

Exploring the Complexity of the Book of Daniel: A Multifaceted Analysis

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Recieved: 28 Januari 2024 Revised: 15 Maret 2024 Published: 29 April 2024

Abstract

This research delves into the intricate layers of the Book of Daniel, seeking to unravel its complexities through a comprehensive examination. Emphasizing the historical and literary significance of the text, the study explores the multifaceted nature of the Book of Daniel, which has intrigued scholars for centuries. The primary objective is to illuminate various dimensions of complexity, including symbolic language, prophetic elements, and historical context. Employing a methodological approach that integrates literary analysis, historical investigation, and theological perspectives, the study aims to provide a holistic understanding of the Book of Daniel's intricacies. Positioned within ongoing scholarly discussions on biblical interpretation and prophecy, the research reveals that the Book of Daniel invites diverse approaches, incorporating historical, wisdom, prophetic, and apocalyptic perspectives. Comprehending the Book of Daniel's complexity contributes to bridging the gap between historical, literary, and theological viewpoints, thereby enriching our grasp of biblical texts and fostering scholarly discourse in this field.

Keywords: approach; faith; historical; literary; perspective; theological

1. Introduction

The groundwork for this journal article originates from Chapter One of my master's thesis at the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Roma in 2015. Over time, there has emerged a growing need to transform the content of that work into a scholarly journal article, now titled "Exploring the Complexity of the Book of Daniel: A Multifaceted Analysis."

The Book of Daniel, a profound and mysterious text within the biblical canon, has captivated scholars for centuries. Its rich historical and literary content has sparked numerous investigations aimed at unraveling its complexity. Esteemed scholars such as James A.

Montgomery,¹ John E. Goldingay,² André Lacocque,³ John J. Collins,⁴ Ernest Lucas,⁵ Carol A Newsome and Breed,⁶ have all endeavored to unveil the intricacies of the Book of Daniel.

Their research has significantly contributed to our understanding of the Book of Daniel. This article identifies their contributions and seeks to categorize them to uncover the unique differences and nuances that distinguish each study.

The research problem addressed in this article revolves around the necessity for a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the Book of Daniel. Although not confined to a single hypothesis, this study aims to shed light on specific dimensions that have been explored and contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse.

To address the inherent complexity of the Book of Daniel, a multifaceted methodology is employed. This approach integrates literary analysis, historical investigation, and theological perspectives, ensuring a thorough examination of the text.

The complexity of the Book of Daniel, which invites interpretations from various diverse perspectives and distances, requires an approach that can reconcile and narrow these differences. This study represents an endeavor to promote interpretation ultimately emphasizing the spiritual significance of faith, which can bridge the disparate perspectives.

2. Research Method

We use multifaceted methodology in researching the complexity of the Book of Daniel. This methodology employs a multifaceted approach involving literary analysis, historical investigation, and theological perspectives. The chosen approach aims to provide a holistic understanding of the complexity of the Book of Daniel, encompassing literary, historical, and theological aspects. By integrating these various dimensions, the research seeks to unravel the multiple layers of meaning and contexts that influence the interpretation of the Book of Daniel as a whole. The multifaceted methodology is applied to ensure a comprehensive analysis and present a deeper insight into the complex phenomenon.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Complexity of Literary Genre and Extended Narratives

The Book of Daniel (commonly known as Dan), as it is found in the Hebrew Bible, has 12 chapters. Scholars say that the text falls into two parts.⁷ The first half of the book, Dan 1-6, consists of stories about Daniel and his three companions, who were deported to Babylon

¹ James Alan Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh, 1927).

² J. E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (Dallas, 1989).

³ A. Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel* (Atlanta, 1979).

⁴ J. J. Collins, *Daniel* (Minneapolis, 1993).

⁵ E. Lucas, *Daniel* (Leicester, 2002).

⁶ J Paul Tanner, "A Commentary On the Book of Daniel a Man of Faith, Integrity, and Insight Prepared for BEE World," 2015, www.bible.org

⁷ See Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 1-2, 89; Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxv; Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 1; Collins, *Daniel*, 1; Lucas, *Daniel*, 18.

and rose to prominence in the Babylonian court. The second half, Dan 7-12, contains revelations about the future presented by Daniel.

