-876)
877. So Ginsberg, *Studies on Daniel*, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-877)
878. So Hoffman, “Mene, mene tekel upharsin.” [↑](#footnote-ref-878)
879. So Prince, *Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin.* [↑](#footnote-ref-879)
880. So Haller, “Das Alter von Daniel 7.” [↑](#footnote-ref-880)
881. So Kraeling, “The Handwriting on the Wall.” [↑](#footnote-ref-881)
882. So Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-882)
883. Silberman, “Unriddling the Riddle,” esp. 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-883)
884. Cook, *The Persian Empire*, 42–43). [↑](#footnote-ref-884)
885. Newsom, *Daniel*, 178, comparing Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-885)
886. See e.g., Grabbe, “Another Look at the *Gestalt* of ‘Darius the Mede.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-886)
887. See Rowley, *Darius the Mede*. [↑](#footnote-ref-887)
888. Sparks, “On the Origin of Darius the Mede.” [↑](#footnote-ref-888)
889. See Caquot, “Les quatre bêtes et le ‘Fils d’homme’ (*Daniel* 7),” 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-889)
890. See Young, *Daniel*, on the passage; also Waterhouse**,** “Why was Darius the Mede Expunged from History?” [↑](#footnote-ref-890)
891. Cf. Frye, *Heritage of Persia*, 97 on the name Darius. [↑](#footnote-ref-891)
892. So e.g., Colless**,** “Cyrus the Persian as Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-892)
893. So Boutflower, “The Historical Value of Daniel v and vi.” [↑](#footnote-ref-893)
894. So Alfrink, “Darius Medus.” [↑](#footnote-ref-894)
895. So Anderson, in the most recent systematic study, *Darius the Mede*; Waterhouse, “Why Was Darius the Mede Expunged from History?” [↑](#footnote-ref-895)
896. Shea (see *Pericope Bibliography*) is the most painstaking advocate of this view, though he had a brief flirtation with Cyrus (“Darius the Mede in His Persian-Babylonian Setting”). [↑](#footnote-ref-896)
897. So Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*. [↑](#footnote-ref-897)
898. Koch, “Dareios, der Meder.” [↑](#footnote-ref-898)
899. Ashley, *Daniel Chapters 1–6,* on the passage; cf. Ps-Saadia and Rashi in גדולות מקראות on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-899)
900. So Lister, “‘Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin’”; Galling, “Die 62 Jahre des Meders Darius in Dan 6 1.” [↑](#footnote-ref-900)
901. Wallace, *The Lord Is King*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-901)
902. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel,* 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-902)
903. Hill, “Daniel,” 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-903)
904. Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*,84. [↑](#footnote-ref-904)
905. Cf. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-905)
906. Cf. Lucas, *Daniel*, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-906)
907. De Bruyn (“Daniel 5, Elohim and Marduk”) sees Dan 5 as “the final battle” between the God of Israel and Marduk, on the latter’s territory. [↑](#footnote-ref-907)
908. E.g., Hippolytus, *Daniel* 3.14. [↑](#footnote-ref-908)
909. Collins, *Daniel*, 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-909)
910. Cf. Segal**,** “Rereading the Writing on the Wall.” [↑](#footnote-ref-910)
911. Anderson, *Signs and Wonders*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-911)
912. Hebbard, *Reading Daniel*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-912)
913. Longman, *Daniel*, 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-913)
914. Cf. Berrigan, *Daniel*, 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-914)
915. Lüthi, *The Church to Come*, 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-915)
916. Hebbert, *Reading Daniel*, 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-916)
917. Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-917)
918. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-918)
919. Theodoret, *Daniel*, 150-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-919)
920. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-920)
921. Hebbard, *Reading Daniel*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-921)
922. cf. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, 232. [↑](#footnote-ref-922)
923. The emphasis of K. Koch, “Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im AT?” ET “Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the OT.” [↑](#footnote-ref-923)
924. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-924)
925. Atzerodt, “Weltgeschichte und Reich Gottes im Buch Daniel,” 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-925)
926. Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-926)
927. Barth, *CD* iii, 3:235. [↑](#footnote-ref-927)
928. Barr, “Daniel,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-928)
929. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-929)
930. Driver, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-930)
931. Rupertof Deutz**.** *De Trinitate: in Danielem prophetam*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-931)
932. See Aukerman’s comments (*Darkening Valley*, 119) on the implications of J. F. Kennedy’s death,; and Gammie’s comments (*Daniel*, on the passage)on the Shah’s fabulous banquet at Persepolis in 1971 that opened a decade in which the Shah lost first his empire and then his life. [↑](#footnote-ref-932)
933. Gowan, *Daniel*, on the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-933)
934. Wallace, *The Lord Is King*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-934)
935. See Aukerman, *Darkening Valley*, 102–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-935)
936. Cf. Dobberahn**,** “Daniel 5.25.” [↑](#footnote-ref-936)
