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**Reading Daniel as a
Theological Hermeneutics
Textbook**

Aaron Hebbard

**Ph.D. candidate at the Centre for the Study of
Literature, Theology and the Arts
University of Glasgow**

Reading Daniel as a Theological Hermeneutics Textbook

A Thesis submitted for the fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Under the supervision of David Jasper at the Centre for the Study of Literature, Theology

and the Arts

University of Glasgow

Aaron Brent Hebbard

May 2005

To my wife, Nicole,
my Knucklehead

If patience is a virtue, then you are truly a virtuous woman.

ABSTRACT

Reading Daniel as a Theological Hermeneutics Textbook is a thesis that sets out to read the book of Daniel as a narrative textbook in the field of theological hermeneutics. Employing such disciplines as historical criticism, literary criticism, narrative theology and hermeneutics, this thesis seeks to maintain an interdisciplinary critical outlook on the book of Daniel. Two particular perspectives come to light in this reading of Daniel, both of which are inherently linked to one another. Firstly, is the perception that the character of Daniel is the paradigm of the good theological hermeneut; theology and hermeneutics are inseparable and converge in the character of Daniel. The reader must recognize in Daniel certain qualities, attitudes, abilities and convictions well worth emulating. Essentially, the reader must aspire to become a 'Daniel'. Secondly, is the standpoint that the book of Daniel on the whole should be read as a hermeneutics textbook. The reader is led through a series of theories and exercises that are meant to be instilled into his/her theological, intellectual and practical life.

Attention to the reader is a constant endeavor throughout this thesis. The concern is primarily with the contemporary reader and his/her community, yet with sensible consideration given to the historical readerly community with which the contemporary reader finds continuity. Greater attention on what the book of Daniel means for the contemporary reader is given than on what the book of Daniel meant in its historical setting. Yet, we must be sensitive to the 'historical' reasons (theirs and ours) that demand the acquisition of finely tuned hermeneutic skill. In the end the reader is left with difficult challenges, a sobering awareness of the volatility of the business of hermeneutics, and serious implications for the reader to implement both theologically and hermeneutically.

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Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
To the only God our savior,
Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever,
Amen.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Daniel¹ is all about interpretation, or at least it is according to my reading represented here in this thesis. This is not to say, of course, that what we are about to embark upon is the only reading, nor is it an attempt to debunk the vast amount of historical-critical attention given to Daniel^B. Quite the contrary, as we will notice this reading of Daniel^B not only invites other readings, but nearly insists upon their presence. Furthermore, the very issue of hermeneutics demands that its proponents must be conscientiously sensitive to the placement of a text in its historical setting, which also serves the readerly community with a sense of continuity in the vein of narrative theology. Yet, before we preview the our literary and theological objectives, let us firstly review briefly the general trends already abounding in Danielic scholarship, then we may take a look at the methodology that will be employed in this reading of Daniel^B as an exercise in hermeneutics.

Since the Enlightenment Daniel^B has been dominated by historical-critical studies from a non-traditional position.² The issues are varied and any overwhelming consensus upon them is often a rarity.³ The major issues that overshadow Danielic scholarship are the date of composition, the literary genre and antecedents, the unity of the book, the

¹ For the sake of clarity and economy, the book of Daniel shall henceforth appear as Daniel^B; Daniel as character shall henceforth appear as Daniel^C.

² J.J. Collins, *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p.1. By 'non-traditional', I mean from a position that views Daniel as a compositional product of the second century BCE; the term 'traditional' refers to the minority of scholars who uphold the position that Daniel is a product of the sixth century BCE as it purports.

³ Joyce Baldwin, *Daniel* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), p.17.

legend and person of Daniel^B, its bilingualism, the historicity of the Neo-Babylonian, Persian and Greek empires, the political career of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the apocryphal insertions into the Greek version, and its importance and placement in Jewish and Christian communities. The predominant scholars who have contributed to this vast amount of knowledge are C.F. Keil, J.A. Montgomery, Robert Dick Wilson, Eric Heaton, D.J. Wiseman, Robert Young, Norman Porteous, Joyce Baldwin, André Lacocque, J.J. Collins, D.S. Russell, Klaus Koch, John Goldingay, Otto Plöger, M. Delcor, Philip Davies, Shalom Paul, and a multitude of others who have contributed on a slightly smaller scale. Perhaps two of the best known commentators of ancient critical work on Daniel^B are Jerome and Porphyry, both of whom are known only by the surviving works of Jerome. What we find in Jerome is a defense of Daniel^B's authenticity against the attacks against such by Porphyry. These essential early arguments of Porphyry are later taken up by Danielic scholars in the past century, and therefore his arguments are revered as a milestone in critical scholarship, ironically preserved only by the defensive writing of its opposition.

While historical-critical scholarship is good and well appreciated for its immense contributions to the study of Daniel^B, this thesis is not necessarily intended to add a piece to this intriguing mosaic of Danielic criticism. At present, I can offer no justification—or even the critical skill for that matter—for such an attempt. However, neither do I wish to ignore such works; indeed, they will be one of several springboards that will be utilized to aid the accomplishments sought for in this project. Therefore I must assert quite plainly and boldly that this thesis is not a commentary on Daniel^B. Yet, if this is not a

commentary on Daniel^B, we might rightly ask, then what is it? The answer to this question leads to the issue of methodology.

From the beginning of this project, the desire and understanding was that Daniel^B would be approached from an interdisciplinary position. Daniel^B would not receive similar treatment as traditional commentaries that focus primarily on historical-critical, theological or practical issues in a verse by verse format. Though these are indeed important, additionally disciplines such as literary criticism, narratology, narrative theology, and hermeneutics would play integral parts in this reading of Daniel^B. With this anticipated framework the reading of Daniel^B began, yet shortly into the reading the interdisciplinary quality found in the hermeneutical character of Daniel^C was already blatantly obvious. I was not the interdisciplinarian working on Daniel^B; Daniel^C was the interdisciplinarian already at work showing me the way to do interdisciplinarity in that he maintains religious, academic, social and political perspectives proficiently. Furthermore, the challenges presented in the book such as narrational shifts, bilingualism and genric⁴ interplays proved Daniel^B to be literature that demands interdisciplinarity in its reader as well. With this in mind, Daniel^B began to be read as an exercise in the theory and practice of interpretation, which demands sharp skills at least in the disciplines already mentioned. In short, Daniel^C is observed as the paradigm of the good theological hermeneut.

Likewise, much of the same can be stated concerning of the issue of hermeneutics. My intention was to interpret the text of Daniel^B, but what I found was that Daniel^B is a text there to enlighten me how to interpret. The hermeneutical circle is essentially inescapable: I seek to interpret Daniel^B, only to read Daniel to discover the

⁴ 'Genric' is employed over 'generic' due to the 'general' connotation of the latter; this follows Mary Gerhart in her essay entitled "Genric Competence in Biblical Hermeneutics" pp.27-43 in *Semeia* 43, 1988.

already existent promotion of hermeneutics, then I study hermeneutics in order to be equipped to understand better the text of Daniel^B, until at last I interpret Daniel^B in a mode more aligned with the ‘Danielic ideology’, in that together, interdisciplinarity and hermeneutics play complementary roles. The study of Daniel^B as an exercise in hermeneutics is indicative of its endorsement of interdisciplinarity. Hermeneutics is inherently an interdisciplinary field of study for it is at once a science and an art, a theory and a practice, and as we will see, it is human and divine, natural and supernatural.

The first two chapters of this thesis function much like a funnel, taking two initially divergent approaches to this historical text and bringing them together. We begin our study in Chapter 1 with a survey of certain Danielic historical-critical issues that prove particularly pertinent to our ultimate goal, those being the identification of the possible authorial/readerly communities surrounding the original composition of the book and the issue of genre and purpose. The second half of Chapter 1 focuses on literary and narratological issues revolving around discussions of author, text and reader. These two issues converge in Chapter 2 in a discussion of narrative theology, which depends upon a cognitive continuity with a past readerly community of a given text, hence our study of prescribed historical-critical issues, and upon the literary conventions and theological understandings by which the present community reads this text, which leads to our study of narratology. Then the focus of the chapter narrows more, again like a funnel. The identity of the community, as stated by narrative theologians, is defined by the acceptable methods and pre-understandings of the community and by their communal understanding of the text. This being the case, the identity of the Danielic community is emphatically interpretive. Their identity is not defined simply by their praxis of interpreting the text of

Daniel^B by conventional means; their identity is also defined in the very encouragement by the text to become a community of interpreters. Therefore Daniel^B as a hermeneutics primer becomes a pretextual understanding for the community's praxis of interpretation for other 'texts' as defined by Daniel^B.

Before the actual reading of Daniel^B commences, certain issues in the narrational nuances must be addressed. This is justified by the fact that Daniel^B contains no less than three explicitly literary narrators in the twelve chapters, all of whom create literary and theological intricacies that demand our attention. Furthermore, the narrational issues are fully addressed in Chapter 3 in order to provide a smoother and more coherent reading of the chapters 1-12 of Daniel^B taken up in the subsequent chapters. From this point a careful reading of Daniel^B ensues from the slant that Daniel^B is to be read as an exercise in hermeneutics; training the reader to become a 'Daniel^C'. As we approach the reading of Daniel^B, the analogy to a funnel continues. Daniel^B is a text that is deposited at the wide open-ended top of this funnel, read and shaped by its contours of historical criticism, narratology, narrative theology and hermeneutics until at last it flows from the more narrow open-ended bottom.

Like the vast majority of Danielic scholars, we also will make a distinctive break between Daniel 6 and 7. The first six chapters present essentially the theoretical treatment of hermeneutics, while the latter 6 chapters basically leave the reader with practical implications for interpretation. My reader might notice a sense of paradox in my treatments of the earlier half of the narrative and equally in the latter half of the narrative. In the earlier half when dealing with the theoretical side of Danielic hermeneutics, I tend to go about digging through theories by way of praxis of interpretation. In short, I

practice interpretation in order to arrive at the theories latent in Daniel^B. In the latter half when exposing the practical demands of Danielic hermeneutics, I proceed through the material using theory to demonstrate how the reader is expected to practice the act of interpretation. In short, I theorize about the practical implications for the reader and arrive at theory through praxis. To a certain degree I find this method quite apropos. If I was to theorize abstractly about the theory of interpretation as found in the earlier narrative, the foundational basis would remain too abstract and I would fail to demonstrate that Daniel^B is indeed laying down the groundwork as a hermeneutics textbook. Likewise, if I was to practice interpretation in the latter half of the narrative, as I believe the text encourages the reader to do, I could perhaps hamper the point of praxis by limiting the practice of interpretation to my own interpretation. My point is not so much to interpret the text but rather to show that the text of the latter half demands that we must indeed interpret, though admittedly, I ultimately come to these conclusions by way of interpretation.

Finally we come to the last chapter in which we gather together the various and multiple implications for the reader. In this chapter the reader is recognized as playing a role as character, as text and finally as hermeneut before going his/her way to do the business of hermeneutics. Ultimately our reading is about what significance the text has for the reader; not the historical reader, but the contemporary reader who is sensitive to his own placement in the historical continuum and as a theological and literary member of a long-standing pistis community.

By way of delimiting the scope of this thesis, certain statements must be asserted upfront. Firstly, this reading—and not a commentary—will cover the Hebrew and

Aramaic material only. The apocryphal Greek insertions such as the ‘Prayer of the Three Children’ in chapter 3 and the stories of ‘Susanna and the Elders’ of chapter 13 and the two stories about Daniel^C and Bel and Daniel^C and the Dragon of chapter 14 will not receive detailed attention. In reading Daniel^B as a hermeneutics primer, I do not find that these stories add weight to the reading. However, on an interesting note the characteristics we find in Daniel^C in these particular stories are indeed consistent with the ones we find in him in the other court-tales. Even in these later traditions, Daniel^C is revered as a wise and pious man with an uncanny ability to solve mysteries. So while we can appreciate that these stories add consistency to the character of Daniel^C and add flavor to the ‘legend’ of Daniel^C, they do nothing for our present reading.

The primary text used in English is the New International Version,⁵ while others will also be used with reference. Other translations include Goldingay’s own,⁶ Goldwurm’s own,⁷ Fewell’s own,⁸ and the Tanakh translation.⁹ All references to Hebrew and Aramaic are from the Masoretic Text, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.¹⁰

⁵ *The Holy Bible*, New International Version, New York International Bible Society copyright 1973, 1978. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979).

⁶ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, (Dallas: Word, 1989).

⁷ Hersh Goldwurm, *Daniel: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources* (Brooklyn; Mesorah, 1988).

⁸ Dana Nolan Fewell, *The Circle of Sovereignty* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991).

⁹ Tanakh Translation, Jewish Publication Society copyright 1985, 1999. *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2004).

¹⁰ John R. Kohlenberger III, ed., *The Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987).

CHAPTER 1 HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONCERNS

Paradoxically, the more powerful and authoritative, the more writing it generates.
-Jonathan Culler¹¹

There is nothing new under the sun. Ecclesiastes 1.9b

Daniel^B is an intriguing book in Jewish and Christian communities of faith. As demonstrative of this, an investigation into the history of interpretation of Daniel^B reveals that Jewish and Christian scholars have never ceased to produce works of commentaries and articles on this piece of literature. In the Jewish circles of scholarship, Daniel^B has been often noted in discussions in the Talmud, has been the subject of many midrashim, was the most talked about prophet by Josephus, played an influential role in Philo's treatment of Joseph,¹² and has been used as a text that helps unlock the meanings of other texts.¹³ In Christian circles of scholarship, Daniel^B has been the subject on which many major Christian thinkers have commented, such as St. Ambrose,¹⁴ Jerome,¹⁵ Calvin and Sir Isaac Newton. Indeed, it has also further enjoyed a high sense of appreciation in the world of literature from such great authors as Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, Cowper,

¹¹ Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), p.90.

¹² In his work *On Joseph* Philo never mentions Daniel^C by name but any reader of Daniel^B and Genesis will concur that Philo conflates the two traditions of these two great interpreters serving under a pagan king. Philo only worked from Torah, but his knowledge and employment of Danielic tradition is noteworthy.

¹³ Take as an example its use to reveal historical sequences in the book of Genesis. See Goldwurm.

¹⁴ Vg. Ezek. 28.3.

¹⁵ Jay Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel* (Washington, Catholic Biblical Association, 1978); PL 25.491=CChr 75.A772.16-18.

Shakespeare, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Chaucer, Charlotte Bronte, Emerson, Thomas Hardy, Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge, and Joyce.¹⁶

The commonality of the interest in Daniel^B that exists between biblical scholarship (both Judaic and Christian) and literary circles is likewise evident in this present thesis. Not only does this work likewise revolve around the literary text of the biblical book of Daniel^B but it does so by utilizing both the fields of biblical studies and literary theory. In my approach to Daniel^B, I come to the text with two quite distinct competencies; one in the field of historical-critical studies that has been and still is so prevalent in Danielic studies, and the other in the field of narratology. Neither of these will be exclusively employed as an end in or of itself; rather they are simply a means to the end. This end to which I refer is to read Daniel^B as a text that submits to the reader theory, training and practice in hermeneutics, and offers clues to the reader the means necessary to be a good theological hermeneut.

This chapter is fundamentally broken into two sections, each of which represents an approach to biblical text. On one hand, the historical-critical information pertinent to our study of Daniel^B will be explored. Our particular emphasis in this work primarily demands our attention in the specific areas of historical authorial/readerly communities, genre and purpose. On the other hand, narratology and literary theory will also be explored in order to establish a foundation of literary conventions by which we can read the text of Daniel^B more proficiently. Essentially, historical criticism and literary studies ask different sets of questions; while historical criticism generally tends to ask questions that are external and extrinsic to the text and makes suggestions of its historical significance, literary studies asks questions that are internal and intrinsic to the text and

¹⁶ These will be more fully explained in the latter half of this chapter.

reveals how literature flourishes in the present. This present work is not solely about the past or the present, it is emphatically about both. An interdisciplinary methodology, maintaining various and sometimes competing perspectives, and the more specific concentration on the issue of hermeneutics permits us to have it both ways. Yet quite pointedly, this study will give greater concentration to 'present-ness' of Daniel^B's significance while also appreciating the historical continuum through which Daniel^B comes to us.

Due to the over-saturation of historical-critical attention, I feel compelled to justify any reiteration of historical-critical methodologies at all. To state things quite bluntly, I really have nothing new to add to this age-old debate. However, what I must also reveal and admit to is that I am not opposed to the historical criticisms *per se*, though it is not my preference of approaching the text. Justification for reciting the historical-critical debate raging among a majority of Danielic scholarship finds shelter in the very methodologies that I necessarily employ in this study of Daniel^B. To state the case more plainly, the following are the reasons of justification. Firstly, in some (post)structural attempts to read a text apart from any historical context, the pendulum has swung to a peak of complete disregard for historical data and has suffered willful naïveté to some extent.¹⁷ If such naïveté can be avoided simply by the awareness of historical data, then such information is a welcomed asset. We can come to the text not simply as contemporary and actual readers, but perhaps as informed and ideal readers. Secondly, in the field of narrative theology, which will be discussed in the following chapter, the

¹⁷ Gary Phillips addresses this issue in his "Introduction" to *Semeia* 51, "Poststructural Criticism and the Bible: Text/History/Discourse" (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) pp.3-4. He claims that poststructuralism regains some ground in historical criticism lost by structuralism, yet poststructuralism reshapes the posture of 'historical description' primarily by its rhetorical nature.

dependence upon the historical identity of the community of the text is crucial for a deeper understanding of the continuity with the identity of the contemporary community of faith. Narrative theology as a methodology promotes that ‘real’ readers are best served as mindful members of a community in the historical continuum. Thirdly, in the field of hermeneutics, which will also be discussed in the next chapter, history is an integral part of its theory and practice. One of the many chasms that hermeneutics seeks to bridge is between the past and the present. Fourthly, like the nature of hermeneutics itself, interdisciplinarity also musters strength and acquires greater credence with the acknowledgement of pertinent historical details maintained in the equation. Fifthly, and perhaps most importantly, Daniel^B is not only an historical piece of literature but it is likewise emphatically historically conscious. Daniel^B’s deliberate concerns for history put a similar responsibility on the reader to acquire a like-minded historical awareness. For these reasons—and perhaps more—the historical-critical issues remain important for this particular study. Yet since the Danielic historical-critical material currently in circulation is so vastly extensive, I can only hope to survey the basics of the issues and to limit them to the ones pertinent to our study.

Quite different is the situation in the reading of Daniel^B from a narratological point of view. Contrary to the numerous volumes produced on historical-critical issues in Daniel^B, few works have resulted from a purely literary reading of Daniel^B. Over the past few decades literary studies of the Bible have become increasingly popular and often such approaches have been prefaced by a justification for such a rendering since they were relatively *avant garde* and cutting edge. Although as late as 1996 when David J.A. Clines and J. Cheryl Exum claimed that a majority of scholars in the field of biblical

studies are still preoccupied with historical criticisms,¹⁸ biblical scholarship has reached a point now when such justification for literary approach is superfluous. Consider as an example one particular poststructural—and more specifically, deconstructionist—reading of Daniel^B by Dana Nolan Fewell entitled *The Circle of Sovereignty*. In the second edition of her work in 1991, she plainly states that in her first edition in 1988 she devoted a great deal of space to attend to the presuppositions, procedures and interpretive possibilities of narrative criticism. In the few years that pass between the two editions of her book, she claims that narrative criticism no longer needs explanation due to the continual flourishing of works on biblical narrative.¹⁹ Other volumes by Alter,²⁰ Bar-Efrat,²¹ Berlin,²² Miscall,²³ Sternberg,²⁴ and Gunn and Clines²⁵ are dedicated to the task of explaining methodologies, thus rendering yet another introduction unnecessary. Her entire explanation of methodology, including her brief slant on deconstruction, is reduced to two pages, while another two pages explain the general political motif of Daniel^B on which she concentrates. Narratology has reached a stage in biblical studies where justification and extensive explanation are no longer required, while justification for reiterating historical-critical concerns may indeed need such explication. Despite the presence of volumes explaining literary methodology, I will offer a brief introduction to the narratological aspects that are at work in the Danielic corpus.

¹⁸ David J.A. Clines and J. Cheryl Exum, “The New Literary Criticism”, *Semeia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), p.11.

¹⁹ Dana Nolan Fewell, *The Circle of Sovereignty*, p.9.

²⁰ *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981).

²¹ *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989).

²² *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983).

²³ *The Workings of Old Testament Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

²⁴ *Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 1985).

²⁵ *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982).

Though I indiscreetly admit that my reading of Daniel^B will be biased toward the literary methodology, there are several issues that constrain my approach. As I have already mentioned before, the historical details of Daniel^B can by no means be ignored. Additionally, I also realize that the method of narratology is just a means to an end. Ultimately my reading of Daniel^B will focus on its narrative theological perspective, which requires both historical and literary competencies. In other words, discovering the aesthetic beauty of Daniel^B as literature will not suffice, nor will affirming the historical date of composition work to establish credentials; neither historical-critical data nor narratological discovery is the aspiration. History and narratology are only tools in order to get to a 'deeper' and perhaps apocalyptically hidden meaning. Here, then are the two major components covered in this chapter that must be in place prior to our embarking on the narrative theological endeavor: the historical context of Daniel^B and the literary methodologies pertinent to my reading of Daniel^B.

Historical-Critical Issues in Daniel

Historical-critical Danielic scholars have a vast amount of issues with which they deal. Among them are the bilingualism, the genre, literary antecedents, unity, authorial community, historicity of kingdoms and figures, and the date of composition(s), yet on no one issue is a general consensus reached.²⁶ The factions are strongly divided and the central issue around which almost every other issue revolves is the date of the composition. Danielic scholars work according to their own hermeneutical circles in this regard: all issues relate to the date of composition and this date informs perspective on all issues. From the author and his community, to the central figure of Daniel^B, to other

²⁶ Joyce Baldwin, p.17.

historical figures, to genre, to languages, to its purpose, to its accuracies, to its predictive ability, to its placement in the canon, scholars study these components in order to draw conclusions regarding its date, and furthermore allow their conclusions of its date to influence their perspective on the individual issues.

Since Danielic scholarship is so sternly divided on these critical issues in Daniel^B, I will do my best to represent fairly differing sides of the various debates. In order to avoid any tactic of ‘name-calling’ or ‘labeling’ I will deem those scholars who take a ‘non-traditional’ or ‘liberal’ approach to the later dating of the book as the ‘majority’ since most Danielic scholars take this position; likewise I will deem those scholars who study Daniel^B from a ‘traditional’ or ‘conservative’ position to be the ‘minority’. By these terms I will simply be indicating the numbers of scholars assuming the various positions without regard to their theological or religious preferences or convictions. My intentions for this survey are multiple: 1) to give adequate background to general historical-critical concerns in Danielic studies, 2) to show how these specific details are part of the hermeneutical message of Daniel^B, and 3) to demonstrate at a later point how these competing positions on the historical-critical issues add strength to the overarching theme of Daniel^B as a hermeneutics textbook.

Genre – ‘Revealing’ the Nature of Apocalyptic

The general consensus among Old Testament and Danielic scholars is that Daniel^B is a prime example of an apocalypse.²⁷ Though many have reached this

²⁷ D.S. Russell, *Daniel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), p.6; Ronald Wallace, *The Lord is King* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), pp.24ff; Joyce Baldwin, p.46; W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), pp.10ff; André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), pp.4ff; J.J. Collins *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1981), p.18; Norman Porteous, *Daniel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p.14, though with open-ended conclusions; not in agreement is Eric Heaton, *Daniel* (London: SCM Press, 1956), pp.33-37, who views it as coming from a background of wisdom tradition, pp.41-47.

consensus, there are others who do not readily accept the classification of the whole of Daniel^B as apocalyptic. To be sure, nearly all Danielic scholars recognize the compositional division that occurs between the first six chapters of the book and the latter six chapters of the book. Therefore, as an amalgam of various traditions and sources, we must question the extent to which Daniel^B assimilates these various sources as an apocalypse. Furthermore, many Danielic scholars also recognize that the court-tales and perhaps the vision of chapter 7 stem from older sources than the later visions of chapters 8-12. Rainer Albertz has divided Daniel^B primarily by means of the distinct languages of the book; chapters 2-7 constitute a unit and chapters 1, 8-12 compose the other section. What Albertz seeks to prove is that Daniel^B is an apocalypse that is composed of two separate apocalypses: the Aramaic Daniel apocalypse of 2-7 and the Hebrew Daniel apocalypse of 1, 8-12.²⁸ Though there are many scholars with valid points who would argue against such a purely linguistic division of the book, still the point that he makes concerning the apocalyptic characteristic of the book as a whole can be supported by closer investigation.

In this coming section, we must primarily take a look at the generic²⁹ characteristics of the apocalypse, and then we will proceed to observe the extent to which Daniel^B fits into this genre. Firstly though, we will survey the various opinions of Danielic scholars regarding the literary antecedents to Daniel^B as apocalyptic.

Literary Antecedents to Daniel

We can see once again how the dating of the book comes into play in the issue of

²⁸ Rainer Albertz, "The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel" in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, (Leiden: Brill, 2001), Vol.1, pp.171-79.

²⁹ 'Generic' is employed over 'genric'; again, Mary Gerhart in her essay entitled "Genric Competence in Biblical Hermeneutics" pp.27-43 in *Semeia* 43, 1988.

literary antecedents to a piece of literature that has two possible dates of composition ranging from the 6th century BCE to the other in the 2nd century BCE. The primary reason for the divergence in opinion stems from the issues inherent to respective hermeneutical convictions, and only secondarily from textual and historical evidence, which still remains ambiguous. The majority of scholars regard the predictive ability of the literature as *ex eventu vaticum*, preferring instead to focus on coinciding external factors between the literature and history. The minority chooses to focus on the internal evidences of the literature, that the time Daniel^B purports to write is the time in which it actually is composed. Obviously, the minority of scholars who date Daniel^B back in the 6th century will have radically different literary antecedents than those who date Daniel^B in the 2nd century.

Among the minority of scholars declaring the date of composition to be the earlier 6th century BCE, a general opinion arises that as an apocalypse Daniel^B is a prototype of the apocalypses that follow and become popular during the three hundred year span between 200 BCE and 100 CE.³⁰ Yet even the notion that Daniel^B is to be thought of as an early or the earliest apocalypse does not negate the theory that Daniel^B is to some extent influenced by other pieces of literature prior to its composition. The opinions of scholars who wish to isolate the antecedents of Daniel^B are even more varied than what we have previously distinguished as minority and majority camps. Daniel^B is such a unique work of literature in the Hebrew Bible that the task becomes quite arduous. Opinions in general categorize the streams of tradition behind Daniel^B into a few different possible backgrounds: Israelite historiography, wisdom literature, Israelite prophecy, popular romances, and the socio-political catastrophe of the exile and diaspora. These literary

³⁰ Baldwin, p.47.

antecedents and conditions are not necessarily mutually exclusive; Daniel^B may indeed be an amalgam of all of these at some point.

In the case of Israelite historiography, we must keep in mind that never in this genre was an absolute attempt to record accurate history for the sole sake of historicity; Israelite historiography always had a theologically didactic purpose. The very same can be said of Daniel^B. In the very opening of the book the reader is confronted with this possible influence: the timeline is established, the king of Judah is named, and the alleged adversary is likewise identified along with his act that has everything to do with the people of God. Additionally, many chapters within Daniel^B seek to set the temporal stage of the story or vision as if following the forms of other Israelite historiography. The mythic background of the visions might also suggest a connection with the learning of the scribes, who were likely the producers of Israel/Judah's historiography.³¹ There are general similarities with other Judean historiographies,³² however the storyline leaves many historical gaps and follows the political concerns of pagan nations, and is not exclusively concerned with the exilic condition of Judah.

This connection with the learning of the scribes might also reveal in Daniel^B an influence from the wisdom literature. Eric Heaton argues his point that the author of Daniel^B is a scribe who displays more about the teachings of the psalms and wisdom than of other genres in Israel's hagiography.³³ He sees in Daniel^B two major themes from the psalms which are incorporated into the teachings of Daniel^B: the affirmation of Yhwh as king and judge, and communal laments. Furthermore, he also recognizes the theme of the wise man who is able to solve riddles in Daniel^B as stemming from the same school of

³¹ John Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.323.

³² Samuel, Kings and Chronicles being good examples.

³³ Eric Heaton, *Daniel*, pp.41-47; also supported by von Rad.

scribes who were trained in the writings of wisdom. Clearly, any reader will notice the blatant preferences given to the wise who receive their gifts from Yhwh. Acquisition of wisdom is a highly esteemed ideal, and in Daniel^B it becomes a matter of life or death. This is a strong case but in light of other arguments, it fails to completely convince.

The connection between apocalyptic and prophecy usually attracts the most attention and support from the scholastic community. D.S. Russell states that apocalyptic “has the prophetic tradition as its father and faith in the ultimate triumph of God in times of peril and persecution as its mother.”³⁴ Though Daniel^C is never identified as a prophet *per se*, the literature has certain prophetic nuances. For example, Daniel^C is regarded as a man in whom the divine spirit dwells, a man who receives supernatural messages, and one who confronts kings and authority figures, even calling for their repentance.³⁵ There are also the obvious connections with the so-called prophetic-apocalyptic³⁶ sections of such writings as Is. 2, 11, 13, 24-27, 34, 65, Jer. 23, Ezek. 38-39, Joel 3, Mic. 5, Zeph. 1, Zech. 3, 9, 14, where apocalyptic material is an integral part of the overall prophetic message.³⁷ Though many follow this argument for good reason, Daniel^B by no means falls tidily into the prophetic genre, as the organization of the Hebrew canon is quick to reveal³⁸, nor can we say with any certainty that prophecy is Daniel^B's literary antecedent.

Along with such stories as Tobit, the Story of the Three Youths (I Esd. 3.1-4.42), Esther, Judith, the apocryphal stories in Daniel^B, and the Story of Ahikar, Daniel^B also

³⁴ D.S. Russell. *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), p.104. Other scholars who view Daniel as an apocalypse which finds connectedness with prophecy are S.B Frost, H.H. Rowley, Paul Hanson.

³⁵ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.323.

³⁶ Poetic passages in the prophets which look to the end time and give an account of God's covenant promise to Israel. Baldwin, p.57.

³⁷ Heaton, p.35f.

³⁸ In the Tanakh Daniel is incorporated into the Kethuvim, the Writings, opposed to the Prophets in the Christian Canon.

demonstrates its similarities with popular romances.³⁹ In common with these stories is the theme of relationship between Yhwh, the people of faith, and the gentile world. In this relationship the one true God bestows upon his true believers the gifts of wisdom and might, which allows the chosen of Yhwh not only to survive outside the comfort zone of the Holy Land but to thrive and prosper without a surrender or compromise of faith. These stories are all set in an historical environment of exile and diaspora; a time that is not in accordance with their date of composition. 'Historical accuracy' is inconsequential; the lesson to be learned in trying and turbulent times is the bottom-line agenda for these authors. Without much debate we can see the tight appropriations that can be found in the first six chapters of Daniel^B, designated as court-tales, popular romances, or wisdom-style dramas. However, what is clearly out of alignment with this genre is the latter six chapters which speak very little of Daniel^B's prosperity in the foreign environment.

Another possible source of inspiration for Daniel^B may be found in literature outside the canonical and non-canonical works of the Hebrew communities; that is to say that there may be sources in non-Jewish literary and social milieus. Among such features are the four-empire scheme, the concept of the revelation, pseudonymity, and quasi-prophecy which may have been borrowed from various sources originating in Babylonian and Persian models, and from Hellenistic thinking, which also borrowed from the former two.⁴⁰ Hellenism adds to the mix the concept of angels and various forms of dualism which are both predominant in Daniel^B. Certainly the tone of the latter chapters is quite strongly anti-Antiochene and more moderately anti-Hellenistic, but this does not decidedly cancel Hellenistic influence. Such influence might indeed exist but there are

³⁹ Norman Porteous, *Daniel*, p.16; Heaton, p.37f.

⁴⁰ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.324.

but few examples that can be cited as being distinctively Hellenistic, Babylonian or Persian. some of these foreign features follow the establishment of Jewish apocalyptic in the first to second centuries BCE.⁴¹

Distinct from any literary antecedent is the catastrophe of the exile and the diaspora. Certainly we have no problem understanding that the socio-political situation of the exile and the diaspora were extremely consequential in the shaping of Daniel^B as literature; could that in itself be enough to make Daniel^B what it is? The content of Daniel^B undoubtedly speaks of both conditions of exilic and post-exilic periods, yet at the same time, such a proposal would largely ignore the literary nuances of the book. Yet, we must consider that from a perspective of the minority of conservative Danielic scholarship, new conditions might necessitate a new form of literature to meet the demands of the perilous times. The rise of culture clash, internal conflict, political oppression, foreign imperialism, economic crisis, and psychological stress in religious change may be the very components which gave rise to the need for apocalypticism.⁴² Despite what difficulties might plague this theory historically, this proposal seems most intriguing in light of our hermeneutical agenda, and will be taken up at a later point.

Whether Daniel^B be influenced solely by Israelite/Judean historiography or wisdom literature or prophetic literature or foreign thought or demanding times remains rather debatable; that Daniel^B is to some extent influenced by them all is a reasonable conclusion. The freshness and creativity of the eclectic collaboration of these distinct influences makes Daniel^B what it is. Though we may not be able to pinpoint with any accuracy the proper literary antecedent(s) of Daniel^B, we can simply say that Daniel^B is

⁴¹ Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), p.8; Baldwin, p.49; Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.324.