The first part, Dan 1-6 presents six stories and Daniel is spoken of in the third person singular. The first chapter tells of the arrival of Daniel and his three companions at the court of king Nebuchadnezzar and their eventual training as servants of the king. The second chapter portrays how Daniel interprets the king's dream about a statue. Chapter 3 is a story about the miraculous survival of the three companions from a fiery furnace following their refusal to worship the golden statue erected by the king. In chapter 4 Daniel interprets a dream of the king about a tree. In chapter 5, Daniel interprets the inscription on the wall as the fate of King Belshazzar. And chapter 6 tells about Daniel's survival in the lions' den.

The second part, Dan 7-12, consists of visions and Daniel is designated in the first person singular. These chapters present Daniel himself as the author, the dreamer and visionary. Chapter 7 is about the increasing bestiality of the empires and God's judgment delegated to "someone like a son of man". A vision of a ram is presented in chapter 8. Chapter 9 is about Daniel's prayer of intercession and explanation of Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years. Chapter 10 is about the man clothed in linen. Chapter 11 is about the historical recapitulation from the Median-Persian Empire up to Antiochus Epiphanes. And chapter 12 is about the resurrection and the final retribution.

In the Greek Bible or the Septuagint, Dan has 14 chapters. It contains four passages that are not found in the Hebrew Bible. Two passages are inserted in chapter 3, known as the Prayer of Azariah and the Canticle of the Three Companions. Two other passages namely, the story of Susanna and the story of Bel and the Dragon are presented as additional chapters.

The Prayer of Azariah is a national supplication that includes the confession of the people's sinfulness. The Canticle of the Three Youths consists of a hymn of praise and an invitation to give praise to the Lord. The story of Susanna tells about Daniel who unmasked the falsehood of the accusation of two elderly people that Susanna committed adultery with a stranger. The story of Bel and the Dragon contains two stories. The first story tells how Daniel showed the falsehood of the priests of Bel who had affirmed that the offerings of the temple were consumed by Bel himself but in reality the priests themselves ate them during the night. The second tells about how Daniel, having killed a dragon was thrown into a den of lions but was rescued by God who sent the Prophet Habakkuk.

3.2. The Complexity of Its Place

As part of the Old Testament (OT), the place of the Book of Daniel in the Hebrew Bible differs from its place in the Septuagint. In the Hebrew Bible, which is arranged in three divisions,⁸ the Book of Daniel is found in the third part, the Writings,⁹ in the fourth from last

⁸ See F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Illinois, 1988), 29. The three divisions are the Tôrāh or Law, the Nebî'îm or Prophets and the Ketûbîm or Writings. The Tôrāh comprises the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy; the Nebî'îm is further subdivided into the four Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and the four Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve Prophets); the Ketûbîm comprises eleven books: Psalms, Proverbs and Job, then a group of five called the Megillôt (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.

place, before Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicle. Sometimes it is classified in a subdivision as narrative or historical book.¹⁰ The Septuagint, which is arranged in four divisions,¹¹ places it in the fourth part, the books of the prophets.¹² It comes as the last book.

3.3. The Complexity of Its Languages

In the Hebrew Bible, Dan uses two languages.¹³ The beginning of the book is in Hebrew. At 2:4b it shifts to Aramaic and then back again to Hebrew at 8:1. The Hebrew of Dan contains some Persian words and a number of Aramaisms.¹⁴ Scholars notice that the Hebrew style of Dan is that of Chronicle, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.¹⁵ It is not the style of the classical Hebrew of the exile in the 6th century BC., but rather after the exile or even after the age of Nehemiah.¹⁶ In its comparison with the known Biblical literature, it can't be attributed to a date earlier than the 4th century BC., but only to the 2nd century BC.¹⁷

From the philological point of view it is found that the Aramaic of Dan is late Aramaic and James A. Montgomery holds that its view, evidence is not of the 6th century BC. Scholars also find in the Aramaic of Dan, the presence of a fair number of Akkadian, Persian and Greek words.¹⁸ The presence of foreign words argues for its dating to the age of the Persian settlement after the exile and for the Hellenistic age.¹⁹