937. Barton, “The Story of Aḥikar”; Collins, *Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 49–54; Krappe, “Is the Story of Aḥikar the Wise of Indian Origin?” [↑](#footnote-ref-937)
938. Joubert, *Power and Responsibility in the Book of Daniel*, 114-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-938)
939. Talmon, “‘Wisdom’ in the Book of Esther,” 441; cf. Rosenthal, “Die Josephsgeschichte mit den Büchern Ester und Daniel verglichen”; **——— ,** “Nochmals der Vergleich Ester, Joseph, Daniel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-939)
940. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-940)
941. See further Van Deventer, “Literary Lions.” [↑](#footnote-ref-941)
942. See Bentzen, “Daniel 6”; Gunkel, *Das Märchen im AT*, 33 (ET 53). [↑](#footnote-ref-942)
943. See Van der Toorn**,** “In the Lions’ Den”; more broadly, “Scholars at the Oriental Court”; more broadly still, Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion?* [↑](#footnote-ref-943)
944. So Prinsloo, “Two Poems in a Sea of Prose,” 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-944)
945. Cf. Di Lella, *Daniel*, 121.On seek/find, see Arnold**,** “Wordplay and Narrative Techniques in Daniel 5 and 6,” 482-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-945)
946. See Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel*, 85-121, for the differences in narrative technique (the way motive is conveyed, the pace of the stories, and the functioning of irony and suspense) and in theological emphasis; morerecently Helms**,** *Konfliktfelder der Diaspora und die Löwengrube*; also Albertz, *Der Gott des Daniel*). Collins (*Daniel*, 262-63) notes that OG is less hyperbolic. [↑](#footnote-ref-946)
947. See e.g., Schlenke**,** *Gottes Reich und Königs Macht*. [↑](#footnote-ref-947)
948. Collins, *Daniel*, 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-948)
949. Cf. Towner, *Daniel*, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-949)
950. Davies, “Daniel in the Lion’s Den,” 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-950)
951. Cf. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East* 2:689; and on satrapies, 689-92, also Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 63-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-951)
952. Cf. Cook, *Persian Empire*, 242; more generally 77–85, 167–82, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-952)
953. Cook sees them as judges rather than ministers (*The Persian Empire*, 144–45, 167–70). [↑](#footnote-ref-953)
954. Cook, *Persian Empire*, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-954)
955. Seow, *Daniel*, 89-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-955)
956. Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-956)
957. See Widengren, “The Sacral Kingship of Iran”; Frye, *Heritage of Persia*, 95–97. [↑](#footnote-ref-957)
958. Walton(“The Decree of Darius the Mede in Daniel 6”) suggests that prayers must be made via the king so that he may ensure that they are offered to Ahura Mazda. [↑](#footnote-ref-958)
959. Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel*, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-959)
960. Frisch, *The Danielic Discourse on Empire*, 81, following Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-960)
961. See Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 46; Keil, *Biblischer Kommentar*, on the passage; and 2:38 *Comment.* [↑](#footnote-ref-961)
962. Cook, *Persian Empire*, 142; for lions, 249 and plate 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-962)
963. Cook, *Persian Empire*, 132, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-963)
964. On Darius I as a law-giver, see the varying estimates in Olmstead, *Persian Empire*, 119–34; Frye, *Heritage* *of Persia* 104–6; Cook, *Persian Empire*, 72–73. [↑](#footnote-ref-964)
965. See Cook, *Persian Empire*, 132; he also speaks of the venality, corruption, and treachery of the court. [↑](#footnote-ref-965)
966. Lucas, *Daniel*, 149. On the position of the king and his relationship with his court which is implicitly satirized, see Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East* 2:676-89; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 165-354. [↑](#footnote-ref-966)
967. Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-967)
968. Pace, *Daniel*, 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-968)
969. Gowan, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-969)
970. Lucas, *Daniel*, 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-970)
971. Cf. Levinger**,**  “האריות בגוב דניאל.” [↑](#footnote-ref-971)
972. Smith-Christopher, “Daniel,” 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-972)
973. Vogel, “Cultic Motifs and Themes in the Book of Daniel,” 26-27; cf. his more extensive discussion in *The Cultic Motif in the Book of Daniel*, 113-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-973)
974. Pace, *Daniel*, 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-974)
975. Cf. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 281–82; Olmstead, *Persian Empire*, 177–78. [↑](#footnote-ref-975)
976. Cf. Jeffery, “Daniel,” on the passage; Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-976)
977. Cf. Newsom, *Daniel*, 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-977)
978. See Hennecke, *NT Apocrypha* 2:322–90. [↑](#footnote-ref-978)
979. Cf. Alomía**,** *Daniel* 2:163-74; and Alomía, *Lesser Gods of the Ancient Near East*, 439-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-979)
980. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 269. He also goes on to discuss the moral issue raised by the king’s action (*Daniel 1—6*, 270-71). [↑](#footnote-ref-980)
981. Cf. Young’s declaration that the plot was the work of only a few men (*Daniel*, on the pssage). [↑](#footnote-ref-981)