⁴² F.M. Cross, "New Direction in the Study of Apocalyptic" *JTC* VI, '69 p.161; Baldwin, p.51.

what it is, a unique and innovative piece of literature, set apart by genre from the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

Generic Characteristics of Apocalyptic

Despite the difficulties involved in the search for the ‘exact’ literary antecedents of Daniel^B, we need to press forward to determine the relation between Daniel^B and the genre of apocalypse. Several competent apocalyptic scholars offer their definitions of apocalypse but I would like to adopt the definition of apocalypse as given in *Semeia* 14 by J.J. Collins, a scholar who has worked and is working in the arena of apocalyptic and Danielic studies for a good, solid three decades. From this point we need to proceed to unpack the terms of this definition and critique its application to Daniel^B as literature, and if appropriately deemed, as apocalyptic literature. “‘Apocalypse’ is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”⁴³

Revelatory Literature. By the very lexical meaning of the word ‘apocalypse’, literature of this type is supposedly revelatory as indicated by the Greek word *αποκαλυψις*, which is translated as ‘revelation’, revealing that which is hidden. In our consideration of Daniel^B, we must make that distinction between the earlier six chapters and the latter six chapters of the book. To be sure both halves stress revelation but they are communicated in different manners and to different internal audiences. The haunting but (un)forgettable dream of Nebuchadnezzar, Yhwh reveals it to Daniel^C who then

⁴³ Collins, “Towards the Morphology of a Genre” *Semeia* 14 (SBL, 1979), p.22.

reveals it to Nebuchadnezzar. The power of God to rescue from a fire from which no god can possibly rescue is revealed to Nebuchadnezzar verbally by Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, visually by one like the son of the gods, and actively by Yhwh himself. The sovereignty of Yhwh is revealed to Nebuchadnezzar through a strange course of events. The end of a kingdom and the beginning of a new one is revealed to Belshazzar by an undecipherable text, which is later deciphered by Daniel^C. In the latter half of the book, Daniel^C receives revelations as well as interpretations of those revelations, which address several events that are to come. In the early half of the book, the revelation comes as an integral part of the storyline; in the latter half of the book, the revelation is storyline. The state of being apocalyptic or revelatory as well as an encoded and cryptic work demands a special hermeneutic, at least from historical-critical scholars.

Narrative Framework. Narrative is certainly not unusual in ancient Hebraic literature and occupies a great portion of the Hebrew canon. Though Daniel^B has commonalities with the prophetic and wisdom literary genres, and while there is the occasional employment of communication through poetry,⁴⁴ most of Daniel^B is narrative. Daniel^B is predominantly concerned with the task of telling the story through prose; its function and its form is that of a narrative.

Mediation by an Otherworldly Being. The mediation of revelation from an otherworldly being to a human recipient is a common feature of apocalyptic literature. The setting of this mediation is generally broken down into two categories: those apocalypses which portray otherworldly journeys and those which do not. The ratio between the two aforementioned categories is roughly equal, as is the case in the two

⁴⁴ Poetic sections include doxologies (2.20-23, 4.1-3, 34b-35, 6.26b-27) and the description of the Ancient of Days (7.9-10), NIV; also according to the Tanakh Translation also translates 4.7-9 (10-12), 11-14 (14-17), 20 (23), poetically as well as the 'Son of Man' description (7.13-14).

apocalypses of the Christian canon: Daniel^B does not have an otherworldly journey⁴⁵ and Revelation does.⁴⁶ The mediation of revelation is made possible by several different otherworldly means. For instance, Collins lists the following: a symbolic dream-vision, an epiphany, an angelic discourse, a revelatory dialogue, a midrash, a pesher, and a revelation report.⁴⁷ Daniel^B displays many of these features: symbolic dream-vision in chapters 2, 5, 7, 8; an epiphany in chapters 3, 7, 8, 10; an angelic discourse in chapters 8, 9, 10; an exegetical midrash in chapter 9 of Jeremiah 25; and pesher, that is, an appropriation of a text in a contemporary setting, as an overlap of exegetical midrash, in chapter 9 of Jeremiah 25. In Daniel^B there are several human recipients including Nebuchadnezzar, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah in the fiery furnace, Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall, and of course, Daniel^C. The otherworldly messengers are not always the same, but they usually connote angelic beings, one of which is assigned the name of Gabriel.⁴⁸

Transcendent Reality. The progress of theology throughout the Hebrew Bible is clearly seen by the increasingly transcendence of God over against the decreasing focus on the immanence of God. This very development from the immanence to the transcendence of God is particularly seen within the storyline of Daniel^B itself. This gap that is created from the separation of immanence and transcendence of God is necessarily filled by another being, one who is more imminent and less transcendent than God himself, but more transcendent than other humans inasmuch as he is able interpret the

⁴⁵ However, some might argue that Daniel^C standing at the banks the Ulai River by the fortress of Shushan (Susa) is a visionary transportation from his normal Babylonian locale, since the province in which Daniel^C stands is Persian and the time at which the scene takes place is under the Babylonian reign of Belshazzar. Heaton, p.192; Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.208. This is certainly possible but by implication only. In any case if the visionary journey does occur, it is certainly not otherworldly.

⁴⁶ Collins. *An Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p.5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* pp.6-11

⁴⁸ Michael is also named, but not as one conversing with man.

transcendent more authoritatively. Initially this gap—a critical and substantial component of the book—is filled by Daniel^C himself but as the chasm grows even larger in the later narrative, the gap must be filled by two characters, one still being Daniel^C and the other by an angelic being. The revelation of transcendent reality is a major theme in Daniel^B and its existence and prominence are obvious in every single chapter of Daniel^B. As with the development of apocalypses and later Hellenistic thought, dualism plays an important role. Attention to transcendent reality is brought to the forefront from the very opening of the narrative when the defeat of Judah and the sacking of Jerusalem are presented in the light of the divine will of Yhwh. Repeatedly, mundane existence is submitted only as a reflection of transcendent reality. Yet dualism in Daniel^B is uniquely marked in that these realities are not competing or simply coexistent, rather both realities fall under the supreme sovereignty of Yhwh.

Eschatological Salvation. The rise of apocalyptic literature and the reasons for its popularity are due largely to this particular factor of eschatological salvation. The communities of the ancient Jewish apocalypses were not the social elite, nor were they even the religious majority; they were the people who believed themselves to be the true descendents of a pure Israel who were the true worshippers of the one true God. Though they lacked social and religious influence, they believed that their present status was recognized by God and that they would be the ones who would inherit the kingdom of God. All their present tribulations, persecutions and adversity would someday be reversed when God would come and set things straight. Eschatological salvation is the element that gave hope to the seemingly hopeless. Apocalyptic literature has as its tone the attitude that realizes that things are bad and getting worse, but when the eschaton

comes the circumstances will be reversed by God and his faithful will be vindicated. Certainly this theme is also a consistent theme in Daniel^B in such contexts as the rock uncut by hands destroying the statue of worldly power (ch.2), the presence of the fourth man in the fire during perilous conditions (ch.3), the judgment of the Ancient of Days against the fourth and terrible beast and in favor of the saints (ch.7), the war that is raged against the saints, who will eventually attain victory (chs.11,12), and the final resurrection and reward of the righteous and punishment for the wicked (ch.12). All of these visuals offer hope to a people who live under circumstances quite distinctly human and therefore implicitly fallen; a hope that God will establish for his people a kingdom ruled by righteousness and for the righteous ones.

Supernatural World. The presentation of the supernatural world is closely linked to the presentation of the transcendental reality. However, Collins's point here is to ascertain that the apocalyptists were not only aware of a transcendental reality, but that they also envisioned a place where God was enthroned and perhaps a place the elect would inherit.⁴⁹ The crucial and pivotal point of chapter 7 displays this quite vividly where the Ancient of Days is enthroned, a heavenly court is assembled and one like the 'Son of Man' enters the scene on a cloud. In this respect, the transcendental reality assumes a visual form and the reader through the vision of Daniel^C gets a glimpse behind the scenes into what has thus far been a hidden sphere.

In summary we can see that Daniel^B fits quite nicely the definition of apocalypse as given by J.J. Collins, this includes the early six chapters of the book which are not as blatantly 'apocalyptic' as the latter six chapters. Though many strands of tradition may lie behind the composition of Daniel^B, and though no single one may be ascertained as the

⁴⁹ Referring to his essay "Towards the Morphology of a Genre".

predominant antecedent, and though it is likely to be an amalgam of these various strands of tradition, it is a book that is unique unto itself. Going beyond a discussion of genre, the issue of the historical social context must be explored so that we can reach a point when we might ask the question, “Who produced such a work? And for what purpose?”

Author and Community of Readers

When discussing the author and the community of readers surrounding the composition of the book, only one thing is certain, all attempts at identification are inconclusive.⁵⁰ The attempt to locate the author or authors of the book is somewhat frustrated by the lack of clear lines of demarcation in terms of genre as well as the anonymous/pseudonymous nature of the literature. The previous discussion of literary antecedents with its unclear conclusions prompts the questions relating to the traditions behind Daniel^B. Does the book reflect the traditions of the priesthood like other Israelite/Judean historiographies? Does Daniel^B signal a new prophetic tradition like some scholars suggest?⁵¹ Does Daniel^B come from the tradition of wisdom with its exaltation of God-given wisdom and ability to solve mysteries? Still other questions relate to the social classification; was the community from the pious Hasidim of lower class ranks or from the well-educated upper class? Precise locale becomes yet another issue; were they a part of the Jerusalem establishment or were they representative of a group of immigrants of the diaspora?⁵²

⁵⁰ Rainer Albertz, “The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, p.171.

⁵¹ S.B. Frost, *Old Testament Apocalyptic* (London, 1952), p.3; H.H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (London, 1944), p.15; D.S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964).

⁵² Albertz, p.173.

Danielic scholars have been and are still striving to identify the community most likely to have produced the work of Daniel^B. Among the minority of scholars who maintain the 'traditional' date of composition, only one real option exists: a generalized identity of pious exiles. For the majority of Danielic scholars, issues become far more complex since they reason that the two languages of Hebrew and Aramaic and two genres of court-tales and visions represent two distinct socio-political environs.⁵³ Among the majority of scholars several theoretical constructs surface; among them are the Hasidim, the cultic and wisdom circles of Jerusalem, apocalyptists yet learned scribes of the urban upper-class, priests, and well-educated, upper-class Jews not affiliated with the Jerusalem establishment. A wide variety of societies are explored in attempts of finding the most logical candidates and essentially all positions enjoy a certain degree of support. What is becoming clear, as Lester Grabbe points out, with regard to the correlation between literary apocalypses and social apocalyptic communities, the connection may not be as clear as scholars once thought.⁵⁴ Daniel^B as an apocalypse may not necessarily be the product of a 'traditional apocalyptic' community.

The Exiles of Judah

The exiles from Judah are considered as candidates of Daniel^B's original authorship and readership by only a minority of scholars. The exiles came from Judah, and many of those from Jerusalem, to Babylon in three shifts of deportations: 605, 597, and 586 BCE. They were part of a nation with a deep religious heritage, one that was supposed to be fundamentally Yahwistic, yet their evil kings of the past denounced Yhwh and embraced the pagan rites and religions of other nations. The exiles, of course, have to

⁵³ Stefan Beyerle, "The Book of Daniel and its Social Setting," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, pp.210-211; see also Rainer Albertz essay, "The Social Setting".

⁵⁴ Lester Grabbe, "The Social Setting of Early Jewish Apocalypticism," *JSP* 4, '89, pp.27-47.

be viewed in terms of their experiences on foreign soil, rather than on their previous history in their homeland.

The dismal circumstances of the exiles in Babylon were a shared experience by all Judeans. Yet, according to the biblical authors, the Lord had delivered his people over to the hands of the Babylonians in order to chastise them and turn them from their evil ways, and certainly not to turn the righteous ones into bitter, vengeful, hate-mongers as Psalm 137 implies. Understanding the healthier religious life of the Jews following the exile helps to promote the idea that according to the biblical authors, who suppose themselves to be interpreters of Yhwh, the exile was successful in turning the people back toward the true worship of Yhwh. To answer the second question regarding locale, the minority of Danielic scholars regard Daniel^B as originating from Babylonian soil. In reply to the third question regarding the social status of the community, regrettably few answers have been offered since it is assumed that many of the exiles initially shared economic circumstances. The strength of this position, the minority claims, lies in the fact that the literature reflects a great deal of local intricacies and cultural flavor.⁵⁵

Regardless of the possible compositional responsibility held by this historical community of Judean exiles, and even if it could be ascertained that this narrative was composed at a later date, this story is in fact set within these historical parameters for a particular purpose. In a sense the exile is metaphoric for a general condition that one might find oneself in times of Yhwh's willful movement for purposes we cannot always fully comprehend. The exile serves as a literary backdrop and theological motif utilized to demonstrate how the people of Yhwh ought to conduct themselves when found on

⁵⁵ Baldwin, pp.45f.

'foreign soil', under oppressive circumstances, or in religiously or morally compromising situations.

The Hasidean Community

The Hasidim or 'pious ones' were devout Jews who were devoted to the strict observation of the Law and to the religious traditions of their fathers during the 2nd century BCE, and they have long been considered the prime candidates for authorship and readership communities. The three references to the Hasidim come from the books of the Maccabees where they are known as "mighty warriors of Israel" who join the Maccabean revolt after the slaughter of pious Jews on the Sabbath (I Macc. 2.42), as scribes who seek peace with the high priest Alcimus (I Macc. 7.12-13), and from the hand of Alcimus to the Syrian king Demetrius, as followers of Judas Maccabeus who stir up sedition (II Macc. 14.6).⁵⁶ Within the larger context of Hasidim, we find several sub-categories. One such sub-group of Hasidim referred to in the books of Maccabees, and likely to be the majority, were those who threw themselves on the side of the Maccabeans in order to win religious freedom. The application of the term 'little help' (11.34) to the Maccabean revolutionaries, including the help of many of the Hasidim, demands that we must be extremely hesitant to credit the composition of Daniel^B to the Hasidean community at large. Though clearly the motives for the Hasidim were far more purely religious than the additional political agenda held by the Maccabees, still the efforts of the Maccabean-led revolt were joint. The Hasidean community involved in the revolutionary efforts would have given more credit to the composite forces than to refer to itself as 'little help'. In addition, we also find that many Hasideans were just as militant as the Maccabeans,⁵⁷ a

⁵⁶ J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), p.62.

⁵⁷ Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, pp.197-203.

quality that is not espoused in the Danielic corpus. However, this does not exclude the possible involvement in the composition of the book by a smaller sect of Hasidim.

The piety of the Hasidean community and the piety of Daniel^C are reflective of each other in several ways. Most obvious would be the willingness to die for the sake of religious devotion and the regularity of personal pious activities. Due to the closeness of the religious characteristics of Daniel^C and the Hasidim, many scholars such as D.S. Russell, O. Plöger and Martin Hengel believe that the book of Daniel^B was composed by the Hasidim.⁵⁸ The smaller sub-group within the Hasidim was more distant from the Maccabean way of thinking than the larger and more general group of Hasidim. This smaller sub-group is more akin to the later communities of Essenes, and more specifically, the monastic community of Qumran. When we also consider that Daniel^B has been found to be of great importance and highly esteemed in the Qumranian community, the likelihood of Hasidean composition is strengthened further. Danielic scholars such as Albertz firmly believe that the author of Daniel^B belonged to the “quietistic wing of the Hasidim who fought against the militant faction, emphatically denying the theological legitimacy of military resistance.”⁵⁹

The 'secularization' of Daniel^C, however, seems a bit strong for the preferences of the community. The willingness of Daniel^C in the service of the king, the utter lack of promotion for Sabbath observation, and its softness on the indulgent lifestyle flies in the face of any Judaic monastic community. These objections to a monastic Hasidean composition are much less formidable than those we find in our reluctance to credit the

⁵⁸ D.S. Russell. *The Message and Method of Jewish Apocalyptic*, p.16; O.Plöger, *Theokratie und Eschatologie*; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, v.1, p.97.

⁵⁹ Rainer Albertz, “The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, p.201.

Maccabean community or a more mainstream Hasidean community with the composition. Yet, in this subgroup Hasidean reading of Daniel^B, this community would have surely found idealistic literature. Daniel^C is one who stood for Yhwh and Judaic traditions in dietary manners, refused to partake in idolatry, pushed for the same moral conduct as the prophets, and ultimately recognized that his and the entire nation's future were in the hands of Yhwh.

Maskilim

Though many, if not most, Danielic scholars hold the view that the Hasidim are responsible for the composition of Daniel^B,⁶⁰ yet another theory suggests a group found within the pages of the text itself. A group of wise ones, the (מְשֻׁכְּלִים⁶¹), mentioned in 11.33-35 and 12.3, 10 is suspected of contributing to the milieu in which Daniel^B was composed.⁶² Unlike the socio-economical situation of the Hasidim, which is usually connected with an apocalyptic community representing the oppressed and underprivileged, the *maskilim* are upper class and are the highly educated intellectual elite,⁶³ yet at the same time they were disenfranchised by the general populace.⁶⁴ Support for this hypothesis comes from several different strands from within the Danielic corpus itself. To begin with the authorial community cognitively employed older Israelite traditions; specifically prophetic ones such as the seventy years from Jeremiah 25.11-12

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p.171.

⁶¹ Masculine *hip il* participle of (hebrew) and is often used as a noun: literally, “causing to know” or “one who makes (another) understand or become wise.” Associated with this word are others terms such as ... all found in Dan. 1.4 which together constitute early Jewish wisdom literature. See Stefan Beyerle, p.214-15.

⁶² Stefan Beyerle, “Daniel and its Social Setting” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, p.210.

⁶³ Lawrence Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), p.197; Philip R. Davies, “The Scribal School of Daniel” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, p.255; also Stefan Beyerle, “Daniel and its Social Setting” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, p.212.

⁶⁴ Philip R. Davies, “The Scribal School of Daniel” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, p.264.

turned to seventy weeks of years in Daniel 9, as well as the reinterpretations of the Songs of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. In addition, as literature Daniel^B is consciously literary—an academic and scribal endeavor—and was not simply the recordings of oral prophecies, as had been the case with regard to the prophetic books of the classical prophetic period. D.S. Russell makes this claim about the *maskilim*: “‘The wise,’ then, were in all probability a rather small elite, a spiritual aristocracy as it were, who believed they had been given special insight into the hidden mysteries of God and his universe.” In a very real sense, this description can be seen as the personification of the character of Daniel^C.

Among the possible candidates for the composition of Daniel^B, the *maskilim* withstand the scrutiny better than others based upon what we know about the belief system of the *maskilim* and what is available to us in the pages of Daniel^B. The very mention of their own group within the writings of the literature itself is a daring exception to the unspoken ‘rule’ of biblical narrative which does not usually identify the group for whom it claims to speak. Furthermore, and beyond the name of the group, the credentials of the authorial community are quite possibly spelled out in 1.4, 17 in the description of the inherent and God-gifted qualities of Daniel^C.⁶⁵ Deeper probing of the issues permits the discovery that Daniel^B is quite a revelatory witness to the self-understanding of its author(s).⁶⁶

Stefan Beyerle and Philip Davies both suggest that the belief system of the *maskilim* consisted of three main components, all of which relate and intermingle with

⁶⁵ Stefan Beyerle, “Daniel and its Social Setting” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, p.214-15.

⁶⁶ Philip R. Davies, “The Scribal School of Daniel” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, p.257.

one another. Firstly, as the wise and the righteous elite, they believed themselves to be like the Suffering Servant of Isaiah: teachers of others seeking spiritual enlightenment as well as sufferers for their divinely-appointed roles. This aspect collates with the court-tales of Daniel^B which alternate between duties and opportunities of enlightenment in chapters 2, 4, 5 and the prospects of persecution in chapter 3 and 6.⁶⁷ Secondly, a further employment of the Songs of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah becomes apparent in the motif of exaltation within a theological concept of humility and atonement.⁶⁸ The qualities possessed by the Suffering Servant are also evident in the character of Daniel^B, who submits himself to persecution to stand for righteousness, who prays for forgiveness for the sins of his people, who is repeatedly exalted, and whose days are prolonged as he serves till the first year of King Cyrus. Thirdly, is the connection with the eschatological hope of immortality, which is also derived from the fourth Song of the Suffering Servant and from the Wisdom of Solomon. The point at which the concept of the resurrection appears in Daniel^B is a later stage of development than what we find in Isaiah or the Wisdom of Solomon. The fourth Servant Song suggests that teaching and exaltation constitute the transformation of the Servant's status or personality, while the Wisdom of Solomon expresses a hope for immortality and everlasting life for the righteous ones.⁶⁹ Daniel^B is a final stage in the development of afterlife with its proclamations of resurrection and the status of the wise shining "like the brightness of the heavens...like the stars forever and ever."⁷⁰ Though the *maskilim* were the educated and righteous elite, they were also members of the marginalized of society who were not supportive of

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p.251-52.

⁶⁸ Stefan Beyerle, "Daniel and its Social Setting" in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, p.217.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p.218.

⁷⁰ Dan. 12.3,4.

Hellenization. The *maskilim*'s eschatological hope was placed in the resurrection and the otherworldly reality to which they gained access by their exercise of wisdom and mantic practices. In the meantime their hope had substance, they were the ones who were privileged with knowledge of revelation: "but those who are wise will understand."⁷¹ In their worldview wisdom leads to righteousness,⁷² and in the closing chapter, the comparisons are not between the righteous and the wicked but rather between the wise and the wicked.⁷³

There is certainly no consensus with regard to the identity of the authorial community that produced Daniel^B, but what we have found in the *maskilim* is most worthy of our critical attention. The *maskilim* as the authorial community would help explain the literary and sophistic nature of the literature. In the historical-critical arena, such information will continue to be researched and debated; opinions will sometimes shift and other times sharpen depending upon recent theories or discoveries, as is common in the practices of historical criticism in biblical studies. Yet, clearly in its favor for our present purposes is the notion that Daniel^B is literature designed by a community of the wise to instill a thirst for wisdom and to provide a means by which to accomplish it. Discussion of the authorial community leads naturally to a discussion of the purpose of the literature.

Purpose of Daniel

In proposing the purpose of the writing of the book of Daniel^B, we have the advantage of the presence of the text, which is far more than what we have in the proposals of the identity of the authorial community. Yet we must recognize that the

⁷¹ Stefan Beyerle, p.221; Dan. 12.10.

⁷² Dan. 12.3.

⁷³ Dan. 12.3, 10.

purpose of the book is intrinsically linked to its author(s) and readerly community, but because the precise identity of the authorial community is dubious, we are forced to speak of purposes of the literature rather than of a single purpose. However, as Daniel Smith-Christopher argues in his essay, the purposes of the various times, conditions and authors have so much in common with each other that we can legitimately return to our search for a purpose of the literature that befits several options.⁷⁴ In other words, we need not search for a solitary purpose for a particular time, place and condition. We can justifiably observe the purposes that Daniel^B serves for the readership among several historical possibilities since there is much in common among them such as oppression, lack of religious, political and social freedom, and enforced cultural integration. Though we might apparently need to speak of the plurality of purposes of the book due to the presence of three compositional candidates, the commonality of circumstances in which we find all three candidates allows us to return to a less complex discussion of a single purpose of the book.

Through the assessment of archeological and anthropological research, Smith-Christopher describes the conditions of Jewish life under Neo-Babylonian, Persian and Hellenistic empires (both Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties) as rather similar to one another.⁷⁵ In support of his case he states, “Memories and traditions regarding the hubris of Babylonian rulers that formed the ‘raw materials’ for the Daniel tales would not need extensive ‘revision’ to be flexible enough to apply with equal cynicism to the pretensions of rulers throughout the Persian and Hellenistic eras.”⁷⁶ His point is not to ignore the real

⁷⁴ Daniel Smith-Christopher, “Prayers and Dreams: Power and Diaspora Identities in the Social Setting of the Daniel Tales” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, pp.266-290.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.274-80.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p.280.

differences between the political and ideological regimes from 587 to 164 BCE, but rather to show that they all had a similar proclivity toward power and control over wealth, territory, and human resources. Furthermore, and on the opposite side of the socio-political spectrum, the Jews suffered greatly under all empires.⁷⁷ The point could be well argued that from an apocalyptic literary perspective stories of a purported earlier time could be used to mask the narrative which actually bespeaks of the present—and as we will later suggest, even our own present, and the ‘presents’ to come.

The purpose must therefore be multifaceted, yet consistent with the evidence we have before us in the pages of Daniel^B. Predominantly and most broadly, Daniel^B is didactic. Yet we must be careful not to assume that what the reader was supposed to learn from the stories and visions in Daniel^B was solely taken from the content itself. The actual process of learning was as important as the lesson itself. Clearly in Daniel^B knowledge and wisdom are highly esteemed qualities to be sought after. At the same time, clearly the possession of wisdom and knowledge are not to be found primarily from human sources but rather from Yhwh, who is the ultimate source of everything that the exiles would need to survive. Yhwh is the integral component that provides the eschatological triumph of superior knowledge of the wise and righteous over superior strength of any number of human political entities.⁷⁸ On this new battlefield the Jews were forced to renegotiate their identity as a people bereft of any political identity; they must return to their fundamental existence as the people of Yhwh. Eventually, those who

⁷⁷ Smith-Christopher argues that the alleged lenience toward the Jews in the Persian empire may be more of a ploy of propaganda than of reality; likewise the conditions under the Hellenistic regimes were as equally ‘exilic’ in their own homeland as they were in Babylon; p.278.

⁷⁸ Daniel Smith-Christopher, “Prayers and Dreams: Power and Diaspora Identities in the Social Setting of the Daniel Tales” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, pp.274-80.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p.289.

find their identity in the wisdom and submission to Yhwh defeat the imperial powers of the earthly kingdoms.

Narratological Issues

Daniel^B is an ancient piece of literature and for that reason the historical background of the book has been reviewed, but Daniel^B is also a contemporary literary piece inasmuch as it continues to be read and reread by today's readers who approach the text with new and different literary skills, tools and protocols. Essentially, we must observe the inherent differences between an historical-critical approach to a text and a narratological approach. While historical criticism asks a certain set of questions that are external to the text itself, literary criticism asks an entirely different set of questions that are concerned with the internal workings of a text. The narratological approach allows the flourishing of new literary skills and tools which help us in understanding a text, whether it be ancient or modern. Though the historical-critical methods of traditional biblical studies are relatively modern in the long history of biblical interpretation, their goals are to read the ancient text in its most accurate and reasonably situated time and place. Narratology, which is quite remarkably different from historical-critical interpretations, invites fresh readings and seeks to loose the bonds of fossilization, an approach which we must realize has its advances and its shortcomings. Frank Kermode quite aptly puts it, "the plain sense, if there is one, must be here and now, not in the origin"⁷⁹; and Jonathan Culler states that, "Writing is divorced from the origin."⁸⁰ In dealing with narratological issues, Edgar McKnight summarizes our present hermeneutical goal when he claims,

⁷⁹ Frank Kermode, "The Plain Sense of Things" in *Midrash and Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 1990), p.190.

⁸⁰ Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p.100.

“literary criticism dissolves the distance between the ancient texts and the modern reader-critic.”⁸¹

When discussing the genre and literary antecedents of Daniel^B in the previous section, conclusions understandably vary. But now that we are about to venture into the literary arena, we are able to view Daniel^B on these modern literary grounds and we may quite confidently state that Daniel^B is a narrative, a story that we will read as if a novel; we will be taking an approach that assumes Daniel^B to be an historical fiction by form and function. We can set our historical presumptions and conclusions to the back of our minds, though not altogether away, if we are willing to agree to read Daniel^B as a literary piece. Keeping in mind that these two sections of this particular chapter comprised of historical backgrounds and literary criticism essentially cause me to be as dependent upon the literary critics—though they may not be specifically dealing with Daniel^B as literature—as I am on Danielic commentators. The crucial point to be made is that Daniel^B as an historical text is now being transplanted into a different and contemporary context, and now its meaning and effectiveness must be retained or perhaps reestablished. The point is not to de-historicize Daniel^B, but to promote its iterability which further strengthens its place in history, regardless of immediate context.⁸² Reading Daniel^B solely as an ‘historical document’ potentially causes its fossilization and in effect dampens its contemporary significance; however, reading Daniel^B from a literary perspective ensures its vivacity and seeks new applications of relevance, which thereby provides an avenue of continuity.

⁸¹ Edgar McKnight, *The Bible and the Reader* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p.12.

⁸² Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.64.

Like many narratological studies, this brief introduction to the literary approach to Daniel^B will observe the nuances present in three distinct areas: the narrative and authorial voices, the characters within the story, and the reader's interaction with the text. Through different periods of literary theory, critics have put their concentrated efforts into a specific area of literary theory's trinity: the author, the text, and the reader.⁸³ This particular study incorporates whenever appropriate all three in order to give the most well-balanced view as possible of Daniel^B as literature.

Narrative and Authorial Voices

Unlike most modern novels, but not unlike many biblical writings, the author of Daniel^B is essentially anonymous.⁸⁴ Yet a small minority of Danielic scholars may argue that internal evidence suggests that in addition to an anonymous author, Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel^C also participate in the writing of this book. Whether that be the case or not from an historical point of view is currently irrelevant; what we are left with fundamentally is an anonymous piece of literature. In this literary sense Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel^C are easily recognized as narrators within the text. We obviously have to recognize that Daniel^B does indeed have an author, but the ascertained identity of such a person is unattainable to the twenty-first century reader. What we are able to attend to are the traces of the author residing in the text through the voice of the narrator who speaks on behalf of the implied author who speaks on behalf of the real author. In the case of Daniel^B, any study of the author necessarily becomes a text-oriented endeavor, which breaks form from traditional author-oriented studies due to the anonymity of the literature. Anything we know about the author is through the inferences left to the reader

⁸³ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in this Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) p.25-29.

⁸⁴ Though we have made the case in the historical-critical study that perhaps the *maskilim* has revealed its authorial involvement in the credentials of Daniel^C and citations in the closing chapter.

in the text itself. The possible or precise identity of the author is something grappled with by the biblical historical critics as we saw in the former half of this chapter, but now we are more concerned with the traces left by the author in the persons of the three narrators and the implied author. In this case it becomes nearly impossible to allow the intentions of the actual author to rule current interpretations on two accounts: 1) historically, as we have previously observed, and 2) literarily, lest we fall into the trap of the intentional fallacy by only allowing what was supposedly intended to dictate any contemporary relevance. We must, however, take into consideration the person of the implied author and his three narrators.

Perspective

The narrator in any story has a perspective that is carefully selected by the author. This perspective helps communicate the message of the story itself, whether by some sense of 'omniscient' commentary on one hand or by willful misguidance on the other. In either case, the controlling author and the manipulated narrator both work in concert to establish their 'meaning' in a text, even if the two 'voices' are completely incompatible.

Discussion of perspective, or point of view, is rudimentarily broken down into two basic facets, the 'person' and the degree of omniscience.⁸⁵ The two most common distinctions in the area of 'person' in a narrative are between first and third-person narrations, of which both are employed in Daniel^B. Though we may comprehend the values and contributions of both types of narration, understanding the interaction and interrelation between either types of narration is still another matter to be tackled in Daniel^B.

⁸⁵ Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1961), p.149.

In any case and in every story, narrative material is always mediated to readers through some kind of narrator, even when there is little distinction between narrator and the implied author.⁸⁶ Even an impersonal and ‘objective’ narrator, also referred to as ‘undramatized’, has a perspective that affects the way the reader views the material. On the opposite end of Wayne Booth’s spectrum containing the ‘undramatized’ narrator is the ‘dramatized’ narrator whose characteristics are far more noticeable to the reader, and perhaps more distant from those of the implied author’s.⁸⁷ This is immediately evident whenever the first-person narration is employed; the ‘I’ or the ‘we’ calls the reader’s attention to the narrator as a first hand witness or as a living character. Even third-person narrators can become dramatized by their manners of speech, their specific slants on issues, and their ‘voiced’ opinions; sometimes attaining a vivacity equal to those who are the subjects of the narration.⁸⁸

Narrators also must be viewed in terms of their reliability and their privilege, which should be viewed distinctly from one another. Reliability is relational to the implied author’s own perspective. When a narrator speaks or acts in a consistent manner with the nature of the implied author, the narrator should be considered to be reliable; when a narrator speaks or acts inconsistently with the nature of the implied author, then the narrator is unreliable.⁸⁹ Once again a spectrum is established between narrators who are faithfully reliable on one side and narrators who may be deliberately deceptive or inadvertently contrary to the implied author on the other side. Where the implied author establishes his narrator on this spectrum is a matter of careful selection. The precise

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.152.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.151f.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.152.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.158-9.

distance that the narrator is placed in proximity to the implied author, the characters and the reader plays an important role in the reading process since the narrator functions as the 'filter' of the implied author's material.

Privilege is also a spectrum of varieties from narrators who know any and everything to those who are limited to share only the things tangible to their own experience. A narrator may be reliable inasmuch as s/he is consistent with the implied author and yet limited in his/her privilege to the material presented in the story; or a narrator may be unreliable in his/her presentation of the material and yet have complete access to all aspects of the story. Privileged access comes in a variety of forms from knowing the inner thoughts and feelings of another character, to knowing the mind and motive of God, to knowing everything happening simultaneously, to knowing anything the implied author may deem necessary. This form of omniscience likewise has its variety which includes insights into psychological dimensions, moral aspects, religious convictions, and intellectual aptitudes. Narrators may access one or several or all areas of privileged information.

Tone

The tone of the narrator sets in motion the reader's sympathies for or antagonisms towards the characters. The manner in which a reader is going to feel toward certain characters is an indispensable component of the narrator's tone. This tone not only affects the reader's emotional involvement with the characters, but likewise affects the reader's reception or rejection of the characters' own words or actions. If a narrator has proved to be reliable and omniscient, and stresses favorable acceptance for a particular character, the speeches given by that particular character are treated similarly as if it were from the

'mouth' of the narrator. On the opposite side of the spectrum, if this narrator leads the reader to acquire distaste for a specific character, the words from that character are therefore treated as suspect.

If a narrator, however, proves to be unreliable and out of line with the general 'meaning' of the narrative, quite the opposite can be assessed by the reader than if the narrator is considered reliable. If the implied author leads the reader to question the motives and judgments of the narrator critically, then the characters that are favored by the narrator are not necessarily preferred by the reader. Likewise, the characters that are negatively viewed by an unreliable narrator are viewed with a certain allotment of sympathy. In such a case, the author depends upon the device of showing the 'goodness' of certain characters and the 'unpleasantries' of other characters, and pits that evidence against the misguided judgment of the narrator. As far as biblical literature is concerned, Daniel^B has to be considered one of the most interesting books in terms of any study of narration. Not only are there three distinct narrators, but they all display various levels of reliability, tone and perspective. This will be studied more extensively in Chapter 3 when we will closely examine the three narrators.