It is noted above, that four passages in the Septuagint (the Prayer of Azariah, the Canticle of Three Companions, the story of Susanna and the story of Bel and the Dragon) are not

⁹ William Henry Green says that the three divisions answer to three types of authorship. The Law was by Moses, the Nebi'im were by prophets and the Writings were by men who had the gift of prophecy but not the prophetic office. See W. H. Green, *General Introduction to the OT, the Canon* (New York, 1899), 81; Cf. Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 1–2.

¹⁰ See J. R. McRay, "Canon of the Bible," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. W. A. Elwel and B. J. Beitzel (Michigan, 1988), 301–2.

¹¹ Cf. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, 47. The four divisions are the Pentateuch, the historical books, poetical and wisdom books and the books of the prophets. The Pentateuch corresponds to the Tôrah in the Hebrew Bible while the historical books largely correspond to the Former Prophets with the addition of Ruth, Chronicles, Esdras, Esther, Judith and Tobit. The poetical and wisdom books contain Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job, Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. The books of the prophets comprise the Latter Prophets, with the twelve minor prophets preceding the others and Lamentations, Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah following the Book of Jeremiah. Daniel comes as the last book in this division.

¹² So its author is considered to be a prophet. If one considers Daniel as a prophet, then it means Daniel possesses characteristics different from other prophets. See Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 12.

¹³ See the discussions in Collins, *Daniel*, 12; J. J. Collins, *Daniel, With an Introductory to Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, 1894), 29–30; Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 13–14; Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 90–92; Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxv. As the Book of Daniel, there are also other passages of the Bible written in Aramaic, namely in Ezra (Ezr 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26) and Jeremiah (Jer 10:11).

¹⁴ Cf. Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxv.

¹⁵ Cf. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 14; Lucas, *Daniel*, 307.

¹⁶ See Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 14. Montgomery mentions some characterizations of the style, like the loss of sense for the modes of the verb and their consecution; the absence of the article and other irregularities.

¹⁷ See Montgomery, 15. See also pp. 3-4.

¹⁸ See Montgomery, 20–22; Collins, *Daniel*, 18–20; Cf. Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxv.

¹⁹ See Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 59; Collins, *Daniel*, 13–14; Collins, *Daniel, With an Introductory to Apocalyptic Literature*, 34; Lucas, *Daniel*, 307–8.

found in the Hebrew Bible.²⁰ Some scholars believe that they are translated from a Semitic *Vorlage*.²¹ This *Vorlage* of course doesn't exist today. To show Dan in its original language along with its Greek additions, one has to separate the different parts in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.²² The Greek additions must have come from a later date, given the spread of Greek culture in the East, even in Palestine.²³

3.4. Manuscript Variations and Witness Complexity

The Hebrew and Aramaic version of Dan can be found in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS). BHS used the Leningrad Codex B 19A (L) as its basis. L is the earliest complete witness of the Masoretic Text (MT) of the Hebrew Bible, dating from 1008 or 1009 A.D. It includes apparatus²⁴ showing unusual variations like *ketib*, *qere* and variant readings of manuscripts of its versions.

Other witnesses to the Hebrew and Aramaic text include the fragments discovered at Qumran. All twelve chapters in MT are represented in eight fragmentary manuscripts of Qumran. The distribution of their contents is as follows:²⁵

1QDan^a: 1,10–17; 2,2–6.

1QDan^b: 3,22–30.

4QDan^a: 1,16–20; 2,9–11, 19–49; 3,1–2; 4,29–30; 5,5–7, 12–14, 16–19; 7,5–7, 25–28; 8,1–5; 10,16–20; 11,13–16.

4QDan^b: 5,10–12, 14–16, 19–22; 6,8–22, 27–29; 7,1–6, 11(?), 26–28; 8,1–8, 13–16.

4QDan^c: 10,5–9, 11–16, 21; 11,1–2, 13–17, 25–29.