982. Cf. Keil, *Biblischer Kommentar,* on the passage. On “models” of the way kings come to acknowledge the truth about God and about the Jewish people in Dan 6 and elsewhere, see Donaldson**,** “Royal Sympathizers in Jewish Narrative.” [↑](#footnote-ref-982)
983. Lüthi**,** *The Church To Come*, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-983)
984. Lüthi**,** *The Church To Come*, 82-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-984)
985. Cf. Wallace, *The Lord Is King*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-985)
986. Davies, “Daniel in the Lion’s Den,” 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-986)
987. Cf. Calvin, *Daniel* *1—6*, 245, 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-987)
988. Anderson, *Signs and Wonders*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-988)
989. Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-989)
990. Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-990)
991. Hippolytus, *Daniel* 3.22. [↑](#footnote-ref-991)
992. Cf. Smith-Christopher, “Gandhi on Daniel 6” and “Daniel,” 94-95; and for further references, Breed, “History of Reception,” 207-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-992)
993. So Thodoret, *Daniel*, 162-63. OG makes motives explicit at a number of points in the chapter, whereas MT is more allusive (Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel*, 90-91). [↑](#footnote-ref-993)
994. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 110–11. [↑](#footnote-ref-994)
995. Haag, *Daniel*, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-995)
996. Longman, *Daniel*, 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-996)
997. Cf. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 249. [↑](#footnote-ref-997)
998. Cf. Lederach, *Daniel*, 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-998)
999. Cf Dulaey**,** “Daniel dans la fosse aux lions,” 39-40; Zissu**,** “Daniel in the Lion's Den (?) at Tel Lavnin”; Xeravits**,** “A Possible Greek Bible Source for Late Antique Synagogue Art”; **——— ,** “The Figure of Daniel in Late Antique Synangogue Art” (but he suggests that Susanna is at least as imprortant an influence). [↑](#footnote-ref-999)
1000. Newsom, *Daniel*, 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-1000)
1001. Cf. Calvin’s worries, *Daniel 1—6*, 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-1001)
1002. Berrigan, *Daniel*, 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-1002)
1003. Alomía**,** *Daniel* 2:157. [↑](#footnote-ref-1003)
1004. Cf Rashi in גדולות מקראות on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-1004)
1005. Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-1005)
1006. So Plöger, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-1006)
1007. So Delcor, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-1007)
1008. Cf. Lacocque, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-1008)
1009. Cf. de Boer, “‘Vive le roi!’” On the significnace of the title, see further, Lederach, *Daniel*, 142-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-1009)
1010. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-1010)
1011. Boogaart**,** “Daniel 6,” 107, 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-1011)
1012. Cf. Longman, *Daniel*, 162-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-1012)
1013. Berrigan, *Daniel*, 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-1013)
1014. Lederach, *Daniel*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-1014)
1015. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-1015)
1016. See e.g., , Lederach, *Daniel*, 144-47; and this theme in the early centuries of the church as illustrated in iconography (see Sörries**,** *Daniel in der Löwengrube*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1016)
1017. Cf. Hippolytus, *Daniel* 3.29-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-1017)
1018. Cf. Philip, *By the Rovers of Babylon*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-1018)
1019. Cf. Towner, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-1019)
1020. Cf. Calvin, *Daniel 1—6*, 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-1020)
1021. Smith-Christopher, “Daniel,” 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-1021)
1022. Cf. Haag, *Daniel*, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-1022)
1023. Gammie, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-1023)
1024. Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 97–99. Frisch considers further the role of Gen 10 as a foil in Dan 1—6 (*The**Danielic Discourse on Empire in Second Temple Literature*, 107-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-1024)
1025. Anderson, *Signs and Wonders,* on the passage*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1025)
1026. Cf. Kennedy, “Daniel*,*”on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-1026)
1027. Davies, “Daniel in the Lion’s Den,” 160, 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-1027)
1028. Polaski**,** “*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin*,” 668. [↑](#footnote-ref-1028)
1029. Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-1029)
1030. Bergsma, “Cultic Kingdoms in Conflict,” 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-1030)
1031. Towner, *Daniel*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-1031)
1032. so Derrett, “Daniel”; for the comparison, see Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 21.18 [NPNF ii 13:399]) [↑](#footnote-ref-1032)
1033. See Langlois**, “**Loin des yeux, non du coeur.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1033)
1034. Adapted from Briggs, “‘I Perceived in the Books.’” 115-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-1034)