Irony

Ironic it is that such a well known and popular trope as irony is so slippery to define. Those who know and understand irony the best are the first to admit to its complexities and inherent difficulties. Wayne Booth commenting on the sloppy use of the term 'irony' in a newspaper article on the Apollo 13 flight states, "The irony is that such ironies, leaving such ironic indifference to precision, multiply on every hand, leaving the

ironic critic caught in the ironic trap of defining a term that will not stay defined.”⁹⁰ Through his ironic overtones and obvious overuse of the term, his point is well taken; irony has become an overly broad term and has led to a state of confusion, and could furthermore lead to its demise as a useful term. For instance, the definition of irony can range from Cicero’s narrow usage of “saying one thing and meaning another,”⁹¹ to one that is incredibly broad: “Irony is more than a literary device; it may be said to inhere in [one’s] outlook on life.”⁹² Similar in attitude regarding the sloppy quality of the study of irony is also reflected by D.C. Muecke when he lists no less than nineteen definitions, many of which, he says, have been invented impulsively by the critics who employ them. The result of such an approach is that “one never sees any ordered relationship between the kinds and consequently never gets a clear picture of the whole range or compass of irony.”⁹³

Irony is especially and purposely placed in this section dealing with narrative and authorial voices for several reasons. Though inside characters may at times intentionally display irony within the story, and though readers may find ironic something the author or narrator did not intend to be taken ironically, irony is usually a play between the narrator and the narratee, or between the implied author and the implied reader. The feature that allows irony to work is the polyvalent nature of language. Ironies work when language exhibits meanings on two or more levels, and furthermore fosters tension between the two levels. On one level are the more literally interpreted actions and/or

⁹⁰ Wayne Booth, *Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1974), p.2, footnote 2.

⁹¹ Cicero, *On Oratory II*, p.67ff; from Norman Knox, *The Word Irony and its Context* (Durham, NC: Duke U. Press, 1961), p.30.

⁹² Joseph T. Shipley, *Dictionary of World Literature: Criticism, Forms, Technique* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), p.331.

⁹³ D.C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1969), p.4.

words of the characters, and on the other level is the meaning that the narrator desires the narratee to apprehend, and which is often contrary to the meaning of the face-value level. Additionally, the workings of irony require that some character(s) be unaware of this tension. The end result is that the reader is prompted to respond to the subtlety and shock of the irony by attaining a position that is higher than that of the inside characters.⁹⁴ The characters are usually unaware of the play of irony; it is characteristically a shared musing between implied authors and implied readers.

Essentially the characters in the story must inevitably be unconscious of the play of irony in order for the irony to work in the first place. Dramatic irony is employed when the reader becomes privy to crucial information given by the narrator which is necessarily denied to the inside characters. In the case of dramatic irony, the ironic device becomes a purposeful tactic in order to give readers access into the hidden meaning. Tragic irony works quite similarly with one major exception: the speaker who unwittingly utters the ironic saying often becomes the victim of his/her own speech. Comic irony works with an even greater exception: the protagonist who utters the ironic speech has been given essentially the same privilege as the outside reader, while the victim of the irony remains confined only to the information available to the inside characters. In this case the antagonist is the one who is unwittingly victimized by the cogent speaker's words. As we will see later in our study of Daniel^B, we will find several applications of irony at work in the text that work in conjunction with the overall theme of the book as a whole in order to grant a deeper understanding of Daniel^B's meaning.

Irony plays a significant role in the reading of Daniel^B. We will observe the minute details of ironic nuances as we proceed through the text, but there are some

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.19f.

general observations that will be best served here. Firstly, we must notice that throughout the narrative that those who have been given power by Yhwh yet fail to recognize the source of their power and authority are the very ones who find themselves helpless. On the flipside the ones who are deemed as powerless yet understand the power of Yhwh are given power beyond those who exercise their political sovereignty. Secondly, we must notice that not even Daniel^C is immune to this ironic ploy. The power that Daniel^C receives is certainly recognized as coming from Yhwh, yet the wise and pious interpreter who consistently solves the riddle in the earlier half of the narrative fails to comprehend much of the texts presented in the latter half of the narrative. At this point irony is directed towards to the reader who, like the crowds who comment on Jesus as he makes his way to Golgotha, is tempted to say, “he saved others, yet himself he cannot save.”⁹⁵ The ironic trap into which the mockers of Jesus slip is the same in which Daniel^B's readers are in danger of slipping as well. As the mission of Jesus is paradoxically perfected at his crucifixion, we must also be willing to explore the possibility that Daniel^C's truest comprehension of text and Ultratext comes when he realizes he is unable to comprehend.

Setting

Setting relates to the temporal, spatial and physical backdrops of the story. Though setting is generally deemed to be secondary to other features of the story such as plot and character development, it is nevertheless an important aspect of the narrative. Setting should not be taken for granted by any means; in many cases the spatial and temporal dimensions of the story provide the only logical environment in which the storyline could take place. In such a case, setting conjoins with the plot and characters in

⁹⁵ Mt. 17.42.

a tightly woven relationship. This is intensely true in Daniel^B as the entire narrative opens with an historical, geographical and theological context in which the story will be played out. The initial opening context of Daniel^B is not the only orientation that the reader receives; nearly every major episode in the story begins with a new reorientation of time and space.

There is yet another significant facet of setting in Daniel^B in particular and perhaps in other narratives in general. Setting in Daniel^B facilitates not only storyline and plot, but powerfully pertains to the essence of the theme of the book. The fact that this story does not take place on Jewish homeland under conditions of autonomy is highly significant. The narrative takes place in a strange land during turbulent times. The rules have changed, and the wisdom required to make the critical changes while not entertaining religious or moral compromise becomes more than a coping mechanism; it is about the survival of righteous living. Daniel^C has to prove himself on testing grounds under pagan dominion if we are to come to view him as a man of uncompromising conviction and impeccable wisdom. Furthermore, Daniel^B thematically demands the integration of a new paradigm; the necessity for this new paradigm comes as a direct result from the setting established in the opening verses of the book. The former ways of Judean life are past history; what is now expected from these Judean exiles—and other readers to follow—as they seek to reestablish religious life in unfriendly environments? To this question Daniel^B offers an answer. The paradigmatic shift could not have occurred so effectively had this story been set in Judah or Israel under terms of autonomy. The newness and strangeness of the setting aids the incorporation of the new paradigm. Ultimately, the question must be asked, what is universally true about the

character of Daniel^C that can be appropriated into any new setting that any reader may encounter? The point of setting in Daniel^B is not necessarily that the narrative takes place in Babylon or Persia, the point is rather that the setting is unfamiliar, strange, unfriendly, and perhaps incompatible to former ways of life. The settings of Babylon or Persia only become coded or symbolic references to a number of 'Babylons' or 'Persias' in the life of the reader.

Showing and Telling

In later discussions of Daniel^B, the differentiation between showing and telling becomes an integral part of the study of the education of the reader as well as of the narrational strategy. Narrators have two primary and indispensable methods of narrating, narration either by showing or by telling. Narrators fluctuate between the two; sometimes describing the scene, sometimes offering a summary, and sometimes giving both in conjunction with one another.⁹⁶ The author of Daniel^B causes his three narrators to do both throughout their respective episodes of narration, but also at work simultaneously is a larger metastructure of the three respective narrated sections, one of which essentially tells and two that essentially show.

The degree to which a narrator relates information to the narratee is based partly upon shared privilege. As we will see later in Daniel^B the narration must necessarily shift from the first Narrator to first-person perspectives of two other narrators in order to maintain the consistency of the Narrator's shared privilege. The amount of shared privilege of the narrator directly affects the methods of showing and telling, which ultimately affect the process and responsibility of the reader. Even the narrator who exhibits full omniscience may not divulge the full amount of his/her privilege. In other

⁹⁶ Wayne Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, p.154.

words, a narrator may know all that there is to know about a particular event and the characters involved, but may also choose not to reveal the motives and inner thoughts of the characters—as one might expect the narrator to do in a modern ‘psychological’ novel—but only allows the reader to be shown what is observable to the bystander. Generally speaking, this is what we find in the Narrator of Daniel^B, one who shows Daniel^C to the reader with little to no comment pertaining to his motives or inner thoughts apart from what Daniel^C himself reveals to his fellow characters. Though the reader may have no initial reason to distrust the privileged presentation of the Narrator of Daniel^B, s/he must also realize that the Narrator does not make the reader privy to all inside information.

Though the line between showing and telling may be to a certain degree an arbitrary one, the method of showing over against the method of telling has long been the preference from Aristotle to certain contemporary critics like Booth.⁹⁷ The main concern for the moment is, however, how the methods of showing and telling work in the reading process. When the reader is told certain details, especially psychological, spiritual and motivational insights into characters, and provided the narrator is reliable, the reader trusts and accepts the judgment of the narrator. Yet when the narrator chooses to show his material to his reader, a greater requirement for skillful reading is forced upon the reader. The reader is not told what to think; rather the reader is shown the evidence by which s/he must evaluate for him/herself. The showing of information additionally compels the reader to become an interpreter. As we shall see later, the methods of showing and

⁹⁷ Wayne Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, p.20,4-8,16. Booth, however, emphatically expresses that often ‘tellings’ of certain accomplished authors are greater than ‘showings’ of less skillful authors. Furthermore, he warns against taking the expulsion of the author (a completely impossible endeavor) to ridiculous extremes, which would in the end make a story undecipherable.

telling, and telling as showing are used in Daniel^B to fulfill a didactic function to hone the reader's interpretive skills.

Characterization

Daniel^B displays characters on a variety of levels and all of whose proportionate functions relate to the purpose of the literature. Characters play different roles and can be classified on different levels. Interest in character is crucial in Daniel^B since the education of the reader is inherently linked to the development of Daniel^C and other characters. What 'good' the reader finds in Daniel^C becomes the goal to be obtained in the qualitative character of the reader. Some primary issues, however, must be resolved in order to proceed with our investigation of characterization in Daniel^B. Among such issues are the connection between historical genre and characterization, the ongoing dual that persists between 'purists' and 'realists' in debates of characterization, and the reader's role in character development.

Preceding any further discussion of characterization, however, is the necessity to notice the connection between and debate over the two literary ingredients of character and plot. Following classical and Aristotelian models of criticism, plot is given the place of high priority in the story while character serves the story as an agent to thrust the plot forward. In this sense the characters need only be typical, static and immutable; they are certainly not viewed as individuals but rather as types and representatives of a species or a group. During a much later period from the eighteenth century and following the novel concerns itself with character as much as plot, if not more, as it displays characters as individuals who develop and are open to change.⁹⁸ Historically speaking, the age in

⁹⁸ Christopher Gill, "The Question of Character Development: Plutarch and Tacitus" in *Classical Quarterly* 33, p.471; Macauley, Robie and George Lanning. *Technique in Fiction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964),

which Daniel^B was originally composed broadly fell in this classical and Aristotelian era when character was considered subordinate to plot; but to every rule there is an exception and in Daniel^B we find such an exception, as we shall later notice.

Classification

The variety of levels we read in characters necessitates some sort of classification among them. The initial vocabulary used in describing this classification came through E.M. Forster, who made two basic distinctions about character: round and flat.⁹⁹ Since the time of this initial introduction to character classification, his treatise has been criticized as being overly simplistic, but we must likewise understand that his classification is not simply between two characters, but rather a spectrum between the two. Character traits, as later defined by Seymour Chatman, are relatively abiding or stable personal qualities.¹⁰⁰ The round character displays multiple traits, is complex, perhaps unpredictable, and may have deeply divided loyalties. The flat character displays only a few traits, which are consistent and is mostly predictable with less complexity. Though the basic idea remains the same in contemporary contexts, the vocabulary has changed throughout the decades since its first introduction in 1927, and though Forster's classification has been criticized for being overly simplistic, they are foundational to the development in characterization studies that have since made great advancements.¹⁰¹

What we may find interesting is the possibility that such a 'modern' theory of character classification can be applied to Daniel^B and is relevant today despite the ancient

p.61; Mudrick, Marvin. "Character and Event in Fiction" in *The Yale Review* 50, p.211; cited in Fred Burnett, "Characterization and Reader Construction" in *Semeia* 63 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), p.14.

⁹⁹ Edward M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Brace and World, 1927), pp.65-82.

¹⁰⁰ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse* (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1978), p.126.

¹⁰¹ Robert Fowler, "Characterizing Character in Biblical Narrative" in *Semeia* 63 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), p.97.

date of the literature, especially at a time when such attention to character was not the norm. Two historical problems stand in the way of an easy application of characterization to Daniel^B: firstly is the general era in which Daniel^B was composed, and secondly, is the genre with which Daniel^B is identified. As previously stated, literature at the time of the composition¹⁰² of Daniel^B does not foster any sort of significant character development as a rule. Fred Burnett cites several scholars of ancient literature who make the case that in general ancient literature from classical and hellenistic periods does not accentuate the individuality of the character but rather the typical quality of the character.¹⁰³ Yet Burnett uses many of the same scholars to assert that there are exceptions to the rule; there were indeed characters who attain individuality, who develop and whose final summation is left open-ended. What Burnett and other Gospel narrative scholars claim for the atypical quality of characterization in the Gospels, I stake for the case of Daniel^B. In Daniel^B we find both typical and individualized characters, those who develop and those who do not, those whose conclusions are easily identified and others whose closures are ambiguous. The characters who exist on a wide continuum of qualities in general are not the norm in ancient literature, but nevertheless they find placement in certain biblical narratives such as Daniel^B and the Gospels.

To address the second issue regarding the connection between the genre of Daniel^B and characterization requires some dependence upon our previous critical discussion of apocalyptic genre and its literary antecedents. Classical scholar William Korfmacher states that types of characterization in the classical era are relative to the type

¹⁰² Regardless of the 6th or 2nd century BCE preference.

¹⁰³ Fred Burnett, "Characterization and Reader Construction" in *Semeia* 63, p.6-14; he cites Christopher Gill, Marvin Mudrick, Robie Macauley, George Lanning, William Korfmacher, Geneva Misener, A.S. Osley, and H.D.F. Kitto.

of genre.¹⁰⁴ The problem is that apocalyptic is a unique genre and was still in its formative stages at the time of Daniel^B's composition, and so it had little in common with classical or hellenistic literature. No other model of characterization can be precisely applied to apocalyptic literature. Like so many other issues in dealing with apocalyptic, we have to conclude that what evidence of characterization we find in Daniel^B has to become the central focus of our study of characterization. We do not need to consult any other models of characterization from any other apocalyptic-type literature, especially since Daniel^B is unique even among other apocalypses. We must read Daniel^B for what it is rather than projecting upon it any other literary model or convention. If each genre displays different characterization, and if Daniel^B is an exceptional apocalypse, then the unique characterization found in Daniel^B is reflective of its distinctive genre.

Role and Development

Characters exist because they have roles to fulfill. Broadly speaking, the protagonist serves as an example to admire or emulate, while the antagonist represents qualities that need to be shunned, avoided and perhaps changed. The antagonists in Daniel^B are multiple in their personifications, but the true common denominator of all antagonists is the sole reliance upon the wisdom and hubris of man. This abstract idea is the true antagonist and finds its manifestation in a variety of characters throughout the narrative. On the opposite side of the antagonist, we find the one primary protagonist Daniel^C to be paradigmatic by which the reader must judge and evaluate all other characters. The Narrator does not simply pit Daniel^C the protagonist against all other antagonists, or even Daniel^C against the idea of man's pride and wisdom. What fundamentally occurs is the conflict between the abstract protagonist—that is to say,

¹⁰⁴ William Korfmacher, "Three Phases of Classical Type Characterization" in *The Classical Weekly*, p.85.

devotion to Yhwh who is the true source of wisdom—and the abstract antagonist. These abstracts are assumed into the identities of particular characters within the narrative in order to ‘flesh out’ the conflict between the two disparate ideologies. This hypothesis that asserts that the characters are only words representing values or themes construed within the confines of the text is reflective of the so-called ‘purist’ theory.¹⁰⁵ Even real historical figures become only literary constructs when written within the confines of a narrative. In short, they are essentially literary entities whose ‘lives’ begin and end respectively with the text.

On the other side of the debate are the so-called ‘realists’ who hold to the idea that characters can and do sustain life outside the text itself. In this theory characters are not just agents used as functionaries in order to move the plot along; they are subjects of debate and discussion outside the context of plot and the literature in which they appear.¹⁰⁶ Purists have on their side a stronger theoretical base, but the realists have in their favor the experience of the readership.¹⁰⁷ In addition to the purist point of view, Daniel^C too can be seen from a realist perspective. In other words, a long list of experience reveals that Daniel^C is discussed for the measure of his character gathered by the reader and not in sole relation to the plot of the story in which Daniel^C appears. Serving as examples are great authors such as Milton,¹⁰⁸ Sir Thomas Browne,¹⁰⁹ Cowper¹¹⁰ and Longfellow¹¹¹ who all cite Daniel^C as exemplary in fasting and moderation in eating. Shakespeare alludes to Daniel^C’s judiciary wisdom in *The*

¹⁰⁵ Marvin Mudrick, “Character and Event in Fiction” in *The Yale Review*, p.213.

¹⁰⁶ Fred Burnett, “Characterization and Reader Construction” in *Semeia* 63, p.4.

¹⁰⁷ Norman Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975), p.266.

¹⁰⁸ *Comus*. pp.720-23.

¹⁰⁹ *Works*. 3.10-11.

¹¹⁰ “The Progress of Error.” pp.215-16.

¹¹¹ Samuel Longfellow. *The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*. 1.36.

Merchant of Venice.¹¹² In *Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne sets the scene whereby the townspeople are in want of the mysterious identity of the father of Hester Prynne's child, a riddle that needs a 'Daniel' who could expound it.¹¹³ Chaucer often mentions Daniel^B in literary discussions of dreams and their significance.¹¹⁴ Also enamored by his abilities to interpret dreams are Charlotte Bronte¹¹⁵ and Emerson.¹¹⁶ Thomas Hardy recognizes the strong spirit of nonconformity in Daniel^C as he refuses to compromise his convictions when common sense would dictate that he should just follow suit with the rest.¹¹⁷ Daniel^C's interpretation of the composite statue is applied to the career of Napoleon by Wordsworth¹¹⁸ and Byron.¹¹⁹ The apocalyptic imagery found in Daniel^B is employed by Byron,¹²⁰ Coleridge,¹²¹ and later by Joyce¹²² in reference to the Irish troubles.¹²³ Daniel^C is not solely a literary construct restricted to the pages of the text; experience tells us that Daniel^C becomes 'real' for many readers.

Perhaps what seems befitting to the strengths of both the purist and realist theories are those like Seymour Chatman who are able to treat characters like both personalities and constructs.¹²⁴ Not only does Chatman do an admirable job in fluctuating between the two extremes, but essentially his middle-ground conclusions find support in the study of characterization in Daniel^B. Characters in Daniel^B display their roles as types as well as

¹¹² 4.1.333-34.

¹¹³ Chapter 3.

¹¹⁴ *Nun's Priest's Tale*. 7.3127-28. *Piers Plowman*. A.8.137-44; B.7.151-58; C.10.304-07. *Handling Synne*. EETS o.s. 119 (1901), 443-60.

¹¹⁵ *Shirley* chapter 1.

¹¹⁶ "The Miracle." Pp.25-30.

¹¹⁷ *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Chapter 13.

¹¹⁸ *Prose Works*. 1.334. 1974.

¹¹⁹ "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte." 19-27.

¹²⁰ "The Irish Aviator." 53-60.

¹²¹ *Collected Works*. 3.1.263. 1978.

¹²² *Ulysses*. 616, 620, 634, 638.

¹²³ The preceding material is collected into one volume by Lawrence T. Martin in the *Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), edited by David Lyle Jeffrey.

¹²⁴ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p.117-19, 132.

individuals as we have seen. They are types that serve the literature as words within the story; they are also individuals that assume a life of their own as paradigms and anti-paradigms in discussions outside the context of Daniel^B.

Characters develop and their developing process also serves a role in the story and in the life of the reader as well. While there may be little to no development in flat or stock characters, round characters are not static, they develop in either a positive or negative direction. As characters evolve and develop so also do the reader's attitudes toward the qualities that the characters represent. The reader may come to understand that we need not have all the answers and solutions at the present moment to be considered successful, but with hard work and diligence we can arrive through our own character development to a similar point where we find the developing hero of our story. Or perhaps on the other side of the process, the reader may come to grips with the idea that though we may start with every possible advantage and wholesome training, we may find ourselves susceptible to moral degradation. As the reader identifies with certain figures in the narrative, the character's development becomes the development of the reader as well. What we find in Daniel^B are two exceptional cases of character development, one found in Daniel^C and the other found in Nebuchadnezzar; while other character developments in such characters as Darius and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are implicit. The evidence that Daniel^B is concerned more with character development than with mere plot is the reality that the structure of the book contains several different episodes displaying various plots, but a few main characters outlast the plot and endure

through the episodes.¹²⁵ The conclusiveness of the plots, therefore, becomes subordinate to the enduring and developing qualities of several characters.

The Reader

Literary critics through the centuries have studied literature from various vantage points, predominantly focusing on one of three loci: the author, the text or the reader. Hopefully by now I have adequately communicated my interdisciplinary intentions; I need not focus on the author or the text or the reader, but rather on the (implied) author and the text and the reader. These particular areas of study have both their strengths and weaknesses, and perhaps an interdisciplinary approach will have its weaknesses as well, but what I hope to gather is the culmination of the strengths of these three areas of literary criticism. In this past twentieth century, studies of the reader have been the last to receive serious scholarly attention, and though the pendulum swings once again toward the preference for text-centered studies or to arenas outside these three like deconstructionism,¹²⁶ reader-response criticism is still an effective model of interpretation.

In reader-response theory the main tenet of belief is that meaning resides in the reader rather than in the text or in the author's intention. This tenet is asserted at various degrees by reader-response critics; while some say that meaning is produced solely by the reader who comes to the text with certain pre-understandings in order to formulate meaning, others will claim that it is the interplay between reader and text that generates meaning. In either case the participation of the reader is absolutely essential to 'give' meaning to a matrix of letters on a page. Reader-response critics are acutely aware that

¹²⁵ Danna Nolan Fewell, *The Circle of Sovereignty*, p.13.

¹²⁶ Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p.41.

often the intended meaning of the author in 'his/her' text is not synonymous with received meaning by the individual reader or by the larger interpretive community. This should not be construed, therefore, as an uncritical approach to text but rather a different slant in the larger scale of literary studies, and for this difference it is warmly welcomed and appreciated in this venture.

Implied and Actual Readers

The real author and indeed the original historical readers of Daniel^B have been lost in history and remain only as theoretical conjectures, but the implied author and implied reader live on through the extant text. Furthermore, the actual reader, the one who is doing the reading, continues to exist in inexhaustible forms every time the book is read and reread. The implied reader relates to the actual reader in a significant way.

Whereas the actual reader is one who approaches the text with certain agendas, beliefs and experiences; the implied reader is one whom the implied author envisions as a reader. As Walter Gibson has pointed out, a bad book is one whose mock (implied) reader is one who the actual reader refuses to become, and conversely, a good book is one whose implied reader is someone with whom the actual reader gladly identifies.¹²⁷ In general, the author, implied or actual, does not know the actual reader, but his second self, the implied author, can only assume to know whom the implied reader is to be or should become.

So the question is, where do the actual and implied readers converge? The answers are innumerable in every reading experience and it speaks significantly of the melding of theory and praxis. As Stanley Fish points out, the informed reader is neither

¹²⁷ Walter Gibson, "Authors, Speakers, readers, and Mock Readers" in Jane Tomkins's *Reader Response-Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1980), p.5.

an abstraction nor an actual reader, but a hybrid who does everything within his power to make himself informed.¹²⁸ However, in this immediate application to the reading of Daniel^B and with any hope, attention and discipline, I would like to reply cautiously to the aforementioned question with the simple answer of “me”. John Darr states, “An interpreter’s search for ‘the reader’ should always begin with a look in the mirror... ‘the reader’ will always be *my* reader...”¹²⁹ I cannot possibly pretend to speak for any other actual reader or a larger interpretive community, perhaps not even my own. All that I really can do is be conscious of the fact that the actual reader for whom I speak is none other than me. My reading is my own, though I am fully aware that I cannot be ‘objectified’ apart from influences of my community. My exact intertextual experience is shared by no one else other than me. I come to the text of Daniel^B with certain historical competencies at my disposal and a desire to read Daniel^B narratologically. I have read Daniel^B and found in it a certain theme, and have reread Daniel^B through that thematic lens. Now I must make my reading convincing enough that I might reach a point where I can speak for readers other than myself in the context of a readerly community.

For the most part, therefore, I will play the part of the reader in this exercise, even if it means that I run the chance of self-contradiction and I must, at times, change my own ways of thinking. For example, if I make certain assertions about the theological condition of Nebuchadnezzar early in the narrative, only to retract my statement at a later point, I do so because I play the part of the reader, who has been led to do this very thing by the narrative. I must realize that it is the narrative itself that leads the reader to change his/her mind on a certain topic and that this aspect functions as a purposeful tactic. The

¹²⁸ Stanley Fish, “Literature in the Reader” in *Reader Response Criticism*, p.86-87.

¹²⁹ John A. Darr, “Narrator as Character” in *Semeia* 63 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) p.47.

acknowledgment of the act of changing a viewpoint or perspective is an integral part of the reading process, and more pertinently a part of hermeneutics, and even more specifically of Danielic hermeneutics.

This distinction as reader, however, is not an adequate description according to Robert Fowler, who claims that readers neither make judgments about texts nor do they declare them, such things are the jobs of the critic.¹³⁰ The claim of being the reader is not sufficient; I must make further claims as well. By the very presence of such a thesis as this and based upon a reading of Daniel^B, I must also stake the claim of critic and assume to attend to the responsibilities inherent in this critical role as well. Somewhere—or perhaps ‘somewheres’—on the slippery continuum between the pure and subjective reader and the pure and objective critic lies the role played by a reader-response critic. On one hand the reader is a critic and on the other hand the critic is a reader; what Robert Fowler calls a critical reader or what Stanley Fish calls an informed reader, or what many others call the ideal reader.¹³¹ Such a reader is competent in a variety of literary nuances such as language, semantics, idioms, professional and other dialects, and literary competencies.¹³² What the whole issue of the identity of the reader really comes down to for Fish, and followed by Fowler, is that the reader, whether referred to as critical, informed or ideal, is the actual reader responsible for the reading if s/he comes to the text equipped with the proper tools. Fish’s informed reader is Stanley Fish; Fowler’s critical

¹³⁰ Robert Fowler, “Who is ‘the Reader’ in Reader Response Criticism?” in *Semeia* 31, p.6.

¹³¹ “Ideal Reader” is a term by Joyce, see Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 1990), p.46; Other terms offered by Fowler are informed readers, optimal readers, superreaders, competent readers, educated readers, hypothetical readers, etc. Stanley Fish cites Ronald Wardhaugh’s mature reader and Milton’s fit reader, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard U. Press, 1980), p.48.

¹³² Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* p.48-9.

reader is Robert Fowler; and the convergence of the actual, implied and ideal reader of Daniel^B in the pages that ensue is Aaron Hebbard.

Yet at the same time, more recent critical admonitions to be upfront and open about the critic's own ethnicity, nationality and gender have been the implicit expectation. Not only am I the critical or ideal reader, but I must say that I do so as a white Anglo-American male, and one who reads from his own historical situation in the beginning of the twenty-first century and not from the pretense of the historical time of composition centuries before the Common Era. Furthermore, I should not hesitate to mention as well that I also come from a conservative Protestant tradition, which is probably as influential on my reading strategy as any other condition under which I exist. Even the ideal and critical side of myself as reader is informed and shaped by my own religion, ethnicity, nationality and gender living in the twenty-first century; it is inescapable.¹³³

Such a responsibility becomes enormous since I cannot simply aim to read as one, though I have already admitted to my limitations as such, but as a number of informed and actual readers, each of whom will be identified by a matrix of theological, political, cultural and literary determinants.¹³⁴ I must comment as a self-conscious reader speaking for a community here and now; the 'Danielic community' to which I will refer in this thesis is not an historical construct but is a presently living entity who reads Daniel^B and yet has continuity with past pistic communities who have read Daniel^B. Therefore, when speaking of the reader, I consciously include others into my readerly community and do

¹³³ This is the general thesis in Daniel Patte, *The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995); Robert Fowler, "Characterizing Character in Biblical Narrative" in *Semeia* 63, p.98.

¹³⁴ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p.87.

so in practical terms by identifying the reader as 'him/her' or 's/he' and talk of 'our' agenda and the tasks that 'we' must perform.

Reading Strategies

All readers are different and come to the text with their own experiences and dispositions. Yet if they are readers then they must exhibit certain reading strategies. Readers inevitably will all yield different interpretations in the end, but they all must to share general linguistic rules of competence.¹³⁵ All readers possess and pursue reading strategies, whether they are conscious of them or not. The reader's response is not solely a reaction to what the author or the text has to say, but is a result of the manner in which a reader reads. Instead of claiming that one's interpretation of literature is a response to what the author meant, one must acknowledge that it is a result of the interpretive strategies one possesses.¹³⁶

In going about describing reading strategies, we must start with the very basic and move toward some of the more complex issues within a limited amount of space. The first thing that must be stated may be obvious to most contemporary critics, but it is something which reader-response critics had to bring to the attention of others in literary criticism decades ago as a foundational piece of a reader-oriented theory. Wolfgang Iser puts this postulation as such, "A literary text can only produce a response when it is read; it is impossible to describe the response without analyzing the reading process."¹³⁷ In other words, study of reading strategy begins with the cognizance that there is a reading strategy, and no response occurs without the initial act of reading. Following close behind this initial step, Stanley Fish calls attention to the barrier between students and the

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.5.

¹³⁶ Jane Tompkins, p.xxiii.

¹³⁷ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: John Hopkins U. Press, 1978), p.ix.

knowledge they must acquire, firstly identifying that knowledge is something that they themselves are already exercising, and then by asking them to become self-conscious about what they do in the hope that they can learn to do it better.¹³⁸ In other words, students do not simply acquire knowledge after the reading of a text closes, rather the encouragement is for students to be attentive to the way in which the learning process is informed by the very process of reading. The interpretive strategies one possesses, says Fish, results in the meaning the reader assigns to the text.¹³⁹ This is the task in our reading of Daniel^B; in believing that Daniel^B is a textbook in hermeneutics, we must be aware that our reading strategy and the discovery of hermeneutical principles in the text are shaped by this premonition, but which in turn has been formed by an initial reading. This suggestion, of course, will be explored in our discussion of hermeneutics; how the parts inform the whole and how the whole pertains to the parts.

Becoming cognizant of one's own reading process entails nearly every other strategy a reader employs. Even before the advent of critical attention to the presence of a reading strategy, scholars have agreed that basic lexical and syntactic skills are prerequisite to any further acts of reading or interpreting. For instance, Umberto Eco states the case as such: "one must first of all assume that sentences can have a 'literal meaning'"¹⁴⁰ By this he explains that within the boundaries of a given language, there is a literal meaning of lexical items and that it is the one listed by a dictionary's definition as well as by 'Everyman' who would define the word. The reader's freedom can only follow this fundamental skill, but can never precede it.¹⁴¹ Of course, there are

¹³⁸ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p.22.

¹³⁹ Jane Tompkins summarizing Stanley Fish, *Reader Response-Criticism*, p.xxiii.

¹⁴⁰ Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, p.5.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.6,53.

innumerable other such examples that stress the absolute necessity for the essential practice of basic lexical and syntactic skills.¹⁴²

Beyond the cognizance of such a thing as a reading strategy and the awareness of the reader's own dispositions, and beyond the assumption that the reader possesses lexical and syntactical skills, other skills come into play. Because our use of language is inherently selective and we cannot say everything, the reader has to fill in the gaps left in the text. Sometimes these gaps are intentional in order to allow the reader to perform this protocol, other times gaps occur due to slippage. In either case, the range in which the reader's skills in filling in the gaps is as wide, if not wider, than the range in interpreting the words themselves. Because language is inherently linear, the reader must unscramble sequences in modes of projection and retrospection. The reader intrinsically guesses where the narrator is taking him/her and must also correct any misconceptions that s/he once held in the course of the literature. Because language is inherently ambiguous and can mean several different things, the reader decides the connotation of the word and reassembles the gist of the context according to his/her best judgment.

Ultimately, reader-response criticism wants readers to become self-aware of their own places in the historical continuum, their own personal repertoires and experiences that shape them as readers and to read accordingly, and find the meaning of the text for themselves. The discovery of meaning is essential for all schools of interpretation; reader-response just seems to emphasize the individuality of the discovery or of the

¹⁴² For example, notice Stanley Fish's three basic skills prerequisite for the ideal reader: The informed reader: 1) competent speaker of the language out of which the text is built up; 2) is in full possession of the semantic knowledge that a mature listener brings to his task of comprehension. This includes the knowledge (that is, the experience, both as a producer and comprehender) of lexical sets, collocation probabilities, idioms, professional and other dialects, etc.; 3) has literary competence from figures of speech to whole genres.

meaning. This leads to our next discussion dealing with the reader's response and discovered meaning.

Response and Meaning

The primary ideology in reader-response criticism is the theory that meaning to a variety of degrees resides fundamentally in the reader as s/he reacts to the text. Reader-response critics assert that the meaning of a given text is a consequence of being in a particular situation in the world.¹⁴³ On one hand, some, like Stanley Fish, believe that in essence the text has no determinate meaning; it is the reader who is ultimately responsible for assigning meaning to the text.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, some, like Wolfgang Iser, assert that the text does have meaning, in fact inexhaustible meaning, and observe that the reader's activity is only a fulfillment of what is already implicit in the structure of a text.¹⁴⁵ And still others, like Norman Holland, claim that textual meaning is a combination of what readers project onto a text and what the words actually mean.¹⁴⁶ In any case all reader-response critics denounce the theory that meaning is completely determined by the text or in the intentions of the author and furthermore, refuse to view the text as being 'fixed'.¹⁴⁷ The process by which meaning becomes meaningful is a fluid dynamic as each reader encounters the text for him/herself.