4QDan^d: 3,5–7, 8–10, 23–25; 4,5–9, 12–14, 15–16; 7,15–20, 20–23.

4QDan^e: 9,12–17.

pap6QDan: 8,16–17(?), 20–21(?); 10,8–16; 11, 33–36, 38.

There are also two quotations from Dan 12,10 and 11,32 in 4QFlor (4Q174) that are variants from MT.

The Qumran texts give older witnesses than the L, for they are dated between the late second century BC. and the first century A.D.²⁶ These texts do not depart significantly from MT. The shift from Hebrew to Aramaic at 2,4a can be seen in 1QDan^a and the shift back to

²⁰ Cf. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 8.

²¹ See Collins, *Daniel*, 5–6.

²² See R. Reggi, *Daniele, Traduzione Interlineare Italiana* (Bologna, 2009) Reggi presents the text of the Book of Daniel in three languages along with its interlinear translation in Italian.

²³ See Lucas, *Daniel*, 318–24.

²⁴ See Collins, *Daniel*, 2; Cf. A Schenker, ed., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia BHS* (Stuttgart, 1997), xii–xiv. The apparatus includes the fragmentary evidence from the Cairo Geniza and the Masoretic variants collected by Kennicott and de Rossi.

²⁵ See E Ulrich, ed., *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls. Transcriptions and Textual Variants*, vol. 3 (Leiden, Boston, 2013), 755–75; Collins, *Daniel*, 2–3; J Ziegler, ed., *Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Literarum Göttingensis Editum, XVI/2, Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco* (Göttingen, 1999), 87–88; Lucas, *Daniel*, 19.

²⁶ See Collins, *Daniel*, 2; Lucas, *Daniel*, 19.

Hebrew at 8,1 is seen in 4QDan^a and 4QDan^b.²⁷ They also generally support the consonantal text of the MT.

3.5. Complexities in Greek and Other Language Versions

There are two main Greek versions, namely the Old Greek (OG) and the Theodotion (Th). Both versions differ from the MT in their addition of the Prayer of Azariah, the Canticle of the Three Companions, the Story of Susanna and the Story of Bel and the Dragon.

The text of OG shows differences from MT especially in Dan 3-6. Dan 3 of OG is longer than that of MT for the insertion between v. 23 and v. 24 with the Prayer of Azariah (vv. 24-45). It is followed by an episode in prose (vv. 46-50) which ties the prayer to the Canticle of the Three Youths (vv. 51-90). Thus v. 24 in MT corresponds to v. 91 in OG. About Chapters 4-6, August Bludau observes that OG does not only have variant readings but also different accounts of the same subject matter to MT.²⁸ In Chapter 4, the order is different and the OG is expanded. In Chapter 5, in contrast, the OG is considerably shorter. In Chapter 6 the OG is paraphrased and shows many differences in detail. Compared with MT, OG has two more chapters: Dan 13-14. Dan 13 contains the story of Susanna and Dan 14 tells the stories of Bel and the Dragon.

There are three manuscripts that serve as witnesses to OG: Codex Chisianus or ms 88, Syro-Hexapla and Papyrus 967. Two of the manuscripts (Codex Chisianus and Syro-Hexapla) are said to be Hexaplaric text. The Codex Chisianus, variously dated between the ninth and eleventh centuries,²⁹ attests to Origen's Hexaplaric recension. The Syro-Hexapla is a literal translation of the Hexapla into Syriac by Paul of Tella in 616-617 A.D. The third witness, the Papyrus 967, dated no later than the early third century A.D. or second century,³⁰ shows a Greek version earlier than the Hexapla. It differs from all the other witnesses in placing Susanna after Bel and the Dragon. It also places Chapters 7-8 between Chapters 4 and 5, in an attempt to improve the chronological ordering of the book, for Chapters 7 and 8 are set in the reign of Belshazzar, who has already passed from the scene in Chapter 6.³¹ One other evidence of OG is found in the P. Gr. Vind. 29255, a fifth-century papyrus from Fayyum, which contains only fragments of a few verses (Dan 3:23-25).³²

Comparing it to the MT, in Dan of OG scholars find some translation that involves a measure of interpretation, an attempt to smooth out the chronology and modifications that clarify allusions.³³ It is usually dated to the late second or early first century BC. in Egypt.³⁴

²⁷ See Collins, *Daniel*, 3.