The foremost issue that I would like to address concerns the theory which states that what a text does is what a text means. The reason for this specific emphasis is that it has direct bearing on our reading of Daniel^B, which will be explored more fully in the last

¹⁴³ Jane Tompkins, p.xxv.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.xxii. This is an assessment of Fish that may not remain true to his later convictions.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.xv.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.xix.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, "The Reader in History: The Changing shape of Literary Response" in *Reader Response-Criticism*, p.223.

chapter dealing with the reader as hermeneut. Though Stanley Fish later admits in an introduction to his essay “Literature in the Reader” that he no longer strictly adheres to the same basis of logic,¹⁴⁸ still this essay is significant for the reason that it introduces the present theory at hand. Fish claims in his essay that the message of the text should be viewed as a constituent of, but not be identified with, the meaning of the ‘utterance’.¹⁴⁹ What is being proposed is neither methodology nor mechanism, but rather a ‘language-sensitizing device.’¹⁵⁰ The emphasis is on what a text does to or for or against a reader, and becoming ‘good’ at this type of reading entails becoming aware of the probable and hidden complexity of the answer. Ultimately, reading is an experience rather than a repository of extractable meaning; or to put it another way, reading is not so much about the organization of materials as it is about the transformation of minds.¹⁵¹

The ‘affective’ theory of reader-oriented critics like Fish and the actual reading of Daniel^B find themselves quite compatible. The theory of reading on one hand is fulfilled in the anticipation of the actual reading process on the other hand in the literature of Daniel^B. Reading Daniel^B is not so much a task of processing information as it is an experience of performing—and experiencing—that which the message is portraying. There is an assumption inherent in the literature of Daniel^B that assumes and anticipates this model of reading. The message of Daniel^B is subservient to the affects anticipated by reading of the narrative. I will further explain this in later chapters.

¹⁴⁸ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p22.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.32.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.66.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.67.

The Interpretive Community

Although the reader as a theoretical construct has been indispensable thus far in our discussion, what is most pressing in the chapters that follow, which notably are based upon the topics of the historical community of readers and the readers of today reviewed in this chapter, is the issue of the community of readers. Discussion of the interpretive community is quintessential as a prelude to our study of narrative theology in the next chapter. For now, however, we will briefly overview the concept introduced primarily by Stanley Fish.

Reader-response criticism rejects the notion that texts have fixed and determinate meanings, and for this reason it has received substantial criticism as being relativistic and for exercising no constraints whatsoever.¹⁵² As a healthy response to such an accusation, many reader-response critics have further refined their reader-response theories in order to restate their position adequately. Critics, like Umberto Eco in his treatise entitled *The Limits of Interpretation*, have stated their theses that texts essentially have controlling features, and that readers must exercise limitations in order to offer profitable interpretations.¹⁵³ Stanley Fish has offered two such constraining features: one in the theory of the informed reader and the other in the form of common rules agreed upon by the interpretive community.

Fish maintains that production of the text is still a result of interacting with the written text, but the interpretive strategies by which a reader interacts with the text have constraints established by an institution or community.¹⁵⁴ The rules governing

¹⁵² See for example, Meyer Abrams, "How To Do Things With Texts" or Wimsatt and Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon*.

¹⁵³ Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*.

¹⁵⁴ Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* p.342.

interpretation are established and agreed upon by the community, and such rules are often 'institutionalized' by implication only. These rules are not in any handbook produced by the community, rather they are assumed to be in operative mode within the framework and members of the community.¹⁵⁵ To be identified with the community is to understand naturally and cohere to the rules intrinsically without the explication of these conventions. Communities are varied and may revolve around academia, social function, religion, or a number of other groups finding commonality among their 'members'. What can or cannot be done, or what is acceptable or unacceptable is determined by the implicit norms of the group.

Yet there is a point of departure from the interpretive community theorized by Fish by application in our reading of Daniel^B. Beyond the idea that interpretive communities maintain assumed conventions of interpretation, Fish claims as a generality that in the text read by any given community there is no formal promotion of agreement of rules to which to adhere.¹⁵⁶ This may be generally true, but I do not believe that it is an accurate assessment for the readerly community of Daniel^B. As a text, Daniel^B is self-conscious of its own promotion for interpretation, and furthermore that its readers are encouraged to play the part of interpreters. The rules established by the community are gathered from within the pages of Daniel^B itself in a reflexive relationship. In other words, the rules to be followed and dynamics of the identity of the community are in the text, and those, in turn, further inform the interpretive community of the conventions to be practiced when encountering a text, whether it be Daniel^B or another.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.343.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.342.

Summary

The historical background of Daniel^B, specifically the social and literary qualities, has been surveyed, not for the sole sake of historicity, but to establish the credentials of the theological community surrounding the book. This historical community, whose identity cannot be ascertained with any accuracy at this time, is one concerned with wisdom, integrity and devotion to Yhwh, all of which are ingredients for superior interpretation. Daniel^B as literature reveals and defines the 'identity' of the community as interpreters whose wisdom comes not from human sources but from a heavenly source. While the norms and pressures of an oppressive society may prove to be a mortal threat to the moral integrity of the righteous ones, the wise will know how to remain upright and uncompromised, even in the face of life-threatening circumstances.

The study of narratological issues becomes another important facet in our reading of Daniel^B. Though the expanse of literary theory is so vast and is at best represented by a scratch on the surface in this chapter, the issues that are brought up in this chapter relate to our reading of Daniel^B. These literary skills and tools are mentioned so that we may be better readers and that we may discover the most we can from this text which demands and anticipates good reading. Like the issues presented in the historical survey, the literary concerns are not mentioned for the sole sake of promoting literary theory, they have relevance in our reading of Daniel^B.

Though the connection between an historical survey and a literary analysis may at first seem somewhat incompatible, they stand as two building blocks upon which the following chapter will be set. The first half of this chapter provides for us a link to the historical community around which Daniel^B was composed; the second half of this

chapter provides us with the awareness of the necessary skills and tools needed to read and appropriate Daniel^B for our present day community which might find itself reading this text. The next chapter deals primarily with the assumptions and practices set forth by narrative theology, a discipline that is sensitive to both historical and present interpretive communities as well as the finely tuned reading skills necessary for the reading of narrative.

CHAPTER 2

NARRATIVE THEOLOGY AND A HERMEUTIC READING

“A person discovers the shape of the life story in other ages, the story of deeds, and the story of experience, and coming back from this to his own time is how he discovers by contrast its current shape, the story of appropriation.”

-John Dunne¹⁵⁷

“And finally if one digs deeply enough into these kinds of studies, one invariably detects beneath the veneer of historicity a modern theological purpose motivating the entire interpretive enterprise.”

-John Darr¹⁵⁸

In the previous chapter two apparently disparate approaches were discussed: the historical-critical and the narratological. In this chapter these two disciplines converge to reveal their interdependence upon each other from the vantage of narrative theology, which appreciates the historical community surrounding the literature and the literary value of the narrative as it continues to shape the identity of the community of readers. In the first half of this present chapter we will look at narrative theology as a discipline as well as its paradigmatic application for reading Daniel^B. The stress placed upon ‘community’ by narrative theology reveals connections between the identity of the community and the process by which the community agrees to read a text. The second half of this chapter takes the issue of communal identity a step further by defining the ideals and practices of this community as primarily interpretive. The main defining characteristic of the Danielic community—and once again I refer primarily to the contemporary community who exists in conscientious continuity with the past

¹⁵⁷ John Dunne, *A Search for God in Time and Memory* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p.xi; from Stroup, 77.

¹⁵⁸ John Darr, “Narrator as Character” in *Semeia* 63, p.49.

community—is the urgency placed upon devotion to Yhwh and the act of interpretation, or in other words, ‘theological hermeneutics’.

Narrative Theology

Several proponents of narrative as theological communication have complained that as a discipline narrative theology is deficient of clear lines of delineation and lacks agreement in defining the terms and practices of the discipline. For instance George Stroup states that “proposals that have invoked the category are bewilderingly diverse and often there is little or no agreement among them.” Later he states, “When used loosely the category is so broad and elusive that it includes practically everything and excludes nothing.”¹⁵⁹ Commenting on the confusion felt by those scholars outside the debate between the advocates of narrative who proclaim narrative as theological reflection is profitable and the skeptics who dismiss narrative theology as a fad, Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones concur concerning its application: “...a bewilderment increased by the fear that nobody is quite sure precisely what is being proposed or opposed.”¹⁶⁰

For the moment a clear-cut definition may elude us as well, but what we need to strive for is a working and pragmatic application. However, because of the complexities of the discipline and the diversities among the proponents of narrative theology, we need to sort through several issues in order to approach this application. To accomplish this task I would like to examine closely the constituent parts that compose the whole in order to analyze this larger entity known as narrative theology. This will be done primarily by

¹⁵⁹ George Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), p.71, 89.

¹⁶⁰ Stanley Hauerwas and L Gregory Jones, *Why Narrative?* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1987), p.1.

taking a look at individual and often binary components outside this discipline and by noting how they co-function within the parameters of narrative theology.

The Convergent Nature of Narrative Theology

Narrative theology is able to work so uniquely as a discipline partly because it operates in a mode of convergence. As we have already observed, and as it stands in this thesis, narrative theology rests upon the two building blocks set out in the previous chapter, the socio-historical community of Daniel^B and the acquisition and cognizance of reading skills in narratological studies. This is not only appropriate in relation to our study of Daniel^B, but this convergent quality of narrative theology has intrinsic links to the issue of hermeneutics, which we will examine in the latter half of this chapter, and throughout this thesis.

Narrative and Theology

The first thing that we need to dissect is the connection or association between narrative and theology. Though no incompatibility between these two should confuse us the way that certain other seemingly mutually exclusive terms do within the parameters of narrative theology, still the pairing of these terms seems odd due to the ‘eclipsing’ of narrative as theology during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hans Frei’s main thesis in his seminal work *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* is that the Bible should be read as a unified narrative and thereby simultaneously as a source of theology.¹⁶¹ The methods of dissection of the scripture in the fields of higher criticism greatly compromised the integrity of the text and caused the focus on narrative to be shifted upon smaller textual units which, in turn, contributed to negligence of the composite whole. Though Frei’s work is thorough in its historical research, its significance is entirely

¹⁶¹ Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1974).

theological. His historical research is motivated by a desire to instigate thoughtful theological reflection.¹⁶² In the past half century the implications of the New Criticism and specific works like Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, H. Richard Niebuhr's "The Story of Our Life" in *The Meaning of Revelation* and Hans Frei's *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* have duly credited the status of narrative in biblical and theological studies as substantially significant.¹⁶³

The linking of narrative with theology should be considered natural, or better, it should be considered essential since theology is itself narratological. However, the coupling between narrative and theology has not always seemed so natural. What we must establish is our specific usage of the individual terms and how they come together to create a distinctive entity. Answering the questions: "What is narrative?" and "What is theology?" only partially leads us to the answer of the final question "What is narrative theology?" Let us begin with the first issue of defining narrative, or at least delimiting our usage of it. In our search for definitions or delimitations, we do not need to look far past those who seek to use these terms in the discipline of narrative theology in order to gain a better understanding.

In his treatise on narrative theology, George Stroup offers three basic distinctions of narrative as it applies to a theological category. In the first case he identifies an approach he calls "introduction to religion" which uses narrative "to describe and explain the location of religion in human experience and the meaning of 'faith' in relation to a

¹⁶² Garrett Green, *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) p.x.

¹⁶³ David Ford, *Barth and God's Story: Biblical Narrative and the Theological Method of Karl Barth in "Church Dogmatics"* (Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, 1985). Stanley Hauerwas and L Gregory Jones, *Why Narrative?*, p.5.

person's encounter with other people and the world."¹⁶⁴ Religious human experience is somehow interrelated with—if not dependent upon—the stories people recite in order to build their identity or make sense of the world around them. Stroup complains that within this approach 'story' is often ambiguous, sometimes meaning a collection of narratives, sometimes a set of doctrines, and other times the individual or communal stories of a community of religion, or quite possibly a combination of any of these.¹⁶⁵

The second category of narrative in relation to theology is the 'life-story' which include stories in three distinct dimensions: sacred stories, mundane stories, and between these two is the temporal form of experience itself.¹⁶⁶ These three narrative tracks, claims Stephen Crites, constantly reflect and affect the others. The uniqueness of the human experience is the capacity to have and hold onto a history, and furthermore, the formal quality of experience that creates history is inherently narrative.¹⁶⁷ The sacred stories that celebrate the gods spoken of by Crites provide consciousness with a sense of orientation in life and a pre-conscious apprehension of reality, and through these stories man's sense of self and world are created.¹⁶⁸ Quite different is James William McClendon who believes that individual or communal biographies attest to the meanings of theological doctrines. The biographies of individuals provide a perspective on what Christian faith means by 'atonement', for example, which differs significantly from traditional theological interpretations of doctrine.¹⁶⁹ This so-called 'biographical theology'

¹⁶⁴ Stroup, p.72.

¹⁶⁵ Stroup, p.73; Scholars counted among those who advocate this approach are James Wiggins, Gabriel Facre, John Navone, David Baily Harned, Dietrich Ritschl, Hugh O. Jones, Harald Weinrich, Johann Baptist Metz, Josef Meyer zu Schlochtern.

¹⁶⁶ Stephen Crites, "Narrative Quality of Experience" in *Why Narrative?* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1997) p.72.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.* p.65f.

¹⁶⁸ Stroup, p.76.

¹⁶⁹ James McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p.36.

resembles the theoretical basis of reader-response criticism in that the doctrine (or written text) is not the prime object of observation, rather it is the meaning, worth and application it finds in the biography of the individual or community (or reader). Akin to McClendon are the proposals of John Dunne who believes that a reader can enter into the lives of the subjects of biographies and autobiographies in order to understand the value of 'life-story' or 'narrative confession', comprehend the historical significance, and appropriate the lessons from these 'life-stories' or 'confessions' into the reader's own 'life-story' or confession.¹⁷⁰ Rather like the hermeneutical proposals of Schleiermacher, Dunne believes that a reader can enter into the lives of the subjects of 'life-stories' in order to understand them sympathetically, and come away with a better understanding of the reader's own life and the reader's own time. In a concurring quotation Amos Wilder states, "When a Christian in any time or place confesses his faith, his confession turns into a narrative,"¹⁷¹ and this narrative becomes community property inasmuch as it is judged, appropriated and valued by the community of faith.

The vagueness of the meaning of 'narrative' in the former two positions has led to a third category of narrative theology that deals primarily with actual identifiable texts found within the canon of scripture.¹⁷² Within this realm biblical scholars and theologians refer to specific scriptural texts before moving forward to discuss the functions that these narratives serve in the life of the community of faith. While in the first category narrative is a means by which religious dimension is expressed; in the second category narrative is a personal or communal story by which others understand doctrine or their own faith; but

¹⁷⁰ John S. Dunne, *A Search of God in Time and Memory* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p.xi.

¹⁷¹ Amos Wilder, *The Language of the Gospel: Early Christian Rhetoric* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p.64.

¹⁷² Stroup, p.79.

in this third category, 'narrative' is not an abstract idea, rather it is the concrete text resident in scripture. Yet even within this field of 'biblical narrative' there is room for ambiguous play. For instance, is the categorical distinction of 'narrative' limited only to the portions of scripture that are traditionally viewed as story, such as histories, Gospels and apocalypses, thus eliminating such genres as the law, poetries, prophecies, and epistles from being considered narrative? If we are to look to the purpose of the narratives in order to find lines of demarcation between traditional narratives and other canonical genres, we may find that there is no such distinction. If the purpose of 'narrative' in theological use is the discovery of religious doctrine and definition of the community of faith, then nothing should be excluded in the canon of scripture from being considered a source of narrative theology. The laws that were enacted, the poems that were expressed, the prophecies the prophets spoke, and the letters the apostles wrote equally function to convey faith and belief, and to build the communal connection to which the pistic community today can relate and even reiterate. Laws, poems, prophecies and letters become our 'story' as much as other stories of the Bible. Therefore, narrative in this last case, though far more exact than the former two categories, is not limited to the traditional boundaries of narrative as simply story, it includes the entire literary corpus the community holds as canonical.

Before we survey the meaning and connection that narrative has with theology, we need to establish how the three aforementioned narrative categories pertain to the study of Daniel^B. In the first and foremost instance, Daniel^B fits nicely into the third category since it is found within the Jewish and Christian canons of scripture. Not only is Daniel^B indisputably recognized as a narrative by its membership in the canon as

previously described, but it also enjoys appropriation of the status of narrative in the traditional and more specific sense as well; after all it is literature that comes to us as a story. But moreover, Daniel^B must be recognized in the realm of the second category as well. Regardless of its status as fictional or historical, Daniel^B is indeed a literary biography in part, and two supplementary autobiographies that constitute the corpus of its literary body. What the reader encounters in the biography and the autobiographies becomes essential in the lives of the reader and pistic community. By several means Daniel^B works to establish the credentials and identity of the community, as we shall see later, but what is more, the reader is invited into the story and the life of Daniel^C in order to find the meaning for oneself as a member of the community. The reading of Daniel^B anticipates an involvement of personal and communal empathies in the life of Daniel^C.

By all intents and purposes, Daniel^B as an auto/biography is meant to affect the lives of its readers in substantial ways. In short, most of this study of Daniel^B primarily employs the third category but as we finally search for the readerly and communal implications, we must likewise look to the second category for the most suitable application. However, with regards to the first category mentioned above, Daniel^B presumes that such religious histories, beliefs and identities through narratives are already existent and intact in the lives of the readers; yet even with such blatant references to Yhwh, the reader must still search for the hidden Text, and therefore Daniel^B qualifies in this regard as well. Finally, as a literary piece it stands somewhere in the midst of realistic narratives spoken of by Eric Auerbach,¹⁷³ the identity narratives in the Gospels proposed

¹⁷³ *Mimesis* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1968), first two chapters, especially.

by Hans Frei,¹⁷⁴ the parables suggested by Sallie McFague,¹⁷⁵ and biography or life-story put forward by James McClendon.¹⁷⁶

Now we turn our attention to the issue of theology. As a discipline, theology is generally a complex and complicated form of academic communication. In short, theology, and more specifically systematic theology, is the study, understanding and explanation of religious doctrine. While the confessional language of the believer is considered first-order language, theology is second-order language that reflects upon the issues resident in first-order language.¹⁷⁷ In other words, one does not need to be a theologian or even a student of theology in order to express oneself in this first-order language of faith. The agenda of the theologian does not involve reiteration of story as his/her main method of communication, rather it is the critical assessment of doctrine, whether it is based upon narrative, didactic or poetic genres, or traditions, confessions or ecclesiastical professions. Theology, however, is not an intellectual end in itself; it does what it does because it seeks to serve a purpose. As Stroup points out, “The theologian brings critical analysis to bear on the language in the life of the church in order that the church may better understand what it believes, correct its mistakes and live more faithfully to the gospel it confesses.”¹⁷⁸ In this sense, theology should be considered a theory that facilitates praxis. Moreover, the theologian also seeks to make the issues of theology relevant and intelligible to the world around and simultaneously provides the necessary tools to equip the pistic community to do this task in a more tangible way.

¹⁷⁴ *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative.*

¹⁷⁵ *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

¹⁷⁶ *Biography as Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974).

¹⁷⁷ Stroup, p.86.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.87.

Ultimately, the work of theology exists for the benefit of the pistic community in the shaping of their identity and in equipping them for their mission.

So we come to ask the question, are the traditional forms of systematic theology as an intellectual enterprise compatible with the structural and logical basis of narrative? On the surface the answer might seem to be 'no', but if theology is not an independent discipline divorced from any association with the pistic community, then the answer would need to leave room for the possibilities of compatibility. One possibility is to assert that narrative bridges the gap between the personal first-order language of faith and the theological second-order language of doctrine. For instance, Sallie McFague argues that Christian narratives of all sorts become primary sources for understanding the more abstract ideologies of Christian doctrine and systematic theology.¹⁷⁹ James McClendon advocates the biographical approach to theology that claims that the meaning of otherwise abstract doctrines becomes intelligible when we are able to see its application in the life-story of a notable Christian figure.¹⁸⁰ But pushing the placement of narrative to higher planes are scholars like George Stroup who do not simply view narrative as a bridge between Christian confession and systematic theology, rather narrative becomes the mode through which the contents of Christian doctrine is reinterpreted. As he states, "Narrative is an important theological category because it is essential for understanding human identity and what happens to the identity of persons in that process Christians described by means of the doctrine of revelation."¹⁸¹

In any case, we would be naïve to claim that we could succinctly identify the one solitary role that narrative plays in the field of theology. Narrative can be the source of

¹⁷⁹ Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables*.

¹⁸⁰ James McClendon Jr., *Biography as Theology* (need pg.). See stroup.

¹⁸¹ Stroup, p.88-89.

theological elucidation; it can be metaphorical, a means by which people understand abstract ideas; it can be the source of personal and communal identity; it can be the bridge that allows the crossing of personal confession on one side and intellectual theology on the other side; and, it can be the means by which any group has come to understand its very existence and by which a community continues to learn. And for sure, narrative can be much more than what we have discussed briefly here.

Jewish and Christian Narratives

For the most part, narrative theologians do most of their work in the generic field of the Gospels and what its implications are for the Christian community or the church. However, the text of Daniel^B is not originally Christian by intent; it is indubitably a Jewish text addressing Jewish concerns written in Semitic languages in a pre-Christian era. Historically, Daniel^B is emphatically Jewish. However, to state that Daniel^B is solely Jewish is to misunderstand the important role that it plays in the Christian community as well. From a Christian perspective the Christian community has as its adopted heritage the Yahwistic community of the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, Daniel^B becomes the text of the Christian community by means of adoption. Though the reading strategies may be diverse at times between the two communities, both communities hold to this text as a sacred narrative. What follows here is historical evidence that Daniel^B is regarded highly by both Jewish and Christian communities alike from their early existences, but furthermore we need to push the issue by begging the question regarding the significance the text has in the life of pistic communities today.¹⁸²

¹⁸² In order to avoid sloppy or insensitive misappropriation between the Jewish community and the Christian community, I will simply speak of both communities of faith as the 'pistic' community at a later point when the two are not easily distinguishable in a contemporary context.

Shortly after its composition, Daniel^B has been shown to have held major significance for Judaism, especially in the Jewish community of Qumran.¹⁸³ From among the fragments found at the caves of Qumran a total of eight scrolls of Daniel^B have been discovered. Daniel^B is outnumbered by only eight other compositions including canonical and non-canonical texts found at Qumran: Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Genesis, Exodus, *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch*, and Leviticus (in descending order of amount of manuscripts).¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, seventeen more manuscripts either mention Daniel^B or contain material that relates to Daniel^B.¹⁸⁵ In the Dead Sea Scrolls, fragment 1-3 ii.3-4^{sup} of the *Florilegium* (4q174), refer to Daniel^B as the Book of Daniel the Prophet, which is a similar sentiment held in the Gospels regarding Daniel^C as prophet. In response to this acclamation, F.F. Bruce responds by stating, “This expression should put an end to doubts about the canonical status of Daniel in the Qumran community.”¹⁸⁶ And William Brownlee claims, “One cannot carefully study the Qumran literature without noting the pervasive influence of Daniel upon the thought and language of the sect. Whatever the theory of canonicity, for all practical purposes Daniel was authoritative.”¹⁸⁷ Though we have serious reservations about the authorial role of Qumran with regard to Daniel^B, we can confidently assert that Daniel^B was held in high esteem in the literary and religious life of the Qumran community.

A substantial illustration of the importance of Daniel^B in the early Christian community comes by way of Howard Clark Kee’s *Community of the New Age*, in which

¹⁸³ Eugene Ulrich, “The Text of Daniel in the Qumran Scrolls” in *The Book of Daniel* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p.573.

¹⁸⁴ Peter Flint, “The Daniel Tradition at Qumran” in *The Book of Daniel* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p.329.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ F.F. Bruce, “The Book of Daniel and the Qumran Community” in *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Principal Matthew Black* (Edinburgh, 1969), p.222.

¹⁸⁷ William Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible* (OUP, 1964) p.48.

he reveals the literary dependence that the Gospel of Mark has upon Daniel^B. Kee's point is to demonstrate that Mark's fashioning of the Gospel genre is highly influenced by Daniel^B and its apocalyptic nature. Kee shows that Mark quotes or alludes to Daniel^B in every single chapter; in Mark from chapters 11-16 Kee counts fifty-seven quotations, twelve of which are from Daniel^B alone; Kee counts one-hundred-sixty allusions, one-eighth of which are from Daniel^B.¹⁸⁸ Christopher Rowland sums up this same basic assertion when he states, "Already in the New Testament, the language of Daniel forms a central backdrop to the emergence of Christian social identity."¹⁸⁹ The Gospel of Mark is not only generally accepted as having chronological priority over the other Gospels, but it is also of special interest in the realm of narrative theology.¹⁹⁰ The main point is that Daniel^B has been used liberally by the Gospel of Mark, which is considered paramount in discussions of narrative theology and the building of identity in the Christian community.

From its early years as a text Daniel^B was held in high regard in devout Jewish community; and from the inception of the Christian community, Daniel^B has also enjoyed an honored place of prominence. Ironically, however, the Jewish community which stands upon the foundations of the book's producers has often shied away from fully embracing the book due to the zealous use of Daniel^B by the Christian community which tends to find in it a rich mine of messianic prophecies fulfilled by Jesus.¹⁹¹ While all this is true inasmuch as it can be historically attested, the main concern for our purposes here is to demonstrate that Daniel^B continues to work today in the life of pistic communities as they continue to read and reread Daniel^B again and again. Today's pistic communities

¹⁸⁸ Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), pp.27,45.

¹⁸⁹ Christopher Rowland, "The Book of Daniel and the Radical Critique of Empire: An Essay in Apocalyptic Hermeneutics" in *The Book of Daniel* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p.447.

¹⁹⁰ Stroup, p.7.

¹⁹¹ Lawrence M. Wills, "Daniel" in *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2004), p.1642.

share historical links with the communities of the past, but yet at the same time it continues with certain continuities to define and redefine the boundaries of today's communities that hold Daniel^B as a sacred text. This question leads to the topic ahead, that is, the relationship between history and future in narrative.

History and Future in Narrative

Narrative theology is not simply a link between the past and the future, rather it is an approach that bases its foundations on those laid in the history of the pistic community in order to understand more adequately its present condition, all so that it might also be preparing itself for what it may become in the future, and in this sense it is eschatological. Though many historical-critical issues surround the book of Daniel^B, I have restricted that particular discussion in the previous chapter to issues revolving around the community likely to have composed and/or read the literature. This is done in order that any community now reading Daniel^B will find its ties with that community and make appropriations for itself and with it discover a certain sense of continuity.

What the community of faith must come to grips with is the temporality of humanity on one hand, and yet recognize the eternalness of our God on the other. Within this schema and tension between the two will we find our placement in the grand continuum of the pistic community. To state the case another way, we must realize that the historical community of Daniel^B's readers are indeed a part of the past, and that perhaps the same will be said of today's community in the generations to come, but though we are separated by time, we are simultaneously joined by our co-subjection to temporality. Furthermore, our links to past and future pistic communities are substantially strengthened by our co-submission to Yhwh, who is revealed in the historical narrative,

continues to be a present force in our time and who will be a continuing object around which the pistic community of the future will identify itself. All of this is revealed to the reader by the text. George Stroup summarizes the point adequately,

“In Christian communities this identity narrative consists of a ‘text’ which begins with the canonical history Christians called ‘Scripture’ and extends through the community’s history into the present. Scripture and the history of the community’s attempts to interpret the text and make it intelligible to the rest of society constitute the community’s ‘tradition’ and therein its narrative identity.”¹⁹²

The community of Daniel^B, however, is not simply a stagnant entity of the same thing existing in different times. Daniel^B is not only consciously time-sensitive literature from the very first verse, but it records and anticipates the movement and change in the historical continuum. In fact, such change in political, religious and theological dimensions is one of the primary motifs in the book. The Danielic community, therefore, is one of full realization of change as well as anticipation and hope in Yhwh in the future. The passing of time allows for the changing of circumstances, and perhaps many of these circumstances are not favorable for the pistic community, but the hope lies in a time when there will be no time, when the consummation of Yhwh’s promise of hope becomes a reality. The movement of time is inevitable and the change that accompanies it is natural, but the hope that the wise and righteous must hold onto comes with a promise of fulfillment. Therefore, Daniel^B, like the very anticipation of narrative theology itself, is emphatically eschatological.

Daniel^B does not allow the reader to remain focused on the past; the reader is forced to look to the future by means of eschatological prophecy. The tension lies in the presentation of the future by an historical character, and in the present the reader must

¹⁹² Stroup, p.91.

apprehend the significance of both past and future. The Narrator never presents Daniel^C as being alive during the course of the reading of the narrative, he is always a figure from the past, yet he offers the keys to understanding the present and the future. The recording of the miraculous and faithful work of Yhwh in the past is precisely what offers hope of the faithfulness of Yhwh in the future. While on one hand Daniel^B surveys the turbulent times of change ahead, on the other hand, it makes glorious promises for the end of time when the wise and righteous will experience everlasting life and the wicked will suffer shame and everlasting contempt. In the meantime—and it is important to note—the Danielic community can indubitably expect change, even revolution, but our ethical positions and our theological convictions must wisely reflect our hope in the eternality of Yhwh.

In summary, Daniel^B is vigorously historical and makes astounding claims about the past, and yet it also makes moral, political, and social judgments about the present, while also making dismal predictions about the future of the world, and finally offers the sincerest hopes in the end times for those who are wise. All of which are ultimately dependent upon the interpretation of an account recorded as history;¹⁹³ the implications of this interpretation of history are for the present and future life of the pistic community. The tension between the past and the future, between memory and hope, is a necessary component in the present life of the community of faith, and our approach to the interpretation of scripture is key to the sustaining of this tension. If we feel no need to reinterpret scripture for an appropriation in our present times by keeping scripture fossilized within a distinctly historical model of reading, or if we dismiss scripture as irrelevant for the task of understanding the future, not only do we risk losing the tension

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.94.

between past and future but we also risk losing our perspective on the invaluable contribution scripture has made throughout its history and that it can powerfully make in our present and future.¹⁹⁴

Identity of Self and Community

Identity is important to our fundamental understanding of self and community. Though these two entities of self and community are not mutually exclusive and the two inevitably coexist, the study of each independently will help to inform our view of them in an interrelationship with one another. The identity of the individual person is inescapably shaped by the community to which that person belongs, and the individual's personality helps shape, develop and revolutionize the identity of the community. Any community is made up of personal constituents and all people belong to some sort of community. The identities of these two are inextricably interwoven and interdependent.

The circularity between the individual and the community in their interrelationship is unavoidable—and perhaps resembles the old debate between the chronological priority of the chicken or the egg—but we will begin by discussing the identity of the individual, specifically in a religious context. According to John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, knowledge of man and knowledge of God are “joined by many bonds,” and any serious attempt to study one's self inevitably leads to a deep contemplation of God.¹⁹⁵ To begin with, God is creator and sustainer of life and world in the Judeo-Christian tradition; we cannot possibly proceed too far in a religious study of man without such acknowledgement. True knowledge of self demands knowledge of God, but meaningful knowledge of God requires an intimate look into

¹⁹⁴ *Op Cit.*, p.260.

¹⁹⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I:35.

one's self, lest this knowledge of God settle as an impersonal pursuit.¹⁹⁶ In similar fashion Karl Barth states, "we do not need to look for any other basis of anthropology than the Christological."¹⁹⁷ As creature under Yhwh and as follower of Jesus, certain instilled behaviors, moral commandments and religious commissions dictate the identity of the Christian.

In Western culture the identities of people are often wrapped up by one primary deciding factor, that is, by their occupation. Not even this facet of cultural identification can escape the biblical precedence found fundamentally in the creation narrative in Genesis, where the existence of man is partly founded upon by the roles he must fulfill. Here is man, one created in the image of God, destined to rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all living things that creep on the earth, and to be fruitful and multiply.¹⁹⁸ Man is introduced here ontologically as the image of God and defined according to the duties which he must perform. Both work together in concert to establish identity. The notion that our work is a great deal of our identity leads us to grapple with a multitude of implications.

For the ones who reflect upon their identities in light of their knowledge and relationship with God, work does not represent the same task as others who do not contemplate their existence in relation to God, their work and their identities reflect a fulfillment of a God-given mission. In return, the result is a deeper sense of fulfillment of their own selves and identities due to the awareness of this higher commission. This received sense of fulfillment is reflective of the act of fulfilling one's duty to work. One's

¹⁹⁶ Stroup summarizing Calvin, p.19.

¹⁹⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3/2:208.

¹⁹⁸ Genesis 1.27-28.

confession of life-work seems to be a natural means of expressing one's own identity, which ultimately points to our role as creatures of the Creator.

The identity of Daniel^C is deeply seated in the light of the identity and works of Yhwh. The functionary performances of Daniel^C in the narrative make little to no logical sense without his commitment to Yhwh and his commandments of righteousness. The introduction to Daniel^C in the narrative displays his qualities and capacities as a gifted creature prior to showing his commitment to Yhwh, but regardless, one is never considered without the other. His talents, gifts, qualities and capacities enlighten, compliment and make sense of his sincere devotion to Yhwh, and vice versa.

Our contemplation of God in relation to our consideration of the self has been and is shaped by our reading of sacred scripture. We must realize that our scriptural perspective of God is influenced by our culture, our economical status, our denominational affiliation and our placement in history; in other words, by our community.¹⁹⁹ The individual has not come to know the things s/he knows about God because s/he is independently intelligent or intuitive. Worldviews, reading strategies and other religious and educational endeavors have a bearing on the way we read scripture, and therefore on the way we view God. Our view of God is inescapably communal. And like the reflexive relationship between God and the individual, we must also consider the intrinsic relationship between God and the community.

Let us for a moment return to the previous notion that man's identity is only intelligible in light of his relationship to God, and let us for now identify this man as Jesus. His mission is likewise a fulfillment of a commission from his Father God, and

¹⁹⁹ Stroup, p.20.

while its benefits are for the individual, its effects are communal.²⁰⁰ The mission of Jesus was performed in obedience to Yhwh and was oriented around others for their rescue; the Christ follower assumes the same commission if s/he assumes his identity. If the Christian claims to put his/her identity in Jesus, then s/he must also accept its benefits and simultaneously work toward the intended effects of community. The multiple commands to establish and nurture community cannot possibly be avoided by those who are believers in Christ. Gene Outka summarizes the need for the Christ-centered community to be aware of its mandate for community: “The ‘basic form of humanity’ is not the individual isolated from others but each person with others, and with them ‘gladly’.”²⁰¹

Similar implications for community are present in the Jewish community as well and can be found in the pages of Daniel^B in two ways. Firstly, the setting of Daniel^B takes place on foreign soil under exilic conditions; socio-historically speaking, gaining a sense of community during a time of communal crisis is not just simply advantageous or beneficial but is absolutely essential for the survival of communal identity. Even when he stands alone against the opposition, Daniel^C represents the survival of traditional and religious community in the face of a hostile environment. Secondly, towards the end of the book, as political and military pressure mounts against the people of God, the wise ones are responsible and rewarded for building community and proselytizing new members.²⁰² Since wisdom is so highly esteemed throughout Daniel^B as a quality to seek after, and since those who obtain and exercise wisdom are rewarded for their efforts of building community, then it stands to reason that the necessity for community is part of

²⁰⁰ Gene Outka, “Following at a Distance: Ethics and the Identity of Jesus” in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p.153.

²⁰¹ Outka, p.152.

²⁰² 12.3.

the overall goal of the narrative. Theoretical proof is found in the Jewish community of Qumran and in the Christian community surrounding Mark, both of which we have shown to appreciate Daniel^B deeply.

Summary

Narrative theology brings together the historical foundations of the social environment surrounding the text of Daniel^B and the literary skills of narratology. Together these two disciplines function for the benefit of the readerly community of the text, here Daniel^B, which finds connections with the historical community of the text and appropriates the text in contemporary contexts employing current literary skills. While narrative theology is an approach that we will take toward Daniel^B, it is a discipline concerned not only with the theological content of the narrative but also with the relation of theology to the community of the text in any era. More pointedly we might ask what theological truths of the narrative define the identity of the pistic community of Daniel^B? This leads to the forthcoming section dealing with hermeneutics. The identity of the interpretive community of Daniel^B is based upon its acts of interpretation. The interpretive community commonly spoken of by narrative theologians and reader-response critics must truly be an interpretive community in a real and practical sense.

Hermeneutics and the Interpretive Community

Hermeneutics comes into focus after our discussion of narrative theology as a defining factor and a narrower scope of the Danielic community, by which I mean the contemporary readerly community. Narrative theology reveals how we read the text of Daniel^B and by what criteria we assess the readerly community; what we find in the

literature that defines this community is the issue of interpretation. Hermeneutics is an undeniable factor we find in Daniel^B and furthermore, Daniel^B presents the challenge to the readerly community to obtain the necessary skills required in order to become the implied interpretive community. The Danielic community is not simply an interpretive community in a generic sense spoken of by scholars of reader-response criticism, hermeneutics and narrative theology; the Danielic community is a proper interpretive community by definition and practice. In other words, the Danielic community is not simply interpretive because like other communities it engages in interpretive acts, but it is and must be interpretive because interpretation is the very thing that the literature demands of its readers and in so doing assigns them their identity.

Before we venture to spell out the specific hermeneutical theories and practices at work in Daniel^B and the readerly community implied therein, we must necessarily begin with a broad discussion of general hermeneutics, then work our way toward theological hermeneutics, until we finally arrive at what I term 'Danielic hermeneutics'.

General Hermeneutics

Discussion revolving around the issue of interpretation has been present for well over two millennia. Works like Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias (On Interpretation)*²⁰³ are ancient and such attention to interpretation was not a new creation written in a vacuum, rather it reflects a stress of cultural and academic texture that has been an ever-present necessity of humankind. Though many discussions of hermeneutics at some point must deal with the delicacy and difficulty intrinsic in interpreting the Bible, general hermeneutics more broadly deals with the abstract theories of the psychological dimensions of the means by which anyone can come to a point of understanding within

²⁰³ <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/interpretation/html>.

his/her own reality.²⁰⁴ Due to the enormous amount of material dealing with hermeneutics, our discussion here can only touch briefly on some of the major contentions within the discipline, such as meaning, understanding, text and the hermeneutical circle as they relate to our present text of Daniel^B. More extensive attention is given to the issue of the definition, this is due to the potential relation that Daniel^B has with hermeneutics. In other words, if we are to establish Daniel^B as literature exploring hermeneutics, we must assess the very foundational assumptions held in Daniel^B cross-referenced with those possessed by both the historic and current academy of hermeneutics.

Definition

Hermes was the messenger god of Greek mythology and the one whose name serves as the etymological foundation for the term 'hermeneutics'. Not only was Hermes the messenger between the gods but was also the messenger between the gods and mortal men. The task that was set before Hermes, therefore, was immensely complex, having to be conversant in the idiomatic discourse of both the gods and mortals, and having to interpret messages accordingly.²⁰⁵ Hermes firstly had to understand and interpret for himself what the gods' intentions were before he could proceed to translate, clarify, and explain the message from the gods to mortals.²⁰⁶ Hermeneutics is likewise a term laden with complexities in reflection of the intense demands placed upon Hermes in order to fulfill his task of bridging the gap between the world of the gods and the world of mortals.

²⁰⁴ Kevin Vanhoozer *Is There Meaning in this Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p.19; Werner Jeanrond *Theological Hermeneutics* (London: SCM, 1994), p.5.

²⁰⁵ H.J Rose. *Handbook of Greek Mythology* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p.145.

²⁰⁶ Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1988) p.1.

In essence I will suggest and advocate two separate already-existing definitions for hermeneutics, and furthermore, I will later offer my own suggestion that will more broadly encompass these other two definitions. Both definitions carry the same core qualities that hermeneutics boils down to, as will be clarified at a later point; my suggested definition will accentuate the common essence of these two definitions. Let us begin with the first definition of hermeneutics that I accept for hermeneutics, which is "the science and the art of interpretation." Hermeneutics is not just the science of interpretation, nor is it just the art of interpretation, it is both the science and the art working together in harmony toward the common goal of understanding and explanation. Though some definitions contain only one of these two binary terms, most hermeneutists recognize the necessity of the presence of these two counterbalances. Moises Silva comments, "Some say 'art' and some say 'science' of interpretation."²⁰⁷ Bernard Ramm states, "These rules are necessary because interpretation is as much art as it is science..." and "hermeneutics is both an art and a science."²⁰⁸ Grant R. Osborne begins his comprehensive introduction to hermeneutics by claiming, "First, hermeneutics is a science, since it provides a logical, orderly classification of the laws of interpretation. Second, hermeneutics is an art, for it is an acquired skill demanding both imagination and an ability to apply the 'laws' to selected passages or books."²⁰⁹

If we were to say that hermeneutics is the science of interpretation without regard to any artistic side much of the debates that we encounter and engage in scholarship, denominations, special interest groups, et cetera would suddenly become moot. Science is

²⁰⁷ Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Dallas: Word, 1993), p.15.

²⁰⁸ Bernard Ramm, *Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967) p.9 and 10, respectively. Also Vanhoozer, p.19.

²⁰⁹ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), p.5.

a discipline of precision and accuracy, and fully carries the capacity for judging definitive correctness, precision and accuracy. The tangible evidence that science deals with makes the judgment between accurate and inaccurate possible. Judgments that claim accuracy are only made possible by the rigid practice of methodology. The term 'method', which is borrowed from the social sciences has initially been borrowed from the natural sciences.²¹⁰ Methodology in scientific terms demands that systematic procedures must be independent of the practitioner and that they are likewise repeatable. The proof or failure of a scientific experiment is dependent upon these principles. Any scientist following the prescribed procedure should come to the same conclusions as those who have performed the same method on the same subject without the presence of unknown variables, thus attesting to the validity of the experiment's conclusions. In other words, the agreement and consistency of the end results of scientific experimentation are a credit to the stringent adherence to scientific methodology primarily, and to the competent scientist minimally.²¹¹

Likewise, we cannot consider hermeneutics, as the act of interpretation, purely artistic. Although many arts also have their methodologies, they do not meet the same demands of rigidity as those we find in the sciences. Methodologies in the arts must likewise be artistic. Art is art not only by content but also by methodology. Art receives special attention not only when new and fresh objects become the subjects of art, but more so when the artist creates new methodologies by which s/he chooses to cast his/her

²¹⁰ David Lee Miller. "Methodology without Method and the Politics of Dissent: Some Thoughts on Cultural Studies", p.56.

²¹¹ See John M. Connolly and Thomas Keutner, eds. *Hermeneutics versus Science* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press, 1988) for a discussion and debate surrounding the relation of hermeneutics to the scientific aspect of decidability of interpretation. The debate essentially boils down to the issue that hermeneutics is the science and art of interpretation.

art form. In fact, in the end the discussions revolving around the new artistic methodology often leaves a deeper and longer lasting impression than does the actual subject of a specific artistic endeavor. For instance, the methodology created and utilized by the impressionists, or the realists, or the moderns is an earmark to their art form, perhaps more so than the piece of art they have created, which is the reflective result of their use of their chosen methodology. Unlike science, repeatable performance is not as admirable in the arts; talent, originality, ingenuity, and creativity are the indications of great artists.

Though this definition is not expressly supported in Daniel^B, still we must understand the nature of hermeneutics, which is of course at the core of Daniel^B's message. This definition works well to describe the binary or interdisciplinary nature of hermeneutics and leads naturally into another similar definition.

Due to the complexity of the issue and our search for a more appropriate Danielic application, hermeneutics demands yet another definition, which is used with less frequency as the one discussed above. The second definition of hermeneutics that I accept for hermeneutics is "the theory and the practice of interpretation."²¹² Discussion of the theory of interpretation is essential but until we really see its workings and worth in the praxis of interpretation, it remains as it is, a theory. This definition, like the former one, displays the same quality of complexity inherent in hermeneutics; that is, it reveals both sides of the same coin.

Theory of interpretation, at least in academic circles, tends to be the dominant member in the union with praxis. Several works dealing with hermeneutics unabashedly

²¹² Among those who also subscribe to this definition is Kevin Vanhoozer p.16.

define hermeneutics as theoretical not only by their 'practice' but also by their diction.²¹³

After all, theory provides academia with the arena in which disciplines may interact at a more universal level. Discussions revolving around hermeneutics are primarily theoretical and frequently only invoke the practice of interpretation to validate or to exemplify a theory. Such discussions are usually designed to equip others with the necessary tools to use while practicing the act of interpretation. Concerning the theoretical side of hermeneutics, scholars discuss such issues as understanding, knowledge, text, history, meaning, subject, object, et cetera. Theory becomes the necessary and logical prerequisite to practice with far more urgency than what we find in the combination of science and art. Before we can interpret a particular text pragmatically, we must firstly view 'text' theoretically in order to determine or outline the way in which we will, in fact, practice interpretation of that text.

While theory seems to be characteristically more dominant than practice in hermeneutical discussions, practice is ultimately the true test of theory. Theory is at its best when we can observe its validity in the real act of interpretation. Practice does not necessarily have to come from the hand of the theoretician him/herself, but at some point practice must be attempted. We might even go as far as to say that practice without theory is at least an attempt to do something tangible. And given the choice between the two, practice is the choice with the greater capacity to realize any actual affects. However, we must be cautious and realize that theory-free endeavors have often been practiced with catastrophic results. Therefore, I only wish to say that pragmatics is an

²¹³ For instance, Roger Lundin, Clarence Walhout and Anthony Thiselton identify their previous work *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) as a theory of interpretation in their introduction to *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) p.xi. Also Werner Jeanrond *Theological Hermeneutics* (London: SCM, 1994) p.2.

indispensable part of hermeneutics, without which practical meaningfulness is largely lost.

Indubitably, theory and practice must go hand in hand; each one requires and desires the other. Without theory practice lacks discipline and order, or at least that is what was thought before the advent of poststructural thought. In poststructuralism the emphasis on regimented theory is diminished in order to make way for a reading that would appear to be ‘natural’, ‘intuitive’, free of theory and ‘abstract’.²¹⁴ However, by no means do poststructural critics abandon theory in favor of sharing their reading, or of encouraging others’ readings. On the contrary, there is as much theory about loosening the reigns of other traditional theories as we find in these very same theories of interpretation. Such theories are deconstructive by design: using the practices of theory in order to undermine the very institute of theory. Certainly the advocates of poststructuralism have no wish to cast off the chains of theory, rather their desire is to blur the lines of demarcation that ‘artificially’ exist between theory and practice; what we may similarly view in the fuzzy distinction between exegesis and exposition, as seen above. Gary Phillips writes, “The aim is a change in praxis that is at once pragmatic and theoretical, individual and institutional.”²¹⁵ Only together as theory and practice, and not as separate entities, is hermeneutics composed.

Hermeneutics is not the science *or* the art of interpretation, it is the science *and* the art of interpretation.²¹⁶ Hermeneutics is not the theory *or* the practice of interpretation, it is the theory *and* the practice of interpretation. Interpretation that is

²¹⁴ Robert Young, *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader*, in Gary Phillips “Introduction” to *Semeia* 51, 1990, p.2.

²¹⁵ Gary Phillips, “Introduction” in *Semeia* 51, p.4.

²¹⁶ R. Hubbard, W. Klein, C. Blomberg, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), p.5.

artistic and not scientific, or scientific and not artistic is not hermeneutics. Interpretation that is theoretical and not practical, or practical and not theoretical is not hermeneutics. By its very nature hermeneutics is interdisciplinary. Ultimately, this leads us to a point at which I would like to offer yet another definition for hermeneutics, yet without any disqualification of or disregard for the two former definitions which have been discussed previously. Many scholars comment on the nature of hermeneutics as being a method of bridging a gap, whether that gap is temporal, spatial, spiritual, idiosyncratic, or other. In short and based upon these two definitions and the very nature of hermeneutics, we come to define hermeneutics as the bridging of a gap through interpretation. Such a definition appreciates the interdisciplinary quality already at work in the other two definitions and retains the necessary tension inherent in them, bridging science with art, and theory with practice.

Meaning

The pursuit of the concept of meaning has become a very difficult endeavor to tackle. Scholars grapple with the meaning of 'meaning' and find problematical the task of assigning meaning its placement and even find meaning as a concept difficult to believe in.²¹⁷ The problems addressed and questions posed by C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards in their 1923 work *The Meaning of Meaning* called for an interdisciplinary approach to fundamental issues dealing with the relationships of words and thinking and other mysteries that remain about language.²¹⁸ Philosophy has made great efforts and headway to respond to this call; language and literature has become a major focus in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first with such notable philosophers as Paul Ricoeur, Hans

²¹⁷ Vanhoozer, p.16.

²¹⁸ C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989); from Vanhoozer, p.16.

Georg Gadamer and Jacques Derrida. In answering the question, “what is literature?”

Derrida states that this issue is fundamentally a philosophical question and not a literary one.²¹⁹ These scholars are trained in philosophy and yet they put their concentrated efforts into dealing with issues of language, and more specifically, the written text.

Though they are all distinct from one another, they all at some time address the issue of meaning. What has resulted is something neither regarded as wholly philosophy nor wholly literary, rather something quite interdisciplinary, quite hermeneutical.

As we have surveyed in the first chapter regarding the three basic approaches in literary criticism, author-centered, text-centered and reader-centered, the orientation from one entity to the next may reveal to us in retrospect that this shift is far more substantial than an academic trend, rather it exposes that such a transferal suggests a deeper search for the locus of meaning. Kevin Vanhoozer takes up the cause for defending the authorial intention by stating, “the meaning of a text emerges only against the backdrop of the author’s intended action and the background of the author’s context.”²²⁰ The discovery of meaning in the author’s intent, so adamantly advocated by respectively different views of Schleiermacher and E.D. Hirsch, is nearly impossible to locate since the author is all but inaccessible to the reader. No doubt the author did indeed have an intended meaning, but what that meaning was or how effectively s/he was able to communicate that meaning in the text is unknown and will remain unknown. Therefore, assessing the reader’s received meaning in light of the author’s intended meaning becomes arguably impossible, and such frustration resulting from the lack of insight into the author led to the demise of

²¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p.1.

²²⁰ p.252.

author-oriented studies. Meaning, at least for a contemporary reader, must be found elsewhere.

Searching for meaning in the text is the next logical step. In this case a text may reveal a meaning that has not been intended by the author, yet the text asserts a meaning that the author could not have possibly intended. Concerning this even Hirsch has to say, “for some genres of texts the author submits to the convention that his willed implications must go far beyond what he explicitly knows.”²²¹ The notion that the matrix of letters on a page has meaning may seem obvious to some, but the question naturally arises, who assembles these letters to acknowledge or give them meaning or allow their meaning to flourish? Meaning cannot be simply found in the text alone, there has to be another agent of meaning. If meaning is not necessarily in the text alone, perhaps meaning may be found in the reader. After all, texts don’t mean, people mean.

The next step in the quest for meaning is the notion that it resides in the reader. Edgar McKnight is among those who believe that the reader’s perception of the text—as opposed to the text itself—is the ultimate basis of authority for the meaning of the text.²²² The reader is ultimately the one responsible to allow either the meaning to come to the surface or to assign a given text any meaning at all. But can ‘meaning’ be so subjective if ‘meaning’ really means? In other words, no reader comes to the text without some kind of constraints or prior social experience; s/he comes to a text as a product of his/her environment or community.²²³ Meaning may not be the sole product of the reader—or even the reader and text—but the reader within the context of the interpretive community.

²²¹ E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1967), p.123.

²²² Edgar V. McKnight, *Postmodern Use of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988) p.161.

²²³ Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston: Northwestern U. Press, 1974) p.3. See also Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*

Moving outside the realm of author, text, reader or readerly community to find meaning, poststructuralist interpreters began to look for meaning in the ‘aporia’, gaps, inconsistencies and incongruities in the text.²²⁴ Aichele and Phillips jointly assert that, “meaning is not *in* the text but *between* the texts.”²²⁵ Disciplines like deconstruction and the ethics of reading pay special attention to the things that are not said and/or the things that are marginalized; what is not said is often as meaningful as what is said. For instance Barbara Johnson asks, “What does the construction of the bottom line leave out? What does it repress? What does it put in the margins?”²²⁶ Levinas adds, “This emphasis on aporia, dissociation, heterogeneity, and tension leaves room for the ‘other’, and in relating to the other one finds justice and “once you relate to the other as the other, then something incalculable comes to the scene, something which cannot be reduced to the law or to the history of legal structures.”²²⁷

Meaning is significant for its own sake. Even those who find that the concept of meaning is an entity that eludes us, still they never cease to ask what even this might mean. From whatever background—whether academic, cultural, religious, or other—or whence one believes the locus to be, meaning is continuously sought after. I do not believe I am overstating the case by professing that the pursuit of meaning is universal and timeless. As we shall observe in Daniel^B ‘meaning’ only becomes meaningful when we are in a right relationship with Yhwh, who is himself expressly described throughout Daniel^B as universal and timeless.

²²⁴ David W. Odell-Scott, “Deconstruction” in (????) p.56. Here ‘aporia’ is defined as unresolved tensions, conflicts, contradictions.

²²⁵ Gary Aichele and Gary Phillips, “Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis” in *Semeia 69/70* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), p.14.

²²⁶ *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1995), p.121.

²²⁷ Emmanuel Levinas quoted in John Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* (New York: Fordham U. Press, 1997), p.14,17; see also Emmanuel Levinas *Ethics and Infinity* (Pittsburg: Duquesne U. Press, 1985), p.17.

Understanding

The issue of understanding is a continual cornerstone in the theory of hermeneutics. Understanding is perhaps the best known issue among the proposals in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, and together with philosophers Fichte and F. Schlegel, these German philosophers sought to ground hermeneutics in the concept of epistemology, and more specifically the issue of understanding.²²⁸ Understanding to Schleiermacher is a two-fold process consisting of inseparable components and could not be understood without the recognition of the other, lest one would exclude the other, thus making understanding impossible. These two elements are: 1) competent acts of speaking and comprehension of the rules of the language, and 2) that the act of speaking must be seen in the progression of the speaker's life-process and personal history. To these two elements Schleiermacher gives the terms 'grammatical' for the former and 'psychological' or 'technical' to the latter. Johann Gustav Droysen also emphasizes understanding as the prime goal: "Understanding is the most perfect knowledge that is attainable for us humans."²²⁹ Understanding is the main hinge upon which the door of hermeneutical theory in the German tradition swings. In fact, according to Joachim Wach the entire history of nineteenth century hermeneutics falls under the rubric of 'understanding' (*Das Verstehen*).²³⁰

Understanding continues to hold a prominent place in hermeneutical discussions, beyond the time and space of the nineteenth century German philosophical traditions. Without the groundwork of understanding being laid firstly, any further discussions of

²²⁸ Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader*, p.9.

²²⁹ Johann Gustav Droysen, *Historik*; taken from Mueller-Vollmer, p.19.

²³⁰ Joachim Wach, *Das Verstehen: Grundzuge einer Geschichte der Hermeneutischen Theorie im 19. Jahrhundert*. 3 vols. (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1926-1933); taken from Mueller-Vollmer, p.48.

hermeneutics become futile. Though we may not be at the same place where Schleiermacher led us, that is to say that understanding is synonymous with hermeneutics, yet we must realize that for us to proceed in our hermeneutical inquiry, we must fundamentally 'understand'.

Text

Paramount in the discipline of hermeneutics is the issue of interpretation and what logically follows is the issue of the very thing that needs interpretation, what the hermeneutics have come to call the text. A wide variety of opinions are offered as to what a text is and how it functions. My intentions are not necessarily to offer an assessment of these various opinions or even to compare and contrast them exhaustively; my intentions are far more simple, and that is, to offer these opinions as possibilities and cite them as demonstrations of the trends and progress in the field of text-theory.

Let us begin with a notion from George Aichele and Gary Phillips who claim, "Text is a field traversed by lines of force in which various signifying systems undergo transposition of varying sorts and in varying degree of magnitude concern for history and culture."²³¹ Umberto Eco offers this observation: "Texts are the human way to reduce the world to a manageable format, open to an intersubjective interpretive discourse."²³² And on a similar note Kevin Vanhoozer suggests that, "insofar as everything from Brahms symphony to a baby's cry is a 'text,' that is, an expression of human life that calls for interpretation."²³³ Later Vanhoozer remarks, "A text is a complex communicative act done in the past that may nevertheless produce present effects."²³⁴ Roland Barthes

²³¹ George Aichele and Gary Phillips, "Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis", p.11.

²³² Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, p.21.

²³³ Vanhoozer, p.23.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.226.

suggests that, “The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture.”²³⁵ James Voelz gives this definition: “Text is a set or complex of signs, which is to be interpreted against the background of other signs or sets/complexes of signs.”²³⁶ Summarizing deconstruction, David Odell-Scott pronounces that, “texts are clusters of signs that readers and writers continually interpret...then texts are open ended.”²³⁷ The authors of the *Postmodern Bible* simply state that, “everything is text.”²³⁸ Wolfgang Iser identifies that, “the text is a thing in itself, controls the reading process, contains the potentiality of meaning.”²³⁹ While admittedly dealing with the specific issue of the written text, Werner Jeanrond defines text as “a structured whole of meaning which consists of at least one word.”²⁴⁰ Paul Ricoeur, while making distinctions between verbal and written usages makes this comment upfront, “Let us say that a text is any discourse fixed by writing.”²⁴¹ Derrida proclaims, “A literary text is a kind of emptying out of meaning that remains potentially meaningful, a repeatable singularity that depends on an openness to new concepts and therefore on its difference each time it is repeated.”²⁴²

I appreciate the value and validity in these definitions and comments, and while my intentions are not necessarily to critique them as much demonstrate their contributions to the current discussion of text, I must pause and deal with one particular definition that finds itself in strong opposition to the theory promoted in Daniel^B, as we

²³⁵ Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p.33.

²³⁶ James W. Voelz, “Multiple Signs, Levels of Meaning and Self as Text: Elements of Intertextuality” in *Semeia* 69/70, p.150.

²³⁷ David Odell-Scott, “Deconstruction” in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), p.59.

²³⁸ *Postmodern Bible*, p.130.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.40

²⁴⁰ *Theological Hermeneutics*, p.84.

²⁴¹ Paul Ricoeur, “What is a Text? Explanation and Understanding” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination* (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1991) p.43.

²⁴² Jacque Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p.16.

will see later. Robert Scharlemann offers a definition of text by tweaking Ricoeur's definition. Instead of viewing a text as any discourse fixed by writing, he sees a text as an original written piece which inspires other interpretations in the form of written texts. He suggests that all texts are writings; but not all writings are texts.²⁴³ The problems that Scharlemann immediately faces are immense. First and foremost is the issue of originality; how is one supposed to know if what one is reading is original—if there is such a thing—or if it is only an interpretation of another writing, and whether that piece is original? Let us look to Daniel^B as a quick point of reference. While many view Daniel^B as an original literary piece, and therefore a legitimate text according to Scharlemann, others consider it a midrash of the Joseph narrative,²⁴⁴ and therefore not a real text in the opinion of Scharlemann. We cannot possibly determine if a 'text' is original or simply an interpretation of another text. For all intents and purposes, all texts are interpretations of something, whether written or not. Therefore, according to Scharlemann, is there *any* such thing as a text? Secondly, even within the very same parameters he sets for defining the text, he immediately falls into his own trap by calling a 'text' something that functions as the interpretation of a text. As he states in his essay, "a text is that written discourse upon which other texts can be written, as interpretations, and to which other texts are referred, but which, in turn, is not referred to any anterior text."²⁴⁵ It would seem that if he intends to delimit the use of 'text' that he might want to offer alternate vocabulary lest his reader, like he himself, is tempted to revert back to calling a text that which he has deemed not to be a text. Most importantly, however, is the

²⁴³ Robert Scharlemann, "Theological Text" in *Semeia 40* (Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1987) p.8.

²⁴⁴ Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, p.1, 8.

²⁴⁵ Scharlemann, p.8.

incongruity that it finds with Daniel^B, especially in the latter half of the narrative when interpretation of a text, and interpretation of an interpretation of a text, is still a text.

While all of these opinions have their commonalties, they likewise also have their differences. Some definitions include everything and exclude practically nothing; other definitions are more narrowly precise; while at least one ironically becomes allusive due to its over-attempts at precision. Perhaps the safest approach to the issue of the text is to be satisfied with the claim of Charles Winquist who states, “It is not assumed that there is a concurrence as to what is meant by ‘text’.”²⁴⁶ Yet as we discuss the issue of the text within a certain framework—that being hermeneutics—we must allow the parameters of one to affect the meaning of the other. So, at least within the discipline of hermeneutics and for our purposes here, the text can be defined as anything that is interpreted. Texts are all around us, but what may be a text to one person may not necessarily be perceived as a text to anyone else. And while this definition is closely akin to those who include everything and exclude practically nothing, the parameters set are within the confines of interpretation, and more specifically in the act of interpretation. Ultimately, definition and delimitations of text falls on the shoulders of the interpreter; what one person interprets thereby becomes a text to that individual. As far as Daniel^B is concerned, what we have before us is a literary text in which we observe Daniel^C interpreting a variety of texts—some literary, but most are not—above all of which is Yhwh the Ultratext. What the reader is challenged to do through our readerly encounter with this literary text is to discover also the ‘non-literary’ texts around us and interpret all texts according to our understanding and devotion to the Ultratext.

²⁴⁶ Charles Winquist, “Preface” in *Semeia* 40, p.1.

Hermeneutical Circle

To speak here of the hermeneutical circle as if there was only one would be ignoring the nearly infinite amount of hermeneutical circles that occur in a variety of reading strategies. On the other hand, and due to the innumerable amount of hermeneutical circles, we cannot realistically list all such possibilities. Therefore, what we will attempt to do at this juncture is to describe as lucidly as possible the theory of the hermeneutical circle and in addition, give a few examples of some of the best known circles.

As a theory the hermeneutical circle has numerous avenues of emphases; some are textual, some are temporal, some are cultural, some are philosophical and many are combinations of several emphases. In essence one condition leads to another condition which then re-informs the previous condition, and so on. Locating the starting point or the ending point is impossible in this theory, just as it is impossible to locate a starting point in a circle. Others claim that the process of one condition informing another condition is not performed in a closed circle but rather in a spiral motif, where a return to the same point is not indicative of the process of understanding as much as it is progress to another yet reminiscent point.²⁴⁷ Validity is found in either model depending upon the specific emphasis; some are better described as circles while others perform as spirals. Regardless of the geometry of the metaphor, the same basic theory is at work in either model.

Perhaps the best known description of the hermeneutical circle asserts that comprehension of the parts give rise to the understanding of the whole and the understanding of the whole reveals how to understand the parts. Johann Gustav Droysen

²⁴⁷ R. Hubbard, W. Klein, C. Blomberg, p. 114; Osborne, p.6.

states the case succinctly, “The part is understood within the whole from which it originated, and the whole is understood from the part in which it finds expression.”²⁴⁸

Schleiermacher applies this same type of circle to the author’s historical setting: “The vocabulary and the history of an author’s age together form a whole from which his writings must be understood as a part, and vice versa.”²⁴⁹ In essence, Schleiermacher claims that an author is both a product of his environment as well as a producer of the same.

The hermeneutical circle that fluctuates between the temporal poles of biblical history and the present is employed most often by ecclesiastical and liturgical parties who seek to bridge this temporal gap for the sake of bringing understanding to their congregation in the form of a sermon. The tools needed for this exercise consist of a newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other. Often the present-day situation is explicated in a way which demands a solution, then similarities are found in scripture within their own historical context, and finally the appropriation is made for the present based upon the findings of the biblical past.²⁵⁰ The task of the interpreter is “nothing less than to bridge the historical—and therefore cultural—gap between them and us.”²⁵¹

The last circle with which we will deal in this brief survey is that which occurs between the pre-understanding of a reader and the understanding generated by the text. Pre-understanding on the most basic level, like Schleiermacher’s grammatical mode of interpretation,²⁵² is the ability to use and understand the fundamental linguistic

²⁴⁸ Droysen, *Historik*; taken from Mueller-Vollmer, p.19.

²⁴⁹ F. Schleiermacher, “Foundations: General Theory and the Art of interpretation” in Mueller-Vollmer, p.84.

²⁵⁰ Osborne, p.6.

²⁵¹ Gordon Fee. “History as Context for Interpretation” in *The Act of Reading the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p.11.

²⁵² Mueller-Vollmer, p.11.

conventions employed in any given text. Beyond this, what Schleiermacher calls the psychological mode of interpretation,²⁵³ are the personal and social experiences and beliefs the reader brings to a text, what Gadamer calls the reader's horizon.²⁵⁴ D.S. Ferguson defines pre-understanding as "a body of assumptions and attitudes which a person brings to the perception and interpretation of reality or any aspect of it."²⁵⁵ The reader comes to the text with a network of pre-understandings, which both shape the reading of the text and are likewise reshaped by the reading process.²⁵⁶ This reading now becomes a part of the reader's pre-understanding in the approach to any other text, including the very same text.

Theological Hermeneutics

Though only a few philosophers of antiquity took time to write about the issue of interpretation, there were no shortages of such treatises from the circles of biblical scholars and theologians.²⁵⁷ To be sure the clergy, biblical scholars and theologians made and still make their livelihood by their ability to give an account of their exegesis; while to other philosophers, hermeneutics was only one of many intellectual endeavors within their discipline. The pistic community is essentially founded upon the biblical text requiring constant efforts in hermeneutical inquiry, therefore scripture becomes inseparable from hermeneutics. When hermeneutics received considerable attention in the nineteenth century as the study of human understanding, it was only the beginning of the high placement that hermeneutics would receive. Due to the centuries of biblical and theological domination in the arena of hermeneutics, other philosophers who would later

²⁵³ *Ibid.* Schleiermacher also uses the term 'technical' for this mode as well.

²⁵⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp.302-307.

²⁵⁵ D.S. Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), p.6.

²⁵⁶ Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, pp.5f.

²⁵⁷ Vanhoozer, p.19.

(re)enter into this field would have to deal at some time with the theological aspect of hermeneutics. Quite candidly the Bible has prompted the largest single hermeneutic enterprise²⁵⁸ and for this reason, philosophers must acquaint themselves with the intricacies of theological hermeneutics. Though principles and theories traverse the sometimes artificial boundaries between general hermeneutics and theological hermeneutics, by implication of its etymology hermeneutics gravitates toward a theological dimension.

Two primary aspects need to be explored other than those covered by general or Danielic hermeneutics, those being theological hermeneutics and hermeneutical theology. Though there are obviously similar connotations between the two, the distinctions that are made may prove to be worthy of the investigation.

Theological Hermeneutics

Theological hermeneutics is a specialized type of interpretation that seeks to interpret a text within the dimension of theology. Such an act of interpretation can have as a subject essentially two types of texts: one intended to be theological and the other having no such intention.²⁵⁹ According to Werner Jeanrond, “every written text could be interpreted from a theological point of view, that is to say that every text may shed light on our understanding of God’s will for and presence in our world.”²⁶⁰ However, as a precursor he adamantly warns that such a theological reading of a text not composed within a theological genre calls into question the reading ideology of such an interpreter. Any interpreter who wishes to interpret a ‘non-theological’ text theologically must firstly attend to its own generic capacities and potential of meaning so as to not violate the rights

²⁵⁸ Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica, *Hermeneutics* (Amherst: U. of Massachusetts Press, 1984), p.11.