²⁸ See Collins, 5-7.

²⁹ See Collins, 4; Cf. Ziegler, *Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Literarum Gottingensis Editum*, XVI/2, *Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco*, 9.

³⁰ See Collins, *Daniel*, 4.

³¹ See Ziegler, *Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Literarum Gottingensis Editum*, XVI/2, *Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco*, 20; Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 4; Lucas, *Daniel*, 19.

³² See Collins, *Daniel*, 5.

³³ See the discussions in Collins, 7-9; Lucas, *Daniel*, 19.

In contrast to the OG, Dan of Th is amply witnessed by ancient quotations and many manuscripts.³⁵ It is witnessed by Codex Alexandrinus (A), Codex Vaticanus (B), Codex Marchalianus (Q), Codex Rescriptus Cryptoferratensis (G), Codex Venetus (V) and so on.³⁶ But its earliest attestations are shown in a number of citations in the New Testament (NT) and in the Book of Baruch.³⁷ Besides, its text is also witnessed in Hermas and the commentary of Hippolytus.³⁸

Scholars have no exact data to determine the date of Th,³⁹ but it is assumed traditionally around 180 A.D. in the reign of Comodus.⁴⁰ Its place of composition is proposed to be in Palestine, Syria or Mesopotamia.⁴¹

In general, aside from the Greek additions, it can be said that Th agrees with MT. But in Chapters 4-6, it is much closer to the OG and sometimes follows it against the MT.⁴² The story of Bel and the Dragon in Th is not identical to that of the OG but both do not exhibit many differences. Th places the story of Susanna at the beginning of Dan.

There are still other ancient versions that bear witness to the Book of Daniel. The commonly known are the Old Latin (OL), the Vulgate of Jerome (Vg), the Peshitta (Pesh) or Old Syriac, Coptic, Arabic and Armenian.⁴³ Two versions, namely OL and Vg, are Latinic. OL is known from patristic citations showing texts that are based on the Greek versions, the majority of which on Th. Vg is dated between 389 and 392; it is based on the MT but is also aware of the earlier translations and occasionally influenced by Th or Hexapla.⁴⁴

The Pesh is a Christian Syriac translation made in the third century. It is also based on MT, but at the same time reflects the influence of Th. Another Syriac version is one that has been mentioned above, namely Syro-Hexapla (Syh). The Coptic versions are based on the Greek. The two most known versions are Sahidic (Sa) and Bohairic (Bo). The Sa follows Th and the Bo has a Hexaplaric character.⁴⁵ The rest include the Arabic version, which is a

³⁴ See Collins, *Daniel*, 9; Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 38; Lucas, *Daniel*, 19.

³⁵ Jerome attests that in Christian use the Septuagint (OG) text of Daniel was replaced by Theodotion's version, because OG differed so widely from the Hebrew and Aramaic text. See Collins, *Daniel*, 34; Lucas, *Daniel*, 19.

³⁶ See Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 26–27.

³⁷ See Montgomery, 49; Cf. Lucas, *Daniel*, 20.

³⁸ See Collins, *Daniel*, 9–10.

³⁹ Montgomery writes that of Theodotion we know next to nothing as to his person and date. See Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 46.

⁴⁰ See Montgomery, 46.

⁴¹ See Collins, *Daniel*, 10; Cf. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 54–55.

⁴² See Collins, *Daniel*, 11.

⁴³ See Collins, 11; Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 29–34; Lucas, *Daniel*, 20.

⁴⁴ See Collins, *Daniel*, 11; Lucas, *Daniel*, 20.