²⁵⁹ Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, p.8-9.

²⁶⁰ *ibid.* p.8.

of the text and thus possibly disqualify the final theological interpretation. Simply stated, such a theological interpreter cannot force the issue by shoving a square theological peg through a round literary hole.

Then there are also texts composed within overt dimensions of theology, having a capacity for theology and anticipating theological hermeneutics. To respect the generic intention of the work and to interpret it theologically is one and the same. These texts include the Bible, prayers, songs, devotionals, and spiritually-based autobiographies, biographies, and fictional works, any or all of which can stimulate the development of theological reflection.²⁶¹ Theological hermeneutics holds the hypothesis that all texts, whether explicitly or implicitly, inherently possess some theological value, and to discover, understand and interpret that value is to do the work of theological hermeneutics.

Hermeneutical Theology

Hermeneutical theology takes a different slant on the issue of interpretation and theology. The claims of hermeneutical theology are that theology by its nature is hermeneutical since it deals with a tradition predominantly mediated by written works and their interpretations.²⁶² Oswald Bayer takes a slightly different approach to hermeneutical theology when he makes the claim that God is characteristically a hermeneut, who approaches man and translates from the heavenly to the earthly language.²⁶³ The search for spiritual significance must replace 'religion' and 'faith' with 'God' and 'word', or 'θεος' και 'λογος'; our study of theology—or of God and his

²⁶¹ *ibid.* p.9.

²⁶² *ibid.* p.9.

²⁶³ Oswald Bayer. "Hermeneutical Theology" in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol.56, #2 ('03) p.131.

word—leads us to the conclusion that God is a hermeneut, hence hermeneutical theology.²⁶⁴

These two aspects are more characteristic of the hermeneutical circle than of choices between the two. Each one leads to the other even as each one is dependent upon the other. For the theological hermeneut, the texts s/he interprets are, or at least become, theological, and this theology is unavoidably hermeneutical, bridging the gap between man and God by means of interpreting a text that is simultaneously from and about God and a text from and about man, and their relation to one another. As we begin to read Daniel^B we will be able to observe both theological hermeneutics and hermeneutical theology.

Danielic Hermeneutics

Danielic hermeneutics is not just a narrower perspective of general hermeneutics, and narrower still of theological hermeneutics, it is an assimilation of common theories and principles of both general and theological hermeneutics. As we focus in on the specific aspects of Danielic hermeneutics, we will refer back to the aforementioned discussions in order to demonstrate the integration of general and theological hermeneutics already at work in Daniel^B. As we will come to discover through our reading of Daniel^B, it is a theological hermeneutical text through and through.

Definition

We have identified three fundamental definitions of hermeneutics: the science and art of interpretation, the theory and practice of interpretation, and the bridging of a gap through interpretation; but what agreement or disagreement do we find in Daniel^B? Of the three definitions, clearly the last is the most obviously identifiable; Daniel^C bridges the

²⁶⁴ *ibid.* p.136f.

gap by means of his interpretations. In essence Daniel^C fulfills the role of the hermeneut, or to state the case another way, Daniel^C is the Jewish Hermes and to follow in the steps of Daniel^C in this regard—as indeed the text challenges the reader to do—is to do the work of ‘Danieleutics’. Daniel^C stands between mortal man and transcendent God, between transcendent God and exalted king, between exalted king and common people,²⁶⁵ between spirit world and material world.²⁶⁶ Furthermore he constructs interpretations that stand in the gap between two disparate entities, perhaps most substantially between the lack of understanding and the state of understanding. In the most fundamental respect, the working definition of hermeneutics in Daniel^B is the bridging of a gap through interpretation.

In regard to the first two definitions, the definition of the science and art of interpretation seems to be the most silent and least obvious in the Danielic corpus, while the definition of the theory and practice of interpretation, on the contrary, seems to be quite prevalent in Daniel^B if we read it as a hermeneutical exercise. Daniel^B offers both theory and practice in interpretation, though certainly not by the same criteria we might find in any formal modern treatise of hermeneutics. The theoretical and practical aspects of Daniel^B become so much more difficult to recognize since we as readers have been conditioned by Western methods of communication in this respect. Yet, as we shall see, thorough examination of the metastructure of Daniel^B reveals semblance to the definition, “the theory and practice of interpretation.”

For just a moment let us back up in order to gather some fundamental details that are prerequisite to our application of this definition of the theory and practice of

²⁶⁵ Philo. *On Joseph*, 148, p.211.

²⁶⁶ Hersh Goldwurm subtitles Daniel as “a bridge to eternity”; *Daniel – A Bridge to Eternity* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1988).

interpretation to Daniel^B. Stephen Moore points out that θεωρεω (I observe) serves as the etymological backdrop for our English word ‘theory’, and hence also ‘theorist’, as well as for our word ‘tour’, and hence also ‘tourist’.²⁶⁷ This particular piece of information serves the case for the consideration of Daniel^B as a hermeneutics textbook in significant ways. To recognize that a ‘tour’ through Daniel^B is similar—if not equal—to a ‘theoretical’ presentation in Daniel^B is to catch the essence of the structure of the book as a reader. Characteristic of the tourist is one who observes the sights but who is not directly or personally involved in the local color. Likewise, the reader of Daniel^B observes as a tourist the text and its interpretation in the first half of the book. In the latter half of the book, the reader is shown the text but is offered no such interpretation, thus suggesting that the reader is ultimately responsible for its interpretation. So while the reader is but a tourist in the first half of the book, that is, his/her job is to ‘observe’ the theory; the latter half of the book is no longer theory but practice since the reader must do interpretive work for him/herself, essentially becoming Daniel^C. Hopefully, this will become more clear when we really begin to read Daniel^B for ourselves.

Daniel as a Hermeneutical Exercise

The Proposal. This particular section is a springboard for the entire remainder of this work. My thesis is laid out plainly: Daniel^B is to be read as a textbook in theological hermeneutics and the central figure of Daniel^C stands as the paradigm of the theological hermeneut. However, the suggestion that the reading of Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise becomes immediately problematical due to the unavoidable involvement of a current and resurging hermeneutical circle. I make such a suggestion after having read

²⁶⁷ Stephen Moore, “Introduction” in *Semeia 54* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) p.1.

and studied the book, but the message that I receive from my reading is that I need to read the book in order to learn the lessons of interpretation available to me the reader. I understand the thrust of interpretation accentuated in the literature, but I have received that message as a result of an act of interpretation. Have I come to learn of this stress of interpretation by an (un)conscious act of interpreting Daniel^B or have I come to the text with a preset agenda and have found Daniel^B to be supportive of it? When there are an infinite number of places where I could enter this circle, the answer to such questions becomes irresolvable.

I must critically ask of my own conclusions, “Why has such a proposal not been suggested before if so many competent Danielic scholars have been so heavily steeped in the very act of interpreting Daniel^B?” I might suggest that Danielic scholars are the ones who come to Daniel^B most determined to perform the acts of interpretation upon the text. In a certain sense, they do exactly what Daniel^B promotes, they interpret, but they do so not as a result of reading Daniel^B, they do so because that is their main objective prior to coming to the text. In other words, and to answer my own question, perhaps this proposal has not been previously suggested because they have entered the hermeneutical circle or spiral at a different point than I have. They are blinded to the reading of Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise because of their own important agendas to perform the act of interpretation. They approach Daniel^B with the goal of interpreting it because they feel they have been adequately trained in hermeneutics, and this is indicative of the point at which they enter the hermeneutical spiral. And to be sure, their confidence in their interpretive skills must be strong since the act of interpreting Daniel^B is indubitably an arduous feat. Their training in hermeneutics and their goal to interpret are ironically the

very things that prevent them from reading Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise. Humbly stated, I might say that perhaps other Danielic scholars have missed what I am proposing since they are past the point of needing Daniel^B as a hermeneutics primer, while I am certainly not. This very sentiment is echoed by Danielic scholar Joyce Baldwin who states, “To assert so much, however, is to appear naïve, as though it were an easy thing to expound a book which has, at least in certain key passages, defeated the most skilled expositors.”²⁶⁸ This is an immensely insightful comment for our purposes here; interpretation is a difficult feat and Daniel^B is indeed a complex piece of literature and difficult to interpret; if Daniel^B was easy to interpret, then it would certainly not be about interpretation.

The next and obvious question that must be addressed is, “Is one right and the other wrong?” Certainly not. Not only do a multitude of different Danielic scholars interpret Daniel^B from a slightly different slant, but the literature itself invites a multitude of interpretations. The most obvious example comes from the debate that rages between the minority of conservative Danielic scholars who insist that the literature was composed at or just after the same time it purports to have happened and the majority of scholars who place the composition of the book in the mid-late second century BCE. Both camps make important contributions but they approach the text from entirely different mindsets, particularly with regards to inspiration-theory. Daniel^B itself offers tantalizing supportive evidence for either side of the debate. Returning to the case we are currently discussing, while the vast majority of Danielic scholars make the book the object of their interpretation, I am making Daniel^B not only the *object* of my interpretative venture but simultaneously also the *subject* of interpretation-theory.

²⁶⁸ Baldwin, p.17.

With regard to the personal differences between other Danielic scholars and myself, perhaps the differences boil down to the amount of training in the field of biblical hermeneutics. While they are competently trained and ready to tackle such a difficult book as Daniel^B, I am in training and still looking for the answers to my hermeneutical inquiries and consequently, I find answers to my questions where others do not find answers because they do not share in my quest. With regard to the innate ability that Daniel^B as literature has to be both object and subject of interpretation, the burden of proof seems to be upon me. The act of interpreting Daniel^B as an object has been in practice for two millennia and will indeed continue to flourish as such; yet Daniel^C as the subject of interpretation is the very thing being proposed here and now. But in the end, my reading of Daniel^B as hermeneutical exercise is as much an interpretation as any other interpretation found in the last the two-thousand year span of interpretations, and therefore finds legitimacy and company.

Daniel, What's in a Name. There is no consensus in Danielic scholarship in locating the identity of the name and person of Daniel^C. Once again, I would like to take a different route in the examination of the name Daniel than that which is currently taken in historical-critical studies. Rabbi Goldwurm suggests that Daniel^C's name represents the concept that judgments come from God and are not a result of happenstance,²⁶⁹ and certainly this fits well within the historical setting of the storyline. My proposal is that the name of Daniel is a clue to the hermeneutical emphasis in the book. The name 'Daniel' translates as "God is my Judge" and can lend itself easily to the theme of hermeneutics and the hermeneutical circle. Daniel^C is initially judged and assessed in chapter 1 by Yhwh who then grants him an additional promise and the responsibility to be a more

²⁶⁹ Goldwurm, p.xxxi.

privileged hermeneut. Accompanying this promise and responsibility is greater accountability, which puts him in an even more vulnerable position to God's judgment. Though Daniel^C's judgments seem to be a major focus, we are reminded by his name that God's judgment of Daniel^C and his interpretive judgments are equally at work. God is the ultimate judge, or we might also say, critic. Yet we are also reminded that Daniel^C's interpretive judgments are performed in the conscientiousness of Yhwh's judgments of him and the text.

Bilingualism. Daniel^B is composed in two Semitic languages: Hebrew from 1.1-2.4a and 8.1-12.13, and Aramaic from 2.4b-7.28. Reading Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise leads us to view the debate over the differences in language from an entirely different angle. While the historical-critical scholars seek to understand this phenomenon in terms of time and place of circulation, I see the differences of language as a seminal contribution to the legitimacy of reading Daniel^B as a hermeneutical primer. Inevitably, Danielic critics will link the changes in language with the changes in sub-genre, which becomes a problematical procedure since the linguistic and sub-genric changes do not perfectly coincide.²⁷⁰ Broadly speaking the court-tales are primarily written in Aramaic while the apocalyptic visions are predominantly composed in Hebrew. The exceptions are that chapter 1, part of the court-tales section, is written in Hebrew and chapter 7, the beginning of the apocalyptic visions, finishes out the Aramaic composition.²⁷¹ Since the

²⁷⁰ J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Visions of the Book of Daniel* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977) p.15.

²⁷¹ Most Danielic scholars comment on the bilingual difficulty: Joyce Baldwin, pp.29-35; Towner, pp.5-6; Russell, *Daniel*, pp.4-5; Collins, *Apocalyptic Visions*, pp.15-19, Walvoord, pp.14-15; Lacocque, pp.13-14; Wood, pp.18-19; Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.325.

languages and section divisions do not perfectly coincide, some amendments have been made to the theory of composition.²⁷²

The attempts to reconcile the differences of languages with the sections of the book have been made and exist in several different formats, and can be found in a number of Daniel commentaries and treatises.²⁷³ Keep in mind, however, that what we are fundamentally concerned with is Daniel^B as it currently stands as literature. Before addressing the section and language divisions, let us initially examine how the bilingualism of the book might contribute to Daniel^B's status as a hermeneutics textbook. Firstly, the very act of translating from one language to another is inherently a hermeneutical concern. Hans-Georg Gadamer in dealing with the concept of translation states, "Thus every translation is at the same time an interpretation. We can even say that the translation is the culmination of the interpretation that the translator has made of the words given him."²⁷⁴ Secondly, thanks to the efforts of historical critics, Hebrew as a language has been shown to have been waning in popularity in favor of an increasingly vernacular Aramaic during the periods following the Judean exile.²⁷⁵ André Lacocque asserts that Aramaic became an international language in the eighth century BCE in the Near East from India to southern Egypt and from Asia Minor to the north of Arabia, and included both Assyrian and Persian empires.²⁷⁶ The diminishing use of Hebrew as a common vernacular led to its growing status as a more scholarly dialect. Rainer Albertz goes so far as to say that the utilization of Hebrew was an attempt to protect Daniel^B from

²⁷² H.L. Ginsberg, *Studies in Daniel* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1948). Ginsberg is most responsible for developing the theory of progressive composition in the book of Daniel, though it fails to be largely supported by modern scholars. See Collins in *Apocalyptic Visions*, p.15-19.

²⁷³ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), pp.70-72; *Apocalyptic Vision*, pp.15-21.

²⁷⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.384.

²⁷⁵ Rainer Albertz, "The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel", p.191.

²⁷⁶ Lacocque, *Book of Daniel*, p.14. see also Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.xxv.

severe political and military misuse as propaganda.²⁷⁷ As a hermeneutical exercise we are faced with a book that is written in a more vernacular style in the early half and a more scholarly dialect in the latter half. This would seem to make perfect sense for an exercise to begin with the language more easily read and understood by the populace before proceeding to challenge the reader in the more difficult scholarly jargon. However, chapters 1 and 7 still prove to be problematical.

Attempts to resolve the difficulties revolve around chapters 1 and 7 for Danielic scholars in pursuit of solving the historical-critical issues as well as for us in attempting to establish Daniel^B as a hermeneutics textbook. Let us begin by dealing with chapter 1. Essentially the debate in Danielic scholarship is between those who advocate that chapter 1 is one of six court-tales in the first six chapters and those who claim that chapter 1 is an introduction to the rest of the book.²⁷⁸ In viewing Daniel^B as a hermeneutics textbook, I find myself in agreement with the latter and must come to the conclusion that chapter 1 is introduction or preface to the rest of the book. Chapter 1 is written in the more scholarly and difficult language of Hebrew; thus, as an introduction it reveals the challenge that lies ahead for the reader in terms of linguistics, and furthermore as a preface it thoroughly lists the qualities requisite for being a good interpreter. Chapter 1 is not simply one of six court-tales written in a different language, it is a preface that sets the tone and the pace for the material that follows in a language that best conveys this very message. The lessons begin in chapter 2 in the more commonly known language of Aramaic as the reader observes the presentation of the text and the interpretation of it by a wise and righteous hermeneut.

²⁷⁷ Albertz, pp.196-197.

²⁷⁸ We will briefly survey this argument when dealing with Daniel 1 in our present Chapter 4.

As we now examine the second difficulty, we cannot help but to notice, as many Danielic scholars have likewise done, that chapter 7 is a pivotal point in the entire narrative.²⁷⁹ In fact, for the purposes of showing Daniel^B to be a hermeneutical exercise, we might even say that chapter 7 itself displays hermeneutical qualities inasmuch as it bridges the gap between the early half of the narrative and the latter half of the narrative. For instance, linguistically chapter 7 remains in Aramaic and therefore shares links with chapters 2-6. The chiasmic structure of chapters 2-7 also puts chapter 7 in association with chapters 2-6.²⁸⁰ The genre, however, displays a definite shift; no longer does Daniel^C play his role in the court of a foreign king, rather he finds himself by way of a vision observing the activities of a heavenly court, and therefore chapter 7 finds commonalty with the latter chapters of 8-12. Additionally, the original Narrator of chapters 1-6 introduces Daniel^C as the new narrator, who will continue to narrate for the remainder of the book. Coinciding with the change in narration, a temporal change is also made; chapters 1-6 move chronologically from Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar to Darius, while chapters 7-12 revert back to the first year of Belshazzar then proceeds to the third year of Belshazzar and to the third year of King Cyrus. In this respect as well chapter 7 is connected with chapters 8-12.

Moving past the pivotal and gap-bridging chapter 7, chapters 8-12 return to Hebrew and consequently, the challenges for the reader become more difficult both materially and linguistically. In the early half of the narrative, the text is one that is presented by another party to Daniel^C who proves himself more than capable of

²⁷⁹ J.J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Visions*, pp.17-19.

²⁸⁰ The chiasm is as follows: chs. 2&7 speak of four earthly kingdoms followed by an eternal kingdom of God; chs. 3&6 present a miraculous rescue to those who remain faithful in their Yahwism; chs. 4&5 demonstrate the haughtiness of earthly kings and show the judgments of Yhwh upon them.

interpreting an enigmatic text. In the latter half of the narrative, the text is one that is essentially presented to the reader by Daniel^C who then does not explicitly reveal the interpretation or his personal understanding. The interpretive task is left up to the reader. Linguistically, the switch to Hebrew is indicative of the more academically challenging material that corresponds to the more demanding dialect.

Interpretation and Understanding. As we have observed in our previous discussion of general hermeneutics, by definition interpretation is an integral component of hermeneutics. The heavy repetition of the word 'interpretation' appearing 31 times in the Aramaic sections of Daniel^B alone communicates the strong emphasis of the book and can hardly go unnoticed. Chapter by chapter the storyline of the Aramaic sections hinges upon the ability of Daniel^C to be able to interpret. Furthermore, the word 'understand(ing)' appears no less than 27 times throughout the entire twelve chapters of the book, thus also revealing another point of concentration. The importance that 'understanding' plays in the hermeneutics of Daniel^C is mirrored in the emphasis that Schleiermacher and others put on the role that 'understanding' plays in hermeneutics.

Text-Theory. Daniel^C is presented as an interpreter *par excellence* capable of interpreting a wide variety of texts. In the process a theory of what constitutes a text is developed, and one that is strikingly similar and familiar to postmodern era discussions in philosophical and literary circles. Daniel^C interprets culture, law, literature, dreams, case specific edicts, personalities, encoded writings, supernatural phenomena, visions, and ultimately Yhwh himself. So what is a text in Daniel^B? Essentially, anything that calls for interpretation is deemed as text. The very idea of entertaining a text-theory and making

certain judgments about its conclusions are evidences of Daniel^B's status as a hermeneutics textbook.

Creating and Bridging the Gap. One final point offering evidence that suggests how Daniel^B can be read as a hermeneutical text is the subtle way that Daniel^B creates gaps and then challenges the reader to bridge the very same gap created. In order to bridge the gap through interpretation, the work of hermeneutics, a gap must firstly exist. The creation of this gap is conscientiously devised in Daniel^B. The gaps between genres, narrators, understanding and non-understanding, languages, and the material and spirit worlds are all created so that the reader can observe and learn from Daniel^C as he bridges the gap, and ultimately the reader must likewise practice bridging the very gaps created by the narrative.

Hermeneutical Circles

We find in Daniel^B numerous hermeneutical circles which lend themselves to the promotion of Daniel^B as an exercise in hermeneutics. Some of the circles inevitably and directly involve the reader—and though they may be difficult to disentangle from the ones that only indirectly affect the reader—these circles will be reserved for the last chapter which deals with the reader as hermeneut. The three hermeneutical circles discussed previously will find at least one application in our study of Daniel^C.

Parts and the Whole. The divisions in Daniel^B have long been problematical, as we have observed above. Similar to one of the major hermeneutical circles previously mentioned, that is, relating the affects the whole has on the parts and the parts on the whole, Daniel^B displays a similar circumstance within its corpus. We must realize that the two major parts of court-tales and apocalyptic visions help to understand the whole genre

and the whole genre helps to reveal the meaning of the parts. Recognition that there are indeed parts in Daniel^B is inescapable. If we understand Daniel^B to be a hermeneutical exercise, then we can meet the challenge of the parts of Daniel^B appropriately rather than attempting to explain them away or to disregard the unity of the composition.

Close examination of the character of Daniel^C is quite similar. While in the first half of the book, Daniel^C is nearly flawless as an interpreter; in the second half of the narrative we see quite another side of him, as he is subject to incomplete understanding. These two sides of Daniel^C lead us to draw conclusions about his whole character, and his whole character helps us to understand his various parts. As we will notice later, the study of the character of Daniel^C leads us to the conclusion that the book exposes a state of gestalt in Daniel^C and ultimately promotes the same in the reader. In short, we only discover our potential for wholeness when we come to grips with the reality of our frayed selves; only when we understand that the answer is a mystery do we comprehend the nature of the answer.

Temporal Circle. The temporal hermeneutical circle that is made possible by the difference between the antiquity of the literature and the readership of today is certainly not unique among the other biblical books, or any antiquated pieces of literature for that matter. However, what we see in Daniel^B is the employment of the temporal circle within the corpus of the book itself. The time of Daniel^B and the time of the original readership are different; this is an agreement that is made among all Danielic scholars, both the majority advocating a later date as well as the minority defending the earlier date.²⁸¹ We see in Daniel^B a story that takes place within a given cultural and political climate and a

²⁸¹ Take Joyce Baldwin as a voice of the minority, p.46. She states Daniel lives till about 537 BCE, p.35, and the book was composed late sixth century or early fifth century BCE.

readership that exists in another such climate. By implication the historic reader is challenged to assess his own conditions, to understand the situations revealed in the narrative, and finally to make the necessary appropriations from the circumstances in Daniel^B to the conditions of his own temporal and cultural position. The historic reader is prompted to appropriate and interpret the narrative out of sheer urgency within this temporal sphere due to the threats to Yahwistic integrity that the Jews were facing. Such interpretation was vitally important for the survival of true Yahwism.

The idea that the author of Daniel^B does not simply state what needs to happen in order for the righteous to survive or for Yahwism to prevail in the religious life of Judah signals that interpretation has as much to do with the survival of Yahwism as does righteousness. In other words, and to recite a popular proverb, “give a boy a fish and he eats for a day; teach a boy to fish and he eats for a lifetime.” If the author made the cultural and religious appropriations for the reader, the reader may do well, but only while that religious and cultural climate remains the same; when change inevitably occurs, the reader must look to another to make the appropriations for him once again. What we find in Daniel^B is a challenge to the reader to make appropriations from the circumstances of Babylon to another kingdom like Persia or Greece on a rather minor scale. This prepares—or perhaps teaches—the reader to go back further into Israel’s history to make appropriations on a much more major scale, that is to find contemporary applications from such pieces of literature as Moses and other historiographies. This act, of course, is exemplified by Daniel^C himself who makes such adjustments on a monumental scale in the course of the narrative from a state of religious and cultural autonomy of Judah, to a state of subservience and submission to the political, cultural and

religious tyranny of Babylon. Daniel^C stands as the paradigm of the interpreter who makes wise appropriations from two entirely differently climates, while the reader watches, learns and hopefully emulates.

Pre-understanding and Understanding. The third hermeneutical circle mentioned above involves the pre-understanding of the reader and the understanding generated by the text. A pre-understanding of Yhwh is a key ingredient for the reader to be successful in his/her reading of Daniel^B. The reader of Daniel^B must have some kind of pre-understanding of Yhwh, and this pre-understanding of Yhwh is unmistakably assumed by the text to be in place. Though there is opportunity for the conversion of inside characters such as Nebuchadnezzar explicitly and Darius implicitly, the point for the reader is to be the one who “leads many to righteousness;” the intentions of the narrative are not to convert the reader. A reader’s pre-understanding of Yhwh leads to an acknowledgment of further revelatory information about Yhwh, which then becomes a part of pre-understanding before encountering more theological claims about Yhwh. The reader must know Yhwh in order to better know Yhwh, then Yhwh will further reveal himself and make himself more known to the reader.

The pre-understanding of Yhwh also leads to the pre-understanding of the supernatural in general. The interpretive task in Daniel^B is to understand the mundane according to the knowledge of the supernatural and by gaining more knowledge of the supernatural the reader is able to acquire better comprehension of the mundane. The interconnection between these two spheres is strong and heavily emphasized throughout the narrative. Yet the only way to come to a better understanding of the natural is by the pre-understanding of the existence of the supernatural.

Many other hermeneutical circles or spirals exist throughout Daniel^B but the main point here was to demonstrate that the three main hermeneutical circles discussed earlier are already at work in the narrative. Other hermeneutical circles in Daniel^B will be examined as we begin to read the story more closely. For now, however, these few examples are sufficient evidence for not just finding hermeneutical circles in Daniel^B but furthermore for seeing Daniel^B as literature that prompts thinking and interpreting in a fashion of the hermeneutical circle. And if this can be established, then we are better on our way to reading Daniel^B as a theological hermeneutics textbook.

Summary

Thus far we have examined Daniel^B from a historical-critical viewpoint, at least with regard to the book as literature as well as exploring the possible communities of authors and readers surrounding the book's composition. From this point we took a look at the various issues of narratology and the reading strategies that individual readers perform within the context of a larger readerly community. These two distinct fields of study lead naturally into the discipline of narrative theology, which seeks to make sacred literature applicable for theological use for today's pistic community yet being conscientiously sensitive to the continuity that today's pistic community has with the historic pistic community. As this community reads and appropriates the literature for themselves in light of its heritage, they become an interpretive community by practice. However, the Danielic community is not simply an interpretive community by practice, it is an interpretive community by definition: they are an interpretive community because they are commissioned to interpret by the very literature they interpret. The theology the

community receives from Daniel^B is emphatically hermeneutical; similarly the stress of the practice of interpretation is equally theological. In this sense the Danielic community is self-reflexive, they interpret as a community and discover in Daniel^B the necessity to be the interpretive community in order to become the theological community they seek to be. The community is at once theologically hermeneutical and hermeneutically theological. Norman Holland advocates the position that interpretation is a function of identity;²⁸² this could be no more true than what we find in the case of the Danielic community.

²⁸² Jane Tompkins. *Reader Response Criticism*, p.xix, a view espoused by Norman Holland.

CHAPTER 3

NARRATION IN DANIEL

“Scripture has a variety of ways of speaking and the process of interpretation requires a variety of hermeneutical approaches.”

-John Goldingay²⁸³

“Critics have sometimes forgotten that there is a meaning in the final whole as well as in its constituent parts.”

- Eric Heaton²⁸⁴

Narration in Daniel^B makes for one of the most fascinating studies of narration in the Hebrew and Christian canons. Of the sixty-six books of the Protestant Christian canon, twenty-four are considered narratives by genre,²⁸⁵ and of these none display such intricacies and complexities as various narrators, characters as narrators, a gentile convert as a narrator, and the intermittent shifting of their roles. Each narrator in Daniel^B has a specific purpose and viewpoint in his narration, and not always are they in complete agreement with each other, or at least this is how it seems on the surface. The coherence of these narrational voices essentially lies in the hermeneutical end; all three of which contribute to this end in their own way.

Narrational Shifts

A survey of Daniel^B reveals that the narrative does indeed have three narrators, the original Narrator²⁸⁶ in chapters 1,2,3,5, and 6, Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 and

²⁸³ John Goldingay, *Models for Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995), p.1.

²⁸⁴ Eric Heaton, *Daniel*, p.48.

²⁸⁵ Included are Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I&II Samuel, I&II Kings, I&II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job (though poetic, it has narrative characteristics as well), Daniel, Jonah, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, and Revelation.

²⁸⁶ The Narrator shall be henceforth capitalized to distinguish him from Daniel or Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel^C in chapters 7-12, but upon closer examination we come to the conclusion that the Narrator is an ever-present force that stands in the gap between the reader and the two other narrators. So while there are formal narrational shifts, there is also a consistency in the voice and presence of the Narrator.

Third to First-Person Narration at Chapter 4

Suddenly and with no warning, the baton of narration is taken from the Narrator by Nebuchadnezzar, who up to this point has proved himself to be viciously violent in relation to fellow man; despondent, unstable, irresolute, insecure in his character and volatile in his opinion of Yhwh. The reader is caught off-guard by the intrusive manner of Nebuchadnezzar's narration;²⁸⁷ after all what the reader has encountered thus far in the narrative is not exactly a favorable picture of Nebuchadnezzar. The Narrator does not introduce Nebuchadnezzar as a convert to Yahwism nor even as the new narrator, rather Nebuchadnezzar assumes control of the narration consistent with the traits of his character, that is to say, he does so violently.

In general chapter 4 is about Nebuchadnezzar who fulfills the role of narrator, who interprets the events of his life and conversion, and ultimately interprets Yhwh himself. What we encounter is a stark difference between the narration of the Narrator and the narration of Nebuchadnezzar, and this difference is found in the medium of their narration. Essentially the Narrator 'tells' the story to his audience from the third-person perspective, but here in chapter 4 from a first-person perspective, Nebuchadnezzar addresses his readers via writing in a common form of Aramaic epistolography.²⁸⁸ While

²⁸⁷ Dana Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, p.62.

²⁸⁸ John Goldingay, *Daniel* (Dallas: Word, 1989) p.82; JA Fitzmyer, "Some Notes on Aramaic Epistolography" *JBL* 93 ('74) pp.201-25; W.G. Doty "The Classification of Epistolary Literature" *CBQ* 31

the Narrator is a voice that does not 'die', here are the written words of a character the reader is permitted, even encouraged, to consider as dead²⁸⁹ when we keep in mind that the Narrator has already told the reader the temporal scope of the book in 1.21, which extends far beyond the boundaries of the life of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar begins his narration at 4.1 and carries it through to verse 18; the Narrator re-emerges at a definite juncture at 4.28, but matters become complicated and ambiguous from 4.19-27. The question is, who is the narrator during the narration of verse 19-27? As Dana Nolan Fewell rightly points out, the shift in narration that comes at verse 19 is subtle, hardly noticeable, and retains the perspective of Nebuchadnezzar.²⁹⁰ The subtlety of the change is in the second half of verse 19 when the king is referred to in the third-person, "So the king said, 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream...'" Thus a signal is given that the narrator is third-person and not the first-person 'I' commonly used by Nebuchadnezzar. However, then the narrator relays Daniel^c's reply with this introduction, "Belteshazzar answered, 'My lord, if only...'" The Narrator is not accustomed to calling Daniel^c by the Babylonian name of Belteshazzar, which would have been Daniel^c's name according to Nebuchadnezzar. There is no clear answer as to who the narrator is from verses 19-27, thus destabilizing the reader to some extent.

The new question is, is there a change in narrators at verse 19 or at verse 28? Is it possible that Nebuchadnezzar as narrator could have spoken of himself in the third-person, even if in this isolated instance? Yes, it is possible. Or is it also possible that Narrator refers to Daniel^c as Belteshazzar, even in this exceptional case? Yes, this is also

(69) pp.183-99; P.S. Alexander, "Remarks on Aramaic Epistolography in the Persian Period" *JSS* 23 ('78) pp.155-70.

²⁸⁹ Dana Nolan Fewell, *The Circle of Sovereignty*, p.63.

²⁹⁰ Fewell, *Circle*, p.68.

possible.²⁹¹ The question becomes moot; we cannot tell who the narrator is of verses 19-27. The issue is that the identity of the narrators becomes ambiguous. The point here for our purposes is that for these particular verses, which stand between sections clearly narrated by Nebuchadnezzar before and clearly narrated by Narrator after, is that the perspectives of these two narrators are unable to be disentangled. The voice of the Narrator and the voice of Nebuchadnezzar become indistinguishable. What we must conclude about this ambiguous convergence of narrative voices is that there is a sense of collusion between the Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar, both of whom are literary constructs of the real/implicit author. If we cannot tell the differences between their voices, then perhaps we cannot tell the differences between their theological beliefs in this episode, spelling out Nebuchadnezzar's personal conversion and glorification to Yhwh, which assimilate the Narrator's own beliefs.

Then as we come to verse 28, the voice of Nebuchadnezzar clearly ceases and the voice of the Narrator assumes unambiguous control. In 4.28-33 the Narrator once again performs his normative duties as narrator. The shift is subtle and swift but certainly not undetectable; the perspective changes noticeably from first to third-person. The Narrator who shares the information of the king losing his wits gives way to the narration of Nebuchadnezzar again. The story of Nebuchadnezzar's lycanthropy and recovery concludes in 4.34-37 with a proper and supposedly genuine exaltation of Yhwh from the pen of Nebuchadnezzar. Narrator 'tells' the reader the stories in chapters 1, 2 and 3, which are followed by Nebuchadnezzar who has his turn to tell the reader his story via written discourse. Essentially, the Narrator relates the story to the reader by a means of 'telling' in the first three chapters, then Narrator conveys the essence of the story by a

²⁹¹ cf. 10.1.

means of 'showing'. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar's 'telling' is a product of the Narrator's 'showing'.²⁹² As Nebuchadnezzar 'tells' his story, the Narrator is simultaneously 'showing' Nebuchadnezzar's story; the Narrator never leaves the scene, despite the abruptness of the shift in narration and his temporary supposed absence.

First to Third-Person Narration at Chapter 5

The shift from Nebuchadnezzar's narration back to that of the Narrator is as abrupt as the initial shift to Nebuchadnezzar, though far more natural as the reader easily readjusts to the narration of Narrator. Nebuchadnezzar has fulfilled his role as character which climaxes with him as narrator, and consequent to his story's closure, the necessity for further narration from him is nonexistent. Out of sheer pragmatics the Narrator must once again assume the primary position of narrating the story by means of telling. As the Narrator abruptly begins again to tell the story of Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall, the reader at this point does not know who Belshazzar is, nor what has been his story, nor when this is happening, nor what the occasion is for this feast;²⁹³ however, the reader does sense that the Narrator has indeed returned and that the death of Nebuchadnezzar is fully realized. This narration in the third-person will proceed through to 7.2, at which time Daniel^c assumes the role of narrator.

Third to First-Person Narration at Chapter 7

The final major shift in narration occurs at 7.2 when the Narrator formally introduces the reader to Daniel^c's own words: "Daniel said: '...'" This introduction to the narration of Daniel^c by the Narrator is far more eloquent and smooth than the abruptness experienced in chapter 4. Yet, Daniel^c's narration has a lot in common with the narration

²⁹² The issues and distinctions between showing and telling are important and have been explained in Chapter 1; see also the details of the broad discussion in Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, pp.211-240.

²⁹³ Fewell, *Circle*, p.81.

of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4, specifically in three areas: 1) the words of Daniel^C are also consciously written, which works to reconfirm our readerly reaction that 2) Daniel^C is likewise to be considered dead, which then necessitates 3) the continual presence and guidance of the Narrator.

Nearly the entire latter half of Daniel^B is narrated by Daniel^C, and the Narrator, whom the reader has learned to trust thus far essentially, but not entirely, leaves the story in the hands of Daniel^C. According to the Narrator the first-person narration which the reader encounters is material that has been written by Daniel^C: “He wrote down the substance of his dream.” The status of the written form in Nebuchadnezzar’s narration is largely gathered by its form and conformity to other Aramaic epistolographies; however, the status of Daniel^C’s narration as writing is made explicit by the Narrator in 7.1.

We need to return once again to the subtle verse that closes chapter 1: “And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.” Before the reader ever really encounters the remaining narrative, we have to come to the realization that the Narrator leads the reader to believe that Daniel^C is already dead. The biography and autobiography of Daniel^C that the reader engages in throughout the entire book do not put the reader under any misconception that Daniel^C is a living hero.

If Daniel^C is not ‘telling’ the story, as the Narrator does in the earlier half, but rather is writing the story, the presence of Narrator is still required. The memoirs of Daniel^C have to be presented by the Narrator to the reader. In other words, the reader does not discover these personal memoirs and navigate his/her own way through the narrative by him/herself. John Darr claims, “By definition, the narrator is involved in *all* of the narrative, though the degree and type of narrator involvement may (indeed, does) vary

substantially from episode to episode.”²⁹⁴ In our case, the Narrator is very much present in chapters 7-12 but far less involved than in earlier chapters, including chapter 4 when he makes several crucial intrusive comments. The first three words in the Hebrew text attest the continued presence of the Narrator, עָנָה דָּנִיֵּאל וְאָמַר which usually translates into English as, “Daniel said.” If the shift in narration had been as abrupt as that which we witnessed in chapter 4, we might have concluded that what we are essentially left alone with is the memoirs of Daniel^C. This is not the case, however; not only do we have Narrator’s explicit introduction to Daniel^C’s memoirs, but we also have a rare reappearance of the Narrator in 10.1 where he orientates the reader historically and furnishes Daniel^C’s proceeding story with an apparently indispensable contextual comment not found in the memoirs themselves.

Similar to the methods of showing and telling found in chapter 4, and on a much larger scale the Narrator is using Daniel^C’s method of telling as his method of showing. In other words, up to this point the Narrator—with some significant though relatively small help from Nebuchadnezzar—has told the reader about the qualities and talents possessed by Daniel^C in terms of interpretation and his devotion to Yhwh; now he will show the reader these very things he has been thus far telling by displaying Daniel^C’s writings of his personal (de)feats of interpretation. Daniel^C likewise shows—more than tells—material to the reader who then must make something out of this shown material. This shown material leaves the reader with greater responsibility to make sense of what has been shown and not simply told.

²⁹⁴ Darr, “Narrator as Character: Mapping a Reader-Oriented Approach to Narration in Luke-Acts” in *Semeia* 63, p.55.

The narrational shift at this point—and to a lesser degree, the shift that occurs at chapter 4—is especially intriguing as we read Daniel^B as a hermeneutics primer. As we will see in later chapters of this thesis, the earlier chapters of Daniel^B function as ‘undergraduate courses’ and the latter chapters serves as ‘graduate courses’. Before the reader is challenged with the more difficult reading and interpreting of Daniel^C’s ‘primary source’ material, s/he is first acquainted with Daniel^C through the ‘secondary’ material about Daniel^C. Only after being introduced to and knowing about Daniel^C is the reader presented with Daniel^C’s own literary works. In this regard Daniel^B follows suit and functions much like contemporary didactic approaches to theorists and their theories: the theorist is introduced and his/her theories are broadly explained, which serves as a preface to the theorist’s own writings.²⁹⁵

The ‘Tell’ of Three Narrators

Before we begin to read Daniel^B closely, we must firstly examine the characteristics and traits of these three narrators. Each of these narrators—Narrator, Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel^C—will be explored in terms of their perspectives, tones, reliabilities, purposes, and finally as hermeneuts.

Narrator

In the study of these three Danielic narrators, we must immediately notice that two of the three are characters proper in the storyline. Before we investigate the issues common to all three narrators, I would like to pause and pursue the possibility that the Narrator too obtains a character-like status. The notion that narrators are essentially characters of a special type is hardly novel; Wayne Booth cites several successful

²⁹⁵ Take as an example Kurt Mueller-Vollmer’s *The Hermeneutics Reader*, in which he collects quintessential essays from notable hermeneuts, yet prior to these essays he offers a broad summary of these theorists’ hermeneutical programs.

examples in his 1961 classic, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.²⁹⁶ The exemplary dramatized narrators, according to Booth, are such narrators as Fielding in *Tom Jones* or the narrator in *Don Quixote*; of the latter Booth says, “the narrator has made of himself a dramatized character to whom we react as we react to other characters.”²⁹⁷ Booth accounts for the success of creating a dramatized narrator by claiming, “An author who intrudes must somehow be interesting; he must live as a character.”²⁹⁸ John Darr states that the dramatized narrator cannot be “just any old character: the narrator is always one of the most important characters—if not the most important character—of all, for he or she is designed to guide and control the readers’ responses to everything in the story.”²⁹⁹

The Narrator we find in Daniel^B is indeed one of the most important ‘characters’ for the very reason that Darr latently suggests: the Narrator guides the reader through the multiplicity of hermeneutical lessons encountered throughout the narrative. Therefore, the prominence placed upon the Narrator is defined by the pedagogical role the Narrator plays in the narrative. However, this very role of pedagogue, which we will more fully explore later, constrains the Narrator from being the *most* important character, or from distracting the reader away from other more important characters. The extreme potentiality of dramatizing the only ‘living’ narrator is purposely never realized in order that the reader receives the proper perspective anticipated by the Narrator. In other words, if the implied author would have truly made the Narrator the most important character, this would have distracted from the central focus placed upon Daniel^C.

²⁹⁶ Booth, see chapter 8.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.212.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.219.

²⁹⁹ Darr, p.43-44.

A second way the reader can recognize the Narrator as more than an objective guide through the story is to discover the evidence of convictions in the Narrator's rendering. Arguably, if the narrator is a construct of the implied author, who is but a construct of the real author, then is there any such thing as an objective narrator? Cases can be bolstered for either side of this debate, but what we might further need to ask is, how does a narrator attain a sense of authority in the eyes of the reader? Darr states the case as such, "Since there is no such thing as absolute, universal, and unquestionable narrational authority in the abstract, the narrator must appeal to structures of the authority that are already recognized by his intended readers; and he must link himself to those authorities in a credible way."³⁰⁰ The Narrator anchors his authority in the eyes of the reader when he demonstrates his relationship with Yhwh and he reveals something about his own theological perspective. Firstly, he identifies the god of Jerusalem as Adonai (אֲדֹנָי) meaning 'my lord', thus revealing that his own allegiance stands on the side of Yhwh. Secondly, he establishes his worldview for his reader by placing all events in the sovereign hands of Yhwh. From his perspective even the fall of the beloved Jerusalem is a consequence of Yhwh's mighty hand. Furthermore, Yhwh controls for his ultimate purposes the hands and movements of this world's leaders, even those who do not claim allegiance to or recognize Yhwh.³⁰¹ In this respect the objectivity of the Narrator gives way to the obvious and devout biases he has toward Yhwh, therefore his authority as a narrator is defined by this same power.

The final, and perhaps ultimate, demonstration of the Narrator as character comes by means of his role as pedagogue. If we can—or should—read Daniel^B as a

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.55.

³⁰¹ Fewell, *Circle*, p.15.

hermeneutical exercise, then we must ask ourselves, “who is our teacher in this exercise?” Clearly, we must assess, at least in an immediate sense, that Daniel^c is our prime example of hermeneut. We might also ask, “how have we come to view Daniel^c as the paradigm of the good hermeneut?” To this answer we must give credit to the Narrator. The Narrator introduces the reader to Daniel^c and shows him as an interpreter *par excellence*, but then leads the reader further; the Narrator takes the reader to Daniel^c himself who essentially becomes personally responsible—in a literary constructive sense—to teach the lessons of hermeneutics. The words of John the Baptist appropriately apply to Narrator’s relation to Daniel^c, “He must increase and I must decrease.”³⁰² In this sense, the Narrator is the pedagogue, the reader is the student and Daniel^c is the master-teacher. Noting that Narrator fulfills a role beyond that of a narrator alone and noting that his role is intrinsically related to other characters, specifically Daniel^c, helps us to view the Narrator as more than a narrator and his role as something approaching character.

Perspective

As previously noted, the perspective of the Narrator is from the third-person, but what remains left to dissect is the Narrator’s degree of omniscience or privilege. The privilege of the Narrator is quite precarious; he knows more than most characters but simultaneously displays a limited privilege to allow other characters like Daniel^c to show an obvious advantage over his perspective. This balance between omniscience and ‘limited omniscience’ is indicative of his position between subjectivity as narrator and his claims to authority as narrator. In other words, as a subjective narrator, any claims to total privilege would cast a shadow of doubt on his willful submission to Yhwh, who implicitly is the only truly omniscient character. As a narrator who puts his claims to

³⁰² John 3.30.

authority in Yhwh, privilege that is too limited would likewise cast a shadow of doubt on his basis of authority in Yhwh, who is explicitly the ultimate authority.

Tone

Generally speaking, the tone of the Narrator is far more sympathetic to the main characters than what we find in Daniel^C as narrator. The first and foremost tone that Narrator establishes is the emphatically Yahwistic sympathies and perspectives, but to the Narrator Yahwism is not reserved for Jewish followers only but is rather open to any and all converts. The Narrator presents Yhwh not simply as the king of Israel, but as king of the universal world, both natural and supernatural alike. Thus, a pagan king such as Nebuchadnezzar is not just an oblivious pawn of God's will but is one who can personally confess and submit to Yhwh and become a Yahwist convert. Yet, some like Belshazzar become ineligible for conversion due to their willful ignorance and pride, while others like Darius are viewed sympathetically and are fully eligible for conversion. The reverent and awed tone with which Narrator initiates the narrative is consistently carried out throughout the entire narrative in dealing with Yhwh. All three narrators handle Yhwh with the sincerest reverence.

The Narrator's devotion to Yhwh is the only priority that supercedes his presentation of the main character Daniel^C. Narrator introduces Daniel^C as one possessing a plethora of desirable qualities, reveals his integrity, tells of his special God-given giftedness, and repeatedly presents him as a flawless interpreter. There is not even a hint of defect in his character or his talents. Through the Narrator the reader not only becomes acquainted with Daniel^C but furthermore, sees through the Narrator a person worthy of emulation in Daniel^C. The reader finds Daniel^C an attractive hero through the presentation

and tone of the Narrator. Had the latter half of the narrative been placed prior to the earlier half of the narrative, and had the tone of the latter half been allowed to establish the general tone of the reading, the potential and effectiveness of discovering an attractive hero would have diminished greatly. The placement of the narrational sections is a well executed ploy by the implied author and is credited to the Narrator who is inadvertently present even in the latter half of the narrative where Daniel^C is the primary narrator.

Reliability

The reliability of the Narrator is almost entirely gauged by the theological convictions he holds. As we have already noted, the Narrator establishes his relationship with Yhwh early in the narrative and promotes a worldview that is in harmony with his theological position. The overall texture of the literature is theological and Narrator revolves every conflict and conquest around the involvement of Yhwh; that is that the wisdom of man is no match for the wisdom of God. The harmony that is enjoyed between the Narrator and the implied author is indicative of the entire literary work, and when we keep in mind that, though Daniel^C narrates almost the entire latter half of the book, the Narrator never ceases to be a present force and guide. This being the case, the reliabilities of the other two narrators should be rightly judged according to their consistencies with the Narrator, who consistently speaks reliably on behalf of the implied author.

Purpose

We have, of course, already discussed the purpose of the book of Daniel^B as being a hermeneutical exercise, but in these sections dealing with the purposes of the three individual narrational segments, we need to explore each narrational subdivision for its distinctive purpose. Yet at the same time we also need to keep in mind the major premise

of the hermeneutical circle that claims that the parts of the narrative make up the whole and the whole informs its parts in a reciprocal interrelationship. If we have established our agenda as reading the whole of Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise, then we must likewise consistently allow this premise to inform our study of these three narrational sections.

The purposes of the Narrator's narration are multiple and we would be naïve to claim that he has one sole purpose, but yet for our purposes we need to attend primarily to those that inform our reading of Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise. The Narrator performs many duties in his narration; for instance, he establishes historical context, asserts his theological worldview, he introduces characters such as Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, Belshazzar, Darius, and the group of wise men, and tells the stories of the triumph of God-given wisdom through faithful young Jewish men over against the worldly wisdom of kings and their pagan counsels. Furthermore, he intersects with Nebuchadnezzar's literary doxology and conversion story to demonstrate the universal kingship of Yhwh and assure the reader of the legitimacy of the optimistic hope for gentile Yahwism. Finally, Narrator leads the reader to the memoirs of Daniel^C himself, introducing him and briefly interjecting a comment in his work midway through the memoirs.

The purpose of the Narrator's duties is emphatically characterized as being pedagogical. Though we cannot avoid understanding the Narrator's early chapters as being sincerely didactic, we must finally conclude that Narrator's end goal is to lead the reader to a higher plane of learning and to a more excellent teacher, that being Daniel^C, who is only understood as interpreter of Yhwh. The Narrator's telling of the tales works

to endear the reader to Daniel^C, but in the end the reader must move beyond the childlike and romantic tales of Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah in order to dig deeply into the issues of theological hermeneutics and hermeneutical theology.

As Hermeneut

In his own right, the Narrator also serves as a paradigm of a good hermeneut.³⁰³

The first evidence that supports the notion of the Narrator as hermeneut is the notion that the Narrator interprets the hand of Yhwh. The simple apprehension of interpretation of text is not the prime objective in Daniel^B, rather the prime objective is emphatically the interpretation of Yhwh as text, or Ultratext. Interpretation is not simply an academic or intellectual endeavor, it is above all a theological endeavor. Before we are introduced to Daniel^C and his three faithful companions, we accept the worldview of the Narrator who presents it in terms that demonstrate his abilities to interpret the hand of Yhwh.

While Daniel^C is the prime paradigm of hermeneut in the narrative, the Narrator initially leads the reader to the theory of interpretation by causing him/her to observe this focal hermeneut Daniel^C and his interpretations. As previously discussed, Narrator is the one who has the responsibility for educating the reader with one side of the hermeneutical process, more specifically, with the theoretical premise. In the process and in order to give the reader the indispensable theoretical foundation, the Narrator has himself interpreted for the reader a certain aspect of the life of Daniel^C. Yet the task of the Narrator is not complete until he fulfills his pedagogical role by leading his pupils of theory in the first six chapters to become the pupils of praxis under the tutelage of Daniel^C in the latter six chapters. Therefore, Narrator does not just bridge the gap between student and teacher, he also bridges the gap between theory, which he fully

³⁰³ Darr, p.57.

demonstrates in his presentation of the earlier episodes of Daniel^C, and praxis, with which he pushes the reader to be challenged by the presentation of Daniel^C's memoirs.

The Narrator also serves as hermeneut by bridging the gap between the dead writers, Daniel^C and Nebuchadnezzar, and living readers who are being prompted to become hermeneuts in our present-day. The respective literary works of Daniel^C and Nebuchadnezzar need some sense of presentation to the reader. Narrator is the force that brings vitality to these documents. Though the inauguration of Nebuchadnezzar's narration is certainly abrupt and without a formal introduction from Narrator, the Narrator plays a crucial role by filling in immensely important gaps in the storyline of Nebuchadnezzar's testimony. The intelligibility and coherency of Nebuchadnezzar's story is made possible by the necessarily intrusive commentary of the Narrator.

The intersection between Daniel^C and the Narrator is not of the same caliber in chapters 7-12 as is the intersection between Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4. The introduction to Daniel^C as the writer is properly noted by the Narrator from the outset and only once throughout the remainder of Daniel^C's memoirs does the Narrator make a contextualizing comment. Thus, we may draw several possible conclusions from this observation. First, perhaps Narrator has far more confidence in the storytelling abilities of Daniel^C than he does in Nebuchadnezzar. Second, as an interpreter himself, the Narrator knows what needs commentary and explanation and what does not; apparently Nebuchadnezzar's story has gaps that must be filled, while Daniel^C's stories do not leave the same kind of gaps. Third, and perhaps the most likely, the memoirs of Daniel^C do indeed leave gaps, but the Narrator leaves these gaps to be filled only by the reader, who has now entered the practical side of this hermeneutical exercise. This is a sign of a good

pedagogue, that when the training is complete—as it is assumed to be after the reading of chapters 1-6—that the student is allowed to stand or fall completely by his/her own merits.

As a final note proclaiming that Narrator is himself a hermeneut is the logic that states only a hermeneut can teach hermeneutics. The episodes concerning the lives of Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah revolve around the issue of interpretation and are essentially interpretations performed by the Narrator. In other words, his own interpretations are about interpretations and are demonstrative of his own interests and skills. The fact that the Narrator leads his reader to learn about and study the works of another hermeneut by no means distracts from his own status as hermeneut; on the contrary, the skilled hermeneut will always refer to and interact with the works of other hermeneuts.

Nebuchadnezzar

Perspective

Nebuchadnezzar is a major character in chapters 1-3, in chapter 4 he becomes the narrator who writes his story from a first-person perspective. Not only does Nebuchadnezzar identify his readership as, “all peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world,” but he further addresses them directly, even in such a direct manner as calling his reader “you”.³⁰⁴ His high place in political domination, already ascertained in the opening verses of the narrative, legitimates his assumed wide range of readership, which is nothing short of the ‘entire’ world.

The privilege credited to Nebuchadnezzar is consistent with his character in terms of his royalty and pride. Firstly, Nebuchadnezzar makes no claims of privilege beyond

³⁰⁴ 1.1,2.

that which is rational for any inside character to know. He is present for any recorded conversation in his narration, which he can reasonably recall. The dream he relates to the reader is a dream that he himself has dreamt and remembers. When greater privilege is required, such as the recording of the angelic proclamations and the recounting of Nebuchadnezzar's metamorphosis, the voice of the Narrator is again utilized.

Secondly, not only does Nebuchadnezzar not have the privilege to reveal the whereabouts, thoughts or actions of the other characters that he encounters in his story when they are not in his presence, but the limits of his privilege seem to be willful. Beyond the actual interaction he has with other characters, Nebuchadnezzar does not seem concerned with them, which ironically reveals something about his own pride, the very thing found to be offensive to Yhwh. Other characters are only important insofar as they directly relate to him; what they do outside his presence does not even remotely receive mention. Likewise, as royalty, Nebuchadnezzar is accustomed to being the center of all attention; any attention given to other characters is beyond the capacities of his character.

Tone

The tone of Nebuchadnezzar is consistent with the general tone of the Narrator. As we have already noted, there comes a section in chapter 4 where the distinction between Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar cannot possibly be made. By the time Nebuchadnezzar begins to narrate, he too has adopted a Yahwistic tone and reveals that he is concerned with bringing glory to Yhwh. In addition, Nebuchadnezzar in agreement with the Narrator also obviously displays strong optimism by offering hope for Yahwistic conversion for all people, not just Jews. The self-narrated conversion of Nebuchadnezzar

works to legitimate the optimism held by the Narrator as well as to establish a paradigm of conversion for others.

The same consistency with the Narrator can be said of his tone toward Daniel^C, whom Nebuchadnezzar refers to as the chief magician, and one in whom the spirit of the holy gods reside, and the revealer of all mysteries. Nebuchadnezzar, like Narrator, also puts his complete confidence in the skills possessed by Daniel^C, but Nebuchadnezzar adds a dynamic of personal interest that the Narrator could not have as credibly added. After Daniel^C hears the dream and understands its meaning but before he delivers the interpretation, Daniel^C sympathetically verbalizes a desire that the calamity of the dream would fall upon the enemies of Nebuchadnezzar rather than on him. Essentially the tone is consistent with the Narrator but the further display of personal interest is an aspect that could only come from another inside character with whom Daniel^C has actual interaction rather than from a narrator who is removed from the immediate internal story setting of Daniel^C.

Reliability

The reliability of Nebuchadnezzar as narrator must be judged in light of his consistency with the Narrator. From his optimistic outlook of hope for conversion for the gentile nations, to affirming submission to Yhwh as ultimate king, to his positive and affectionate attitude toward Daniel^C, Nebuchadnezzar as narrator proves himself consistent with the Narrator and therefore the implied author. The consistency between the Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar is so tight that distinguishing between the voice of Nebuchadnezzar and the voice of the Narrator in the midst of Nebuchadnezzar's story of conversion becomes an impossible task. Furthermore, Narrator essentially confirms the

conversion of Nebuchadnezzar who confirms the mightiness of God as well as the piety and interpretive skill of Daniel^C, which both reconfirm what the Narrator has thus far attested concerning Yhwh and Daniel^C. His reliability derives directly from his new-found Yahwistic worldview.

Purpose

The purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's narration is the most explicitly stated case among the three narrators, at least according to Nebuchadnezzar's own words. His address to all peoples worldwide indicates that his goal is universal and nonexclusive; and his goal is to relay the story of his own conversion to Yahwism in order that others may also come to acknowledge Yhwh as the universal God and king. The very task of hermeneutics is itself universal and deals with universal issues; thus making the connection again between the character of Yhwh and of hermeneutics. Not only does Nebuchadnezzar—and to some extent the Narrator—tell the story of his conversion to Yahwism, but he further personalizes and validates the story by publicly offering doxologies to Yhwh. In short, Nebuchadnezzar wants all peoples to come to know Yhwh as he himself has come to know Yhwh, yet hopefully without the trauma of his own personal experiences. Essentially, Nebuchadnezzar serves as a paradigm of a good convert, and as one who desires to turn others into interpreters of Yhwh.

Yet the use and purpose of this story and doxology is not limited to the 'authorial intention' of the dead Nebuchadnezzar; it too becomes a tool in the hands of the implied author speaking through the Narrator, who is clearly present in the midst of this episode. The commentary by the Narrator is not nearly as explicit in terms of purpose as what we find in the words of Nebuchadnezzar. The words of Narrator seem only to function to fill

in the gaps left by the temporarily lycanthropic Nebuchadnezzar by giving attention to the details of his condition. The purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's narration as utilized by the implied author contributes to the general theme of the book as well as the pedagogical purpose of the Narrator. For example, we do have an important appearance by Daniel^c, who characteristically solves a mystery that baffles the wise men, when he competently interprets Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dream. Additionally, we cannot help but think that Daniel^c and his three companions are somehow partially responsible for Nebuchadnezzar's conversion for their role in standing up for the sake of Yhwh in the face of severe opposition, thus affording Yhwh an opportunity to rescue his servants miraculously and to demand serious attention from Nebuchadnezzar. Such details in the story of Nebuchadnezzar advance Narrator's cause of endearing the reader to Daniel^c.

Completely unbeknownst to Nebuchadnezzar as narrator is the meticulous placement of this story in the metastructure of the narrative by the implied author. Chapter 4 is an important piece of the chiasmic structure that extends from chapter 2 to chapter 7. Chapters 4 and 5, the central pieces of this chiasm, work off each other by their differences as well as their similarities. Both chapters retell the stories of kings who are willfully smitten by their own pride. Both kings receive supernatural texts, one a dream and the other mysterious handwriting on the wall, and both receive their interpretations from Daniel^c. While Nebuchadnezzar suffers lycanthropy and recovers to give his testimony of the greatness of Yhwh, Belshazzar suffers political defeat and a fatal blow. Interestingly, Nebuchadnezzar, whom the Narrator credits with legitimate reasons for his pride, is the one who turns to Yhwh; while Belshazzar, whom the Narrator casts doubt upon any true claim to pride, does not voluntarily recover from his prideful state. In

essence, these stories in connection with one another work to balance and counterbalance—and therefore qualify—the Narrator’s optimism toward the gentile nations. Conversion to Yhwh is universally possible; some will acquire Yahwistic wisdom while others will continue to be blinded.

The purpose of Nebuchadnezzar’s narration must be viewed on two different levels: one, by the purpose intended by Nebuchadnezzar and the other by the purpose of fulfilling a broader agenda held by the Narrator. Both are important and both bring meaning to the overall theme of Daniel^B as literature. While we may assess Narrator’s immediate purpose as pedagogical and didactic, that is, ultimately leading the reader to the master-teacher Daniel^C, his greater goal is to turn people to Yahwism, righteousness and wisdom, which is the very thing exemplified by Nebuchadnezzar in his narration. Nebuchadnezzar’s narration works to temper the Narrator’s pedagogical purpose by keeping the larger Yahwistic goal in focus.

As Hermeneut

Nebuchadnezzar qualifies as hermeneut on two distinct accounts: 1) he, like Narrator, interprets the hand of God, and 2) he interprets his story in written form to a wide readership. As is the case throughout the book of Daniel^B, the interpretation of God is the ultimate goal, and finally after several encounters with those who interpret God in Nebuchadnezzar’s presence, Nebuchadnezzar himself steps in to tell of his own interpretation of God’s activity in his life. Not only does Nebuchadnezzar engage in the activity of interpretation of God, an admirable endeavor in itself, but in his interpretation he is affirmed by the Narrator to have done his duties well, and furthermore, to be considered reliable in his interpretation by the implied author.

Nebuchadnezzar's interpretation of Yhwh is taken a step further when he reinterprets the whole event in writing to a wide readership inclusive of all people worldwide. Understanding through interpretation is one thing, interpretation through explanation is yet another.³⁰⁵ The performance of his narration is interpretive and the goal of his narration is explicative inasmuch as he wants everyone to know of the power and glory of the universal God and king, Yhwh. In this sense, his writing too becomes conscientiously didactic, teaching a 'universal' populace about the universality of Yhwh through his universal act of interpretation, which also seeks to prompt in his readership a similar desire for universal theological interpretation.

Daniel

Perspective

Daniel^c as the main character and the one after whom the book is named takes over the duties of narration from chapters 7-12 by means of written memoirs. Like the narrational perspective of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel^c writes his story from a first-person perspective. Like the privilege of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel^c only knows as much as his character would be likely to know, but what Daniel^c is privy to is not the same as what Nebuchadnezzar would be likely to know. While Nebuchadnezzar relates only one supernatural event in his life, Daniel^c has multiple visions, he converses with angels, and is given information to which no other character has gained access. Daniel^c is now in a position we found Nebuchadnezzar in the earlier half of the narrative, that is, facing supernatural texts and the difficulty of interpretation. The importance of noticing that Daniel^c is not a fully privileged narrator but has gained his privilege to secretive and mysterious material by theological and hermeneutical means results in our holding

³⁰⁵ A view staunchly held by Schleiermacher; see Mueller-Vollmer, p.12.

Daniel^C in higher regard than that which the reader holds the Narrator. This, of course, is an intentional ploy by the implied author.

Tone

The Yahwistic tone employed by Daniel^C the narrator is in complete compliance with the tones of the Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar. Not only does Narrator prove Daniel^C to be a devout Yahwist in Narrator's rendering of the earlier half of the narrative, but Daniel^C too demonstrates his Yahwistic devotions in the tone of his own narration. However, the tones concerning the possible conversions of gentile leaders and nations and the tone taken toward the infallibility of Daniel^C's interpretive skill differ significantly.

By the time that Daniel^C purports to chronicle his memoirs, he has already witnessed the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar to Yahwism, and though this may be the case, the general pessimistic tone that Daniel^C adopts toward the gentile nations is not shared by the optimistic Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar.³⁰⁶ The tone entirely shifts in this regard under the narration of Daniel^C in the latter half of the narrative. The possibility of peaceful coexistence between faithful Yahwists and gentile pagans becomes completely unviable. Nations are no longer viewed as entities with which to share Yahwism, rather they are only seen ultimately as objects of Yhwh's harsh judgments. A common thread, however, runs through the narrations of the Narrator and of Daniel^C that proclaims that in either case, whether optimistic or pessimistic regarding the gentile nations, that triumph is guaranteed by Yhwh for the righteous ones. As a further demonstration of the shift, the divinely-inspired visions and epiphanies that appeared to the pagan sovereigns in the early narrative no longer visit the pagan seers, only Daniel^C himself steps in to be the seer

³⁰⁶ Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, p.9.

of the visions in the latter half of the narrative.³⁰⁷ As a note of justification for the severe difference between the two tones, the early half of the narrative looks to the purported life and times of Daniel^C, while the latter half of the narrative focuses on the apocalyptic and eschatological aspects of world affairs that lead to the end before the establishment of the kingdom of God.

The tone Daniel^C takes toward himself is as equally incompatible with the two former tones of Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar regarding Daniel^C. As we have already noted, Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar avidly support the view of Daniel^C's flawless interpretive skill and moral character, however, Daniel^C reveals quite a different side of himself. Though Daniel^C does not show any signs of indiscretion in his moral character in his narration, he does admit to certain frailties in his interpretive skills. Twice Daniel^C is given the interpretation of his *own* visions, in three episodes Daniel^C shows signs of physical distress resulting from his visions and angelic encounters, at least once Daniel^C admits his own lack of understanding, and once Daniel^C's interpretation is completely redirected toward another referent. Through Daniel^C himself the reader comes to grasp fully the frailty of the interpreter and of the act of interpretation. Had this frailty of Daniel^C been revealed by Narrator or Nebuchadnezzar and had it been neglected by Daniel^C, not only would the character and skill of Daniel^C have been undermined, but the didactic and pedagogical purpose of the literature would have been severely hampered as well. Narrator, and to a lesser extent Nebuchadnezzar, does his duty well: he directs the reader to Daniel^C and offers extremely invaluable evidence for the many reasons the reader should seek to emulate Daniel^C. Only when the reader has once reached this point may Daniel^C truly reveal the delicacies and pitfalls of the position of interpreter. Daniel^C

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.9.

pulls no punches; he honestly parades his vulnerabilities, weaknesses, shortcomings, and his need of interpretive assistance.

Reliability

In order to avoid unnecessary confusion in the following discussion and by way of review, let us reiterate Booth's use of the term 'reliability'. Booth states, "I have called a narrator *reliable* when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work, *unreliable* when he does not."³⁰⁸ The reliability of Daniel^C as narrator is a delicate subject and we must refer back to the tone adopted by Daniel^C, specifically in the areas where he seems to be in incongruity with the tones of the Narrator, who we have already established to be a consistent voice of the implied author. Though I affirm my notion that Narrator speaks consistently for the implied author, I do not mistakenly claim they are one and the same.

Daniel^C is entirely reliable as a narrator in terms of his theological convictions, but in terms of his view of himself as well as his display of pessimism concerning the gentile nations, he does not seem to be in complete agreement with the Narrator. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that he is found to be in disharmony with the voice of the implied author, the true judge of reliability.³⁰⁹ The position of the Narrator is also a delicate one: claiming that his authority to narrate is granted by his relationship to Yhwh and simultaneously claiming to be subservient to him by displaying less-than-omniscient perspectives. A similar balance exists between the Narrator and Daniel^C. The Narrator is essentially put in charge of telling the story of Daniel^C in order to guide the reader to a place of admiration and desire for emulation. The most effective way to accomplish this

³⁰⁸ *Rhetoric of Fiction*, pp.158-59.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

task is not only to give repeated demonstrations of Daniel^C's integrity and abilities, but also to imply his excellence by allowing the reader to foil the abilities and knowledge of Daniel^C and the Narrator. In other words, the Narrator purposely presents Daniel^C on a pedestal by lucidly exhibiting Daniel^C's knowledge and subtly withholding the Narrator's own.

For example, in chapter 2 when Daniel^C comes to Nebuchadnezzar to interpret his dream, though Narrator knows the contents of his dream, he does not expose the contents to the reader, rather they are revealed by Daniel^C himself. This has several effects: 1) Daniel^C is given the place of privilege and prominence over the Narrator; and, 2) the reader in no way is given the chance to be critical of Daniel^C's interpretation by judging it against the rendering of the Narrator, which would have implied that Narrator's rendering is more reliable. This ploy of narration differs radically from the similar scene found in the Joseph narrative, where the narrator firstly tells the reader the dream directly, then later the reader overhears the dream as it is being told to Joseph; the reader then judges pharaoh's rendering against the account of the narrator. In our case, the reader must wait in anticipation for Daniel^C to deliver the dream. In essence, Daniel^C is an inside character whom the Narrator establishes as one who apparently knows more than himself who is not inside the storyline. By showing Daniel^C's fuller knowledge in the earlier half of the narrative allows him likewise to demonstrate his later lack of knowledge for a greater effect of destabilizing the reader and simultaneously making an important theological hermeneutical point.