⁴⁵ See Lucas, *Daniel*, 20; Ziegler, *Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Literarum Göttingensis Editum, XVI/2, Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco*, 130–31.

translation of Th, the Armenian version, which is close to Th and Pesh, and the Ethiopic version, which is a very free translation of Th.⁴⁶

3.6. The Multifaceted Interpretative Perspectives on Dan 1

As is noted above, the Book of Daniel falls into two parts (Dan 1-6 and Dan 7-12) and Dan 1 belongs to the first part. It recounts the story of Daniel and his three companions at the beginning of the exile to Babylon. The vocabulary used in the text of Dan 1 shows that the author's point of view rests on several motives. We consider three motives here as perspectives of interpretation: the historical, the apocalyptic, and the wisdom.

The text of Dan 1 begins with a historical formula: "In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, ..." (Dan 1,1a). It is followed then with a historical event: the exile of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. In the end, it is closed with another historical formula: "And Daniel continued there until the first year of King Cyrus." (Dan 1,21). Thus the life of Daniel is dated in the 6th century BC.,⁴⁷ during the time of the exile.

On the other hand, some state that the historical setting in which Daniel 1 was composed is illusive.⁴⁸ The reference to the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in the third year of Jehoiakim is commonly claimed as historically inaccurate.⁴⁹ Dan 1,5.18 say, that Daniel had already completed his education for three years at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, and this is incompatible with Dan 2,1, which took place in the second year of the king. Further, v. 21 tells that Daniel remained in Babylon until the first year of King Cyrus. This shows a discrepancy with 10,1 which says that Daniel was still there in the third year of King Cyrus.

Moreover, as noted in 1.1.2, the Hebrew and Aramaic style of Dan require a dating after the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great, to be precise, the 2nd century BC,⁵⁰ during the Maccabean period when the Syrian King Antiochus IV Epiphanes was persecuting the Jews.⁵¹ There is a suggestion to treat Dan 1 as a story rather than a historical report.⁵² Here the historical events must be seen in relation to their function in the story.⁵³ The aim of the story is not to inform us of what actually happened but to elevate, to inspire and to motivate.⁵⁴ Historical accuracy is incidental and the essential matter is a call to go and do likewise.⁵⁵

⁴⁶ See Ziegler, *Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Literarum Gottingensis Editum*, XVI/2, *Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco*, 132–36.

⁴⁷ See Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 3.

⁴⁸ See Collins, *Daniel, With an Introductory to Apocalyptic Literature*, 45.

⁴⁹ See Lucas, *Daniel*, 306.

⁵⁰ See Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 3–5; Lucas, *Daniel*, 306-307. At page 312, Lucas notes that the affinity of Daniel with apocalypses also supports its dating to the second century B.C.

⁵¹ Cf. Collins, *Daniel, With an Introductory to Apocalyptic Literature*, 28–30, 45.

⁵² See Lucas, *Daniel*, 26.

⁵³ Cf. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 59.

⁵⁴ Cf. Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 2; Lucas, *Daniel*, 27. Lucas says that the power of the story to persuade the people to accept and to live by the theological, moral or other claims the story is making may

When Dan was composed in the Hellenistic age, the exile already belonged to the past.⁵⁶ For the readers who still had a memory of Cyrus who gave permission to the Israelites residing in Babylon to return to their homeland, the author of Dan 1 wanted to suggest that people like Daniel and his companions had gone through the period of exile with great success. He adopted the historical situation of the exile as the setting for the story, addressing the readers who lived during the time of uncertainties and religious persecution.⁵⁷ With the story, he wanted to exhort and console the faithful Jews with the message that the God of the Israelites would act to help them just like in the past, during the most disastrous time in the Babylonian exile when He protected His people, and even made them to prosper in a foreign land.⁵⁸

In the apocalyptic literature there is a division between this world of man and another world of divinity. This world of man cannot save itself, nor can it be saved by the natural cause and effect. Only God from the world of divinity can set things right.⁵⁹ A real divine interference is required, i.e. a direct influence on this world to restore the rule of God. Apocalyptic literature characterizes God as the Lord of history.

Scholars regard the Book of Daniel as one of the earliest examples of the apocalyptic genre.⁶⁰ The characteristics of the apocalyptic are found in the story in Dan 1. It presents God as the actor of the story. God let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into the power of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon (v. 2). God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master (v. 9). It contains a miraculous element: even if Daniel and his three companions ate only vegetables and drank only water, they looked healthier than the other young men who consumed the royal rations (vv. 14-15). And God gave them knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom (vv. 17-20).

The apocalyptic perspective of Dan 1 is highlighted even further within the setting of the exile. God is the Lord of history also in times of trouble. He is going to re-establish a new era in which his faithful will come out as winners. His hidden divine forces are already in action.

In the perspective of wisdom literature, God's desires are manifested in the universal manner in which the entire world is ordered. Hence it is open to all peoples, but not to Israel alone. It gives an accentuation to the practical knowledge of the laws of life and of the world, based upon common human experiences.⁶¹ It approaches the reality in a more

depend on their belief that there is some connection between the story and events in the real world outside the story.

⁵⁵ See Lucas, *Daniel*, 27. Lucas states that an excessive concern with the historical of the story might lead us to miss the truth it is intended to convey.

⁵⁶ Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 25.

⁵⁷ Cf. Collins, *Daniel, With an Introductory to Apocalyptic Literature*, 38.

⁵⁸ Cf. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 101-2; Lucas, *Daniel*, 30, 313.

⁵⁹ Cf. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 79-80.

⁶⁰ See Lucas, *Daniel*, 311.

⁶¹ See G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh, 1962), 418.

anthropocentric way with a didactic goal, that is, the formation of character.⁶² Human factor can and must be developed and educated.

In rabbinic literature, Daniel is often praised for his wisdom.⁶³ Together with the presentation of Daniel and his three companions as wise men, some scholars regard the stories of Daniel as wisdom tales, especially because of the teaching aspect in them.⁶⁴ Further, in Dan 1, the Hebrew word חָכְמָה translated as “wisdom”, appears three times (vv. 4.17, and its construct form חֲכִמָּה in v. 20).⁶⁵ Dan 1 also implies a didactic goal, for Daniel and his three companions were chosen to be educated for three years, so that at the end of that time they could serve in the king’s court (v. 5).⁶⁶

During the period of Exile the people of Israel lived among the pagans. They were going through a crisis of identity, living without their king, temple and land, the ancient symbols of being the chosen people.⁶⁷ Dan 1 would give an answer to the crisis of identity, demonstrating what is the mission and vocation of Israel in the midst of foreign nations. Through special qualities and certain characters like Daniel and his three companions who mastered wisdom, Israel would prove to be a “light” both for the foreign nations among whom they lived and for themselves living among them.⁶⁸ The wisdom coming from God was the new identity for the chosen people. Wisdom replaces the land, the king and the temple, the outer signs of the chosen people. They were uprooted from their own land and scattered in a foreign country, but wisdom would gather them again. They were detached from the temple, but wisdom would furnish the sacred space where they could live and worship their God. And the Most High God, supreme even over human rulers and ruling their affairs became their king.⁶⁹

3.7. Unlocking the Complexity of Dan 1

Complexities and enigmas found in the Book of Dan,⁷⁰ lead some scholars to say that Dan 1 has double function.⁷¹ It contains a story in its own right but functions also as introduction to the whole book.⁷² We consider three reasons underlying the view that Dan 1 is

⁶² See W. P. Brown, *Character in Crisis. A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1996); G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (London, 1972).

⁶³ See Collins, *Daniel*, 86.

⁶⁴ See the discussion in Lucas, *Daniel*, 24–26, 311.

⁶⁵ Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 49.

⁶⁶ Cf. Lucas, *Daniel*, 27. Some intend to classify Daniel 1 also as a “court tale”. These court tales intend to edify the readers so that they identify with the characters portrayed.

⁶⁷ Cf. Lucas, 27.

⁶⁸ Cf. Lucas, 315.

⁶⁹ Cf. Lucas, 27, 316.

⁷⁰ See Lucas, 307-316. Lucas presents the enigmas and complexities of Dan surveying areas of debates in the epilogue of his work. Particularly, the enigmas of Dan 1 are seen in the multifaceted interpretative perspectives above.

⁷¹ Cf. Lucas, 47.