The second discrepancy that casts a shadow of doubt upon the reliability of Daniel^C as a narrator is his pessimistic attitude toward the gentile nations. The Narrator is

optimistic in this regard and calls on Nebuchadnezzar to deliver his doxology and to recite his conversion as a proof to validate his optimism. Nebuchadnezzar's address to all people worldwide exposes his agreement with Narrator in his hopes for universal recognition of Yhwh as king. Daniel^C leads his reader to no such conclusion, even by implication; the gentile nations are contrary to God's people and therefore contrary to God himself. The nations are to be the objects of God's judgmental wrath, while his own people, the righteous and the wise, will be vindicated.

Though there are two major areas of apparent divergence between Daniel^C and the Narrator, unreliability of either should not be too readily assumed. The effects of two distinct components work to resist the temptation to deem Daniel^C as an unreliable narrator. Firstly, the pitting of Daniel^C's memoirs against the Narrator's portrayal of Daniel^C is a conscientious move of the implied author, who is over and above the entire story of Daniel^C and the telling of it by the Narrator. The implied author has fostered the competing pictures of Daniel^C to coexist, and in terms of privilege, Daniel^C often stands between the implied author, who implicitly and necessarily knows more than Daniel^C, and the Narrator, who often is displayed as knowing less. Furthermore, when we read the memoirs of Daniel^C there is no suggestion that what Daniel^C writes is by any means unacceptable to the implied author.

The evidence of the implied author's approval leads to the second matter that resists the status of Daniel^C's unreliability. In the middle of Daniel^C's narration at 10.1, the Narrator once again makes his final editorial comment for the sake of contextualization, but perhaps the results of this comment are far more effective than the mere benefit of contextualization. Keep in mind that the memoirs of Daniel^C are not

discovered by the reader, they are presented to the reader by the Narrator, who we may assume is already familiar with them. Therefore, the presence of the Narrator during the reading of the memoirs of an assumedly dead author works as a stamp of approval by the Narrator upon the memoirs. The Narrator's fervor for precision is marked by his contextualizing comment, and his silence throughout the vast majority of Daniel^C's narration indicates his general approval and agreement. Furthermore, the Narrator's contextual comment in 10.1 is perhaps a conscious effort to destabilize his own reliability; compare 10.1 "in the third year of Cyrus" with 1.21 "Daniel remained there until the first year of Cyrus." Thus the pedagogue once again leads the reader to view the supposed unreliable narrator Daniel^C as reliable by subtly compromising his own reliable status.

What we must therefore conclude concerning the areas of apparent discrepancy is that the narration of Daniel^C rounds out the narration of the Narrator in complementary roles. Due to the early placement of Narrator's introduction to Daniel^C and set in the temporal midst of dealing with potential pagan converts, Narrator presents what was indispensable for the time. Daniel^C, however, whose memoirs are presented later, exposes the interpretive frailties of his own character long after his character has been firmly established. Daniel^C's own confessions of shortcomings only work to strengthen the reader's admirations of him, and furthermore to understand more vividly the astringent demands of interpretation. Likewise, the pessimism of Daniel^C also rounds out the optimism of the other two narrators, not so much in terms that Daniel^C portrays hopelessness for gentile nations, but more so in temporal terms when the nations will resist God and fight against his people, which demands God's intervention, victory and

vindication. In essence, Daniel^C's bleak eschatological outlook complements the optimism of the earlier half of the narrative by calling for righteousness and wisdom in a time when such possibilities still exist. Certainly in reflection Daniel^C continues to be a good example of Yahwism to Darius, and does not lose hope entirely for the gentile nations during the reign of Belshazzar, during whose reign many of these visions occur.

In short, the conscious and apparent 'unreliability' of the Narrator and Daniel^C the narrator is indicative of the literature's interdisciplinary quality. The literature espouses two views of Daniel^C: one of pure wisdom and impeccable ability to interpret, and the other as one who struggles with the meanings and interpretations of texts that are presented to him. We need not prefer one over the other, nor are we forced to choose between them; both are integral to our understanding of the paradigmatic hermeneut. Furthermore, the distinction between the strength of Daniel^C and his weakness may be found to be artificial; in fact, keeping in mind that the two halves 'chronologically' overlap in the life of Daniel^C, we may find that he is strong in the earlier half because he humbly admits to his weakness in the latter half. He is strong because he admits to his weakness, thus allowing the strength of Yhwh to compensate for his own shortcomings.

Purpose

The purpose of Daniel^C's narration, at least according to Daniel^C, is unclear. What we have before us are the written memoirs of Daniel^C's visions, angelic encounters, intercessory prayer, and final instructions. In close consideration of the material, we may conclude that Daniel^C writes down such remarkable events and details simply because of their extraordinary nature. However, unlike the address of Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples worldwide, Daniel^C does not assume an audience. Therefore, and as we will notice later,

explanation or clarification of material that remains vague is not offered for a reader's benefit. In this sense, Daniel^c performs hermeneutics on a personal basis much like Schleiermacher who distinctly separates understanding from explanation. In other words, succeeding at understanding is hermeneutics; explanation of this understanding is a related but distinctly separate function.³¹⁰ During the episodes of his narration Daniel^c seeks understanding above all else, while explanation from Daniel^c is not offered. As Schleiermacher might say, his understanding is his interpretation. Even when the reader knows that Daniel^c truly receives understanding, he does not share or explain his understanding in his memoirs. Daniel^c seems to write for his own benefit, and therein is his supposed purpose.

The purpose of Daniel^c's memoirs is further from the purpose of the implied author than what we observe in the compatibility between the purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's address and the use of it by the implied author. The pedagogical purpose of the Narrator is fulfilled—and therefore the main responsibilities of his duty are relieved—when the reader finally encounters the literary works of Daniel^c himself. Though Daniel^c's material is not intentionally didactic per se, the Narrator employs his material to serve in this capacity. For example, fresh texts are presented, angelic interpretations are given which demand further interpretation, but none are given. The reader is therefore encouraged to reach his/her own point of understanding. The chronological overlap between the Narrator's episodes and Daniel^c's episodes sheds entirely new light on the life of this—and perhaps any—interpreter. The romantic view of the underdog whose abilities come from above, who is vindicated by God and causes the unbelievers to take notice is heavily altered by the portrait Daniel^c paints of himself as

³¹⁰ Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, p.12. This function of explanation is referred to by Schleiermacher as 'rhetoric'.

one who becomes sick, turns pale and completely fails to understand. The frailty of Daniel^C only works to reaffirm the quintessential qualities necessary to become a good hermeneut presented in chapter 1. If Daniel^C who possesses all the necessary qualities expounded in chapter 1 is this vulnerable in the face of astringently difficult texts, where does that leave less qualified interpreters?

The purpose of Daniel^C's narration—as employed by Narrator—is for praxis. The Narrator has already equipped the reader with the theoretical side of hermeneutics in the earlier half of the narrative by causing him/her to observe the life of Daniel^C and his preparations for and performances of the acts of interpretation. Now the reader reaches a point when a literary text of Daniel^C the master hermeneut is presented, and the reader must take theory and channel it into praxis. As we have noted, conclusive interpretations in Daniel^C's memoirs are absent, thus calling for the reader to become the interpreter by filling in the gaps and performing the act of interpretation. When we take into account all three narrational sections, in other words the entire book, we must come to the conclusion that the purpose of Daniel^B is to train the reader to become a qualified theological hermeneut in the same vein as Daniel^C, who must face and acknowledge his weaknesses and inabilities before Yhwh.

As Hermeneut

Due to the nature of this thesis, which seeks distinctly to explore the nature of Daniel^C as hermeneut, we are going to leave the detailed readings of Daniel^B to be examined in the following chapters. What is presented here is only a commentary on some general observations of Daniel^C the narrator as hermeneut. His means and methods of understanding and interpreting are beyond our current quest; we only seek to view

Daniel^c as hermeneut by his mode of writing down of his fantastical visions and encounters.

So the question that we need to ask is, “What is truly accomplished and what gap is being bridged by the act of writing down material as extraordinary as what we read in his memoirs?” The gap that seems to be the most prevalent in the latter half of the narrative is between memory and future. These memoirs of Daniel^c are supposedly drawn from the memory banks of Daniel^c yet its contents purportedly describe the future events. The very thing that is left to bridge the gap between these two entities, the past and the future, are the writings of Daniel^c. Thus, a tension, similar to the tension advocated by poststructural critics, is created between memory and preservation of something given to us by Daniel^c from his past and at the same time heterogeneity and something new in the future.³¹¹ W. Pannenberg asserts a similar sentiment by stating, “The tension between promise and fulfillment makes history. The development of the Isrealitic writing of history is distinguished by the fact that the horizon of this history becomes even wider, the length of time spanned by the promise and fulfillment ever more extensive.”³¹² These visions of Daniel^c become reiterated in written form, thus making it possible to transplant the text into different contexts, constantly bridging the gap between history and future. The written form of Daniel^c's memories allows the text to find new meaning in a context that is not solely tied to the original context.³¹³ We may assume as the memoirs are repeatedly reiterated in this temporal gap of reading that this gap is constantly in the process of closing. Furthermore as Derrida points out, this (re)iterability allows traces of

³¹¹ John Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, p.6.

³¹² W. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, I (SCM Press, 1970) p.19.

³¹³ Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p.64.

Daniel^C and his memories to function in the absence of their general context.³¹⁴ As we read Daniel^B afresh our own cultural and intertextual experience allows us to find significance and meaning in our own situation. This is a universal and timeless proposal, that no matter when or under what circumstances Daniel^B is read, its truths are applicable when we skillfully employ its hermeneutical endorsements.

Conclusion

The book of Daniel^B enjoys the uniqueness of three distinct narrators who all relay their respective stories through their individual perspectives, tones, reliabilities, and purposes. Of course, we also recognize the working hand of the implied author who orchestrates the narrators and the various literary components to present the literature to the reader in a compelling and intelligible form.

This study of narration and of narrators is not a formal reading of Daniel^C but is preliminary to what we are about to engage in during the following chapters. As we are about to embark upon the reading of Daniel^B, we come to the text with certain competencies. We have gathered historical information concerning the composition and community of the text, we have observed the theoretical and narratological aspects of reading a narrative, we have melded them together in order that we may read Daniel^B as a contemporary community within a context of continuity with the historic community, we have concluded that this community is emphatically interpretive by necessity, and finally we have just examined the intricacies of the manner in which Daniel^B is narrated. And now we read Daniel^B and thereby theorize, practice and perform hermeneutics.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO DANIELIC HERMENEUTICS

At last we have come to a point when we engage in a close reading of the text of Daniel^B. This task becomes challenging for several reasons; primarily, since I view the whole corpus of Daniel^B as an exercise in hermeneutics, the entire narrative must receive comment. Therefore, I must comment on the entire book but with a specific agenda, which limits my comments to only those matters that directly pertain to Daniel^B as a textbook in hermeneutics, thus distinguishing it from a normative commentary format. The first issue that we must address is the debate that is ongoing in Danielic circles regarding the compositional status of chapter 1, which is either viewed as one of six court-tales or an introduction to the entire narrative. From this point we will inaugurate our study of Daniel^B as a hermeneutics textbook by examining the hermeneutical proposals, theories and practices in the text. This chapter will only comment on Daniel 1; the remainder of the book will receive attention in the following two chapters.

Setting the Sense of Reading

In our reading of Daniel^B, we have to come to realize that what we are essentially engaged with is literature that functions like an ‘historical fiction’. As literature Daniel^B is set in a given historical context yet it reads and functions like a fiction. This is not to say that I deem it *as* fiction by making historical-critical assessments with regard to the book’s accuracy, historicity, or political appropriations, rather it is more simply a literary

assessment. As important as historical criticism may be, in that we must acknowledge forthrightly the fact that this text in a real sense is embedded in history, my interests lie primarily in the literary nature of Daniel^B. By asserting that Daniel^B is an historical fiction, in essence I excuse myself from becoming entirely engrossed by the enormity of historical-critical debates and issues that entangle a majority of Danielic scholarship. In viewing Daniel^B like an historical fiction, my intentions are simply to lay out the reading strategy by which Daniel^B will be read in this present work. More specifically, I will assume the structural integrity of the book and read it accordingly; I will respect the purported historical details of the book as well as its fictive elements as they function in their own right and in their own narrative world. In other words, I will read Daniel^B as I would other historical fictions such as William Shakespeare's *King Lear* or *Henry V* or Charles Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities*, though these three clearly have distinct intricacies. At the same time and in concurrence with Susan Handelman, I must also firmly state that literary criticism by itself is no substitute for theological endeavor,³¹⁵ which is precisely what we intend to engage in. Daniel^B is emphatically theological, and consequently our treatment of Daniel^B must likewise be thoroughly theological.

Daniel 1 – Introduction to the Narrative

Principle Function

The issue of the compositional status or of the principle function of Daniel 1 is primarily an historical-critical one, and though our concerns here are predominantly hermeneutical, the debate has relevance for our discussion of Daniel^B as a hermeneutics textbook. In general there is a consensus among Danielic scholars that chapter 1 should

³¹⁵ Susan Handelman, *Slayers of Moses* (Albany: State U. of New York Press, 1982), p.xiii.

be viewed as introductory as opposed to those who believe that chapter 1 is simply one of six court-tales. C.F. Keil notes that chapter 1 should be regarded “as a historico-biographical introduction to the book showing how Daniel, under divine guidance, was prepared, along with his friends, for that calling in which, as prophet at the court of the rulers of the world, he might bear testimony to the omnipotence and infallible wisdom of the God of Israel. This testimony is given in the following book.”³¹⁶ Joyce Baldwin deems the first chapter as introductory, “supplying the historical details to account for the presence of Daniel and his friends at the court of Nebuchadrezzar.”³¹⁷ Other scholars such as Heaton,³¹⁸ Goldingay³¹⁹ and Walvoord³²⁰ concur in viewing chapter 1 as introductory. André Lacocque also agrees but leaves the possibility open that suggests that chapter 1 may be introductory in a limited sense, in that it is an introduction to chapters 2-6 only.³²¹ J.J. Collins³²² and D.S. Russell³²³ do not just leave the introductory nature of chapter 1 for only the first six chapters as a possibility, they firmly state it as the case.

Upon closer examination of the hermeneutical nature of Daniel^B, I also concur that chapter 1 should be viewed as introductory. We have already discussed the linguistic reasons for claiming that chapter 1 should be considered as an introduction to the whole of Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise; I will briefly review these reasons and proceed to mention more that lend their weight to this current proposal. The bilingual state of Daniel^B suggests that the implied author assumes the reader to be also bilingual, or

³¹⁶ C.F. Keil, *Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p.13.

³¹⁷ Baldwin, p.60.

³¹⁸ Heaton, p.17.

³¹⁹ Goldingay, *Daniel*, pp.xxv, 327.

³²⁰ John Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), p.15.

³²¹ Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, p.24.

³²² Collins, *Apocalyptic Visions*, p.17.

³²³ Russell, *Daniel*, p.4.

perhaps suggests that the reader should be, or more emphatically, must be in order to be the implied reader of the narrative seeking to be the ideal interpreter. Each of the two languages of Daniel^B, Hebrew and Aramaic, represents a distinct function and form of the use of language, one a scholarly language and the other a vernacular, respectively.³²⁴

While the predominant language of the earlier half is the vernacular Aramaic, the book begins in chapter 1 with the more difficult and scholarly Hebrew. The use of Aramaic in the earlier half of the book seems logical for an exercise that begins at a more elementary level and grows more complex—and perhaps more sophisticated—at a later point as partially indicated by the more difficult dialect of Hebrew employed in the latter half of the book. The Hebrew of chapter 1, therefore, must be considered as the linguistic indicator of the overall difficulty in the hermeneutical exercise of Daniel^B. Linguistically, the Hebrew of chapter 1 establishes the degree of competence necessary in order to meet the requirements of the exercise. In this present case our view of the text is as a unified whole, as it is before us now, much like the assumptions of canonical criticism,³²⁵ and that the usages of Hebrew alongside Aramaic are consciously devised conventions for hermeneutical purposes.

The second evidence found in chapter 1 for understanding it as an introduction is the list of prerequisites held by Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; implicitly these same qualities are likewise required acquisitions for the reader. On one hand is the proposal by some historical-critical scholars who suggest that the list of qualities are those held by the historical authorial community;³²⁶ on the other hand I suggest the list of qualities are not only those held by the authorial community but ones which must be

³²⁴ Albertz, pp.196-197. Lacocque, p.2.

³²⁵ See as an example *Canon and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) by James Sanders.

³²⁶ Stefan Beyerle, p.214.

obtained by the reader if s/he is to complete the hermeneutical courses successfully and join the community of the wise. Among these prerequisites are a physical condition not wrought with defects, good looking, aptitude for interdisciplinary learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. In addition to the talents for which they were chosen as candidates for the king's service, their faithfulness to Yhwh is further rewarded with an increased and superior knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. Furthermore, Yhwh especially gifted Daniel^C with the ability to understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

The temporal scope of chapter 1 also indicates its status as an introduction to the whole narrative. While most episodes in the narrative cover a certain point in time, chapter 1 informs the reader of events that occur before Daniel^C actually arrives on the scene and closes the episode by revealing the full length of service years Daniel^C performs. The entire career, and therefore the entire narrative, supposedly falls within the temporal frame established in this first chapter. Therefore, based upon our particular reading of Daniel^B and following the consensus of historical-critical Danielic scholarship, chapter 1 will be viewed as an introductory chapter to the narrative.

Narrator's Introduction and Worldview – 1.1-2

The historical context in which the opening verse situates the reader is the backdrop to the entire narrative about to be unfolded. The reminiscence of the stability of Judah is passing; the independent political life of Judah gives way to a life of captivity in Babylon. For the (first and) last time in the narrative—and implicitly in the political life of Judah—the time of an event is told according to the reign of a Judean king, Jehoiakim. The fact that we are not told of the time of besiegement in relation to the year of

Nebuchadnezzar makes the tragic transference of dominance all the more drastic.³²⁷ The very manner of identifying events on a calendar is even subject to change with the new presence of Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem and Judah.

The manner in which time is related changes and is coupled with the sobering knowledge of an end to Judean political autonomy. The former familiar life of Judah is harshly replaced by a foreign way of Babylonian life imposed upon Judeans by force. In this sense, the reader has to come to realize that the paradigm of traditional Judean life has been shifted, and there is no immediate hope or promise that it will return. This rapid initial shift in political and social life calls for the reader to be able to shift appropriately and as quickly with the changing climate in a flexible and yet unbroken manner. The lesson by which the reader will learn to accomplish such flexibility without being broken will be fleshed out in this same chapter by Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

The Narrator, like other characters, is one who is himself an interpreter in the text and not simply a 'lord' over the text; we can, therefore, quite confidently assert that Narrator is the first interpreter the reader encounters in the narrative. His first major interpretation of verse 2 sets the stage upon which the entire narrative will play out. The description of the historical events in verse 1 receives theological interpretive contextualization in verse 2 as the Narrator puts the catastrophic events into a wider theological perspective. The Narrator claims that 'Adonai' is ultimately the responsible party for the destruction of Jerusalem and the capture of Jehoiakim, and that Nebuchadnezzar is only an instrument used by Yhwh for this purpose. As we have noticed in our discussion of the hermeneutical circle that the interpretive task in Daniel^B is to understand the mundane according to the knowledge of the supernatural and gaining

³²⁷ Fewell, *Circle*, p.13.

more knowledge of the supernatural according to the comprehension of the mundane. This is precisely what Narrator does by interpreting the fall of Jerusalem as a supernaturally initiated event, which then leads to further ramifications in the natural world, all of which have a strong bearing on the spiritual nature of Yhwh's spokesmen, who is in this case our Narrator.

The Narrator demands that he be seen in light of his relationship with Yhwh when he reveals something about his own theological perspective. Firstly, he identifies the god of Jerusalem as Adonai (אֲדֹנָי), meaning '(my) lord', thus revealing that his own allegiance stands on the side of Yhwh.³²⁸ Secondly, the use of 'Adonai' concurrently communicates Yhwh's lordship and mastery over world affairs as well as over the personal life of the Narrator.³²⁹ Thirdly, he establishes his worldview for his reader by placing all events in the sovereign hands of Yhwh. From his perspective even the fall of the beloved Jerusalem is a consequence of Yhwh's mighty hand. Furthermore, Yhwh controls for his ultimate purposes the hands and movements of this world's leaders, even those who do not claim allegiance to or recognize Yhwh. The demand for theological allegiance is further emphasized by the use of 'Shinar', a deliberate archaism referring to the site of the Tower of Babel, and suggesting severe opposition to Yhwh.³³⁰ In other words, Babylon is not simply neutral territory in which Judah can theologially convalesce; it is rather a hostile environment in which Yahwists will have to withstand strongly the prevalence of evil paganism. Yet in the midst of such a land is where Yhwh chooses to put his people.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.15.

³²⁹ Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, p.30.

³³⁰ Baldwin, p.78.

This particular perspective is a hard pill to swallow since the reader must accept the view that Yhwh, the God of the Jews, is the one responsible for the Jewish captivity, yet s/he must come to trust the assessment of the Narrator in these theological respects. In doing so the reader is brought into the literary world of the Narrator. What Wayne Booth says of the narrator of Job, we can also claim for the Narrator of Daniel^B:

“In life if a friend confided his view that his friend was ‘perfect and upright,’ we would accept the information with qualifications imposed by our knowledge of the speaker’s character or of the general fallibility of mankind. We could never trust even the most reliable of witnesses as completely as we trust the author of the opening statement about Job.”³³¹

The claim that Yhwh was responsible for the besiegement of Jerusalem would be a hotly debated topic in real life based upon our personal and communal theodictic understandings, but here the reader is given the advantage to view the catastrophe as the Narrator views it, as a divine appointment, and we may do so because we are readers who have voluntarily entered into this literary world. Furthermore, Wayne Booth asserts, “If the reader is to desire the truth he must first be convinced that he does not already possess it.”³³² The Narrator’s explanation of the fall of Jerusalem as a theodicy may be this truth that the reader must be convinced that s/he does not possess.

The Narrator attempts to make sense of the catastrophe of the Babylonian captivity of Judah for his reader, so now the reader must in turn ask, “What sense is to be made of the Narrator making sense of the captivity of Judah?” This point is reiterated by Sternberg who states that in order for the reader to maintain contact with the narrator he must interpret his interpretations, make sense of his sense-making and judge his

³³¹ Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, pp.4-5.

³³² *Ibid.*, p.285.

judgments.³³³ Only in the readerly activity can the hermeneutical circle make this revolution. We must firstly recognize the Narrator as a theologian; one who is not only dedicated to Yhwh as Lord, but also one who is willing to think theologically about the issues and events in life. Having a defined worldview is evidence of a good thinker; having a distinct theocentric worldview is evidence of a theologian. We have to realize that the Narrator is not just telling the story of Daniel^c in a literary vacuum, but rather he is careful to posit Daniel^c and the story in a context. This context, however, is in need of explanation, and even justification, which is provided by the Narrator in relation to his own understanding of Yhwh. In other words, Narrator is practicing and promoting a hermeneutics of faith; interpretation cannot be divorced from one's relationship to Yhwh. As the Narrator does this, so also must the reader do likewise if s/he is to follow the story. The effect sought is to encourage the reader to become a theological interpreter.

Not only does the Narrator establish himself as a hermeneut through his theological interpretation of the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar over Jerusalem, but he also displays the potential latent in Nebuchadnezzar to attain also a status of interpreter. After the Narrator states the theological reason behind the devastation upon Jerusalem, he proceeds to interpret the actions of Nebuchadnezzar. At this particular juncture an initially benighted Nebuchadnezzar displays incredible potential for the makings of a great interpreter. Firstly, the Narrator reports the actions of Nebuchadnezzar as carrying off the articles that Yhwh himself has given to Nebuchadnezzar to the temple of his god in Shinar and putting these articles into the treasure house of his god. The Narrator compels the reader to look at Nebuchadnezzar through a theological lens by forcing the reader to see Nebuchadnezzar as not solely a player on a political field but also as a man

³³³ Sternberg, p.161.

of more substantial and religious loyalties. Nebuchadnezzar is categorically a henotheist, one believing in his own local deity; most likely the way that he would likewise view any religious Judean, who worships the Hebrew god of Jerusalem, Yhwh. The attributes that Nebuchadnezzar possesses of being a man of worship and of loyalty to a god is seen as an asset in terms of his potentiality that will later come to fruition.

The second insightful comment that Narrator makes concerning the potential of Nebuchadnezzar's interpretative skill is the connection that he makes between the events of the material world and the happenings of the spirit world. Fewell makes the point that the verbs which Narrator uses for Nebuchadnezzar's action are active, thus attesting to the belief that Nebuchadnezzar considers himself to be the main party responsible for the siege of Jerusalem. After the siege of Jerusalem, however, Nebuchadnezzar gives credit to his god³³⁴ by offering the temple vessels of one god (Yhwh) to the temple of his god.³³⁵ The victory of Nebuchadnezzar and his god stand over against the defeated Jehoiakim and his god. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar sees the conflict manifest in the material world is a reflection of a similar conflict in the spirit world.³³⁶ As we shall see throughout the book of Daniel^B, this cosmically dualistic perspective, which Nebuchadnezzar possesses so early in the narrative, is a view partially upheld by the implied author, but will need serious revamping in light of his later Yahwistic conversion.

Though we may recognize the great potential that Nebuchadnezzar has as an interpreter, Narrator does not allow Nebuchadnezzar to stand without some sense of judgment against him by the reader. This is accomplished by means of dramatic irony,

³³⁴ The Babylonian god would likely be Marduk or Bel, but it is interesting to note that the Narrator does not take the care to assign the god a proper name. Both literarily and theologically, the identity of this god is a non-entity.

³³⁵ Fewell, *Circle*, p.14.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.14

wherein the Narrator knows and reveals to the reader the theological truth of which Nebuchadnezzar is utterly unaware. Though the general premise that the material world is a reflection of the spirit world is a concept with which Narrator agrees, the Narrator reassures the reader that Nebuchadnezzar is completely ignorant of the theological understanding that Yhwh is not the god of Jerusalem alone, but of the world. This is the very belief that Narrator presents Nebuchadnezzar adhering to later in chapter 4.

Nebuchadnezzar is not cognizant that he is ultimately, though unconsciously, a servant of Yhwh; and it is Yhwh who has used Nebuchadnezzar to bring about retribution against his own people due to their assumed failures. Nebuchadnezzar and his god do not fight against Jehoiakim and Yhwh, as he supposes; rather, Yhwh uses Nebuchadnezzar to do that which had to be done according to the plan of Yhwh. This position is confirmed by the fact that neither Jehoiakim nor Nebuchadnezzar's god receive any further attention throughout the narrative.³³⁷

The Establishment of Credentials and Further Training – 1.3-5

The Narrator continues to exhibit his 'theodictic' worldview in describing the new Babylonian life in which Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah partake. No one would contest the tragedy felt by captives who are deported to live in a foreign land and forced to serve under pagan domination. Such heart-wrenching sentiments are captured and expressed by the psalmist of the 137th, but the attitude expressed here by the psalmist is not shared by the Narrator. The calamity of captivity, which could have been the topic around which the whole book could have revolved, is lightly glossed over in verses 1.1-

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.14. This, of course, does not include the apocryphal stories in chapter 14 about Bel or the Dragon. Again, I am working from the Hebrew Bible, the Protestant Old Testament, neither of which contains these stories.

2.³³⁸ The reason for this glossing is the theological worldview of the Narrator, who has already stated blatantly that it is Yhwh who is the one responsible for the situation in which Judah finds herself. To belabor the tragedy of the captivity would be to fail to show the proper willingness to learn the lesson Yhwh demands the nation to learn while in exile. The real concern is found in the lessons of the story; paradigms of interpreting Yhwh and history must somehow shift to meet new circumstances. Rather than demonstrate the horrific conditions of life in captivity, Narrator rather prefers to show the ability to overcome the religious, social and moral oppression under which Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are to live.

In the administration of the Babylonian empire, certain servants who meet meticulous qualifications are selected to serve in the kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar instructs his chief officer Ashpenaz to find and train from among the 'children of Israel' young men from royal and noble descent who are worthy to serve in the king's court. A detailed list of prescribed qualities follows as well as what their training procedure would entail, the diet they would partake of, and the length of their training. The list of prescribed qualities is established by Nebuchadnezzar, is searched for and found among the Judean captives by Ashpenaz, and is subtly yet readily approved by the Narrator since from this list of qualifications emerge Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar does well in his construction of the list of demands for the young Judean interns. However, as thorough as his list may be, ultimately it is found to be lacking some quintessential items that Nebuchadnezzar would not think to add until a later point in the narrative. As a start, however, these qualities are crucial: physical condition not wrought with defects and good looking, aptitude for interdisciplinary learning, well informed,

³³⁸ Towner, p.22.

quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. In these qualities are found the makings of a good interpreter, yet the list must be expanded in order to discover a qualified theological hermeneut. As we shall see, Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah not only fulfill Nebuchadnezzar's list but they have the extra—or would we say primary—qualities that qualify them as theological hermeneuts.

The essential point of this list of qualifications does not just lie in the fulfillment of this list by Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, nor in the wisdom of Nebuchadnezzar to construct such a list, but really to spell out the qualities required of the reader to become a 'Daniel^C' or a good interpreter. Likewise, this list could also reflect the ideals—or perhaps the realities—of qualities possessed by the authorial community.

Physical Excellence

The elected Judean captives have to meet physical demands in order to even appear in the king's court. These demands are twofold: on the negative side of the issue, they must be free of handicaps (אֵין כָּל מְאֹמִים³³⁹), and on the positive side, they had to be good looking (וְטוֹבֵי מְרֻאָה). Initially the young men are judged and screened according to their physical appearance, which ideally should add to, rather than distract from, the overall splendor of the beautiful Babylonian palace.³⁴⁰ Personal attractiveness and perfection are looked upon as characteristics belonging to the moral and intellectual nobility.³⁴¹ In other words, even if all the boys are not officially from nobility, they at

³³⁹ Here, as well as Job 31.7, the three letter root word (mum) has an (a) added.

³⁴⁰ Leon Wood, p.33.

³⁴¹ Keil. Daniel. p.74.

least have to look the part.³⁴² Surely, this is not an unreasonable requisite, after all Yhwh demands nothing less from his own attendants.³⁴³

Aptitude for Interdisciplinary Learning

The young candidates for the king's court must have the potential to be skilled in the 'interdisciplinary' learning; that they are not only capable of one particular discipline, but can capably master a variety of disciplines. Rabbi Rambam interprets *ומשכילים בקל* *חכמה* as that which encompasses all pursuits of the mind, and should be considered distinct from knowledge that is accumulated.³⁴⁴ What is implied more specifically here is Chaldean wisdom.³⁴⁵ In order to qualify to be a learner of such a discipline as Chaldean wisdom, one must show a certain degree of innate or intuitive wisdom.³⁴⁶ The word *חכמה* denotes that wisdom is the ability to distinguish and to make decisions based upon one's own discretion.³⁴⁷ This issue of wisdom becomes a central theme in the narrative as the wisdom from man is never 'good enough' while the wisdom of God is always sufficient to meet the demands of interpretation. Ultimately wisdom can only be obtained from God; mastery over human wisdom is a result of understanding godly wisdom. Man's wisdom apart from an understanding of God resorts to foolishness.

Possessing Knowledge and Well Informed

The Hebraic structure is tautological in its form, *וי נְעִי נְעִח*, and literally translates as 'ones informed of information'. If the young candidates are possessors of knowledge,

³⁴² On an historical-critical note, Danielic scholars from various traditions still debate the issue of whether Daniel^C is from nobility or just one of the children of Israel who possessed these qualities prescribed by the king.

³⁴³ "No descendant of Aaron the priest who has a defect shall come near to offer bread to his God." Lev. 21.17-23.

³⁴⁴ Goldwurm, p.62.

³⁴⁵ Keil. *Daniel*, p.74.

³⁴⁶ Rabbi Malbim in Goldwurm, p.62.

³⁴⁷ Leon Wood, p.33.

they can retain what they have been taught. If they can retain what they have been taught, they can be re-taught to retain the knowledge suitable for the king's service. The knowledge that these boys possess is not the knowledge that they will be introduced to in their three year training period; their knowledge would have been according to their own traditions. However, they show potential to possess the kind of knowledge appropriate to the high Babylonian court. The reader must come to assume that Daniel^c and his three companions come to the scene as ones with prior educational training.

Mentally Perceptive

Not only do the young candidates retain the knowledge that they have been taught, but furthermore, they are able to process the knowledge into intelligible logic. This trait is the third in a line of intellectual properties required of those who would serve in the king's court. There should be no doubt that the mental capacities of the young men are of great importance to the king.³⁴⁸ This particular quality complements the previous one: the ability to retain information is one important stepping stone to the second one here described, turning information into applicable sense. Daniel^c excels in this area, as well as the other areas, more than any contemporary because he not only meets the minimum requirements but exceeds them greatly, which of course is a gift granted to him by Yhwh.

Competent to Serve

The young men must also be qualified to serve in the palace of the king. This particular competency encompasses many and various aspects including the ability to take and carry out orders, having the proper poise, being graceful in movement, showing appropriate manners, being sensitive to social ranks, and understanding all duties in order

³⁴⁸ Leon Wood, p.33.

for royal house operations to run smoothly. Such endowments are necessarily intrinsic to the candidates' personalities and are absolutely indispensable in order to avoid embarrassment.³⁴⁹ Daniel^c's service to the Babylonian king is exceptional because he serves as if he would for his heavenly King. If the reader projects the worldview of the Narrator onto Daniel^c—as is a reasonable and expected conjecture—then Daniel^c is also likely to see Nebuchadnezzar as a king established by Yhwh for the purposes Yhwh wills to accomplish. Therefore, his service to the pagan king is not a betrayal of his devotion to Yhwh but rather compliance with a deeper understanding of Yhwh's plans. Daniel^c does not serve this pagan king *despite* his devotion to Yhwh, he serves this king *because* of his devotion to Yhwh. This king is not in competition with Yhwh, he is unwittingly a fellow servant of Yhwh alongside Daniel^c.

Capable of Learning Chaldean Language and Literature סִפְר וּלְשׁוֹן כַּשְׁדִּים

The qualities