⁷² See Collins, *Daniel, With an Introductory to Apocalyptic Literature*, 30–32; Lucas, *Daniel*, 315; Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 24.

prefixed by a redactor after collecting various writings as a preface:⁷³ its links to the next chapters, its historical setting and the role of its protagonists.

Scholars find evidences of introductory function of Dan 1 to the whole book in its links to the next chapters. The capture of Jerusalem and its sacred vessels narrated in v. 2 prepare the readers for the desecration of the sacred vessels by Belshazzar in Chapter 5.⁷⁴ One of the qualities of the youths in training for service at the court is called *maškîlîm* in v. 4, a term that will be applied to the wise who play a crucial role in Chapter 11 (mentioned in vv. 33 and 35). The closing statement (1, 21) that Daniel remained until the first year of Cyrus is echoed in 6,29. The character told in 1,17 that Daniel had insight into all visions and dreams, becomes the preoccupations of the next chapters. In Chapters 2, 4, 5, he is presented as an interpreter of dream, and Chapters 7-12 he is a seer, one who sees the visions.

The division of the book into two parts namely stories (Chapters 1-6) and visions (Chapters 7-12) is corroborated by the king or kingdom sequence of the chapters.⁷⁵ Chapters 1-6 are set in the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar (Chapters 1-4), Belshazzar (Chapter 5) and Darius the Mede (Chapter 6, mentions also Cyrus). Chapters 7 and 8, revert to the reign of Belshazzar, followed in sequence by Darius (Chapter 9) and Cyrus (Chapter 10). It is observed that Chapters 1-6 reflect a sequence of Babylonian, Median, and Persian kingdoms and so do Chapters 7-12. Dan 1 opens the story with Nebuchadnezzar, first king of Babylon and closes with Cyrus, last king of the visions. Dan 1 introduces the whole book by starting the story with the first king and closing it with the last king of the kingdom in the sequence, providing the overall historical setting.

Some scholars argue about the probability that the stories in Dan were collected from some separate tales.⁷⁶ In these separate tales, the three companions were not associated with Daniel. This argument is supported by the facts that Chapter 3 doesn't mention at all Daniel. On the other hand, the three companions, the protagonists of Chapter 3 have only a peripheral role in Chapters 1 and 2. When the tales were brought together, Chapter 1 was then composed, probably as an introduction to the collection.

4. Conclusion

The Book of Daniel conceals a rich tapestry of linguistic intricacies, diverse literary genre such as narrative, wisdom, apocalyptic, vision, and prophetic elements. The variations in language, story, and content between the Hebrew and Greek versions, as well as the diverse manuscripts and translations in different languages, contribute to the multifaceted nature of the text. This complexity allows for a spectrum of interpretative perspectives among researchers, each presenting compelling arguments. However, amidst the rational discourse

⁷³ See Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 94.

⁷⁴ See Montgomery, 116.

⁷⁵ See Montgomery, 2; Collins, *Daniel*, 31; Collins, *Daniel, With an Introductory to Apocalyptic Literature*, 28, 34; Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, 16.

⁷⁶ See Collins, *Daniel*, 35.

and persuasive rhetoric, it crucial to prioritize the profound faith-based meaning embedded in each text. Many works have emphasized the significance of faith, thus different perspectives in interpreting the Book of Daniel can be reconciled or bridged in interpretations that emphasize the spiritual meaning for believers.⁷⁷ As articulated by Saint Peter, the interpretation of prophetic Scriptures should not be driven by personal will, for prophecy does not originate from human will, but rather from the prompting of the Holy Spirit in those who speak on behalf of God. In embracing the spiritual dimension, researchers can deepen their understanding of the Book of Daniel and engage in a more profound exploration of its significance in the realms of faith.

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⁷⁷ Frederik Poulsen, "Daniel's Prayer for Jerusalem: Reading Daniel 9 in a Diaspora Context," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 35, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09018328.2021.1909310>; Supriyono Venantius, "Inspirasi Kitab Daniel Untuk Menghadapi Stres Benturan Peradaban," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 19, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v19i2.82>; William Yarchin, "The Book of Daniel as Witness to the Pluriform Bible," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 51, no. 4 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461079211030084>.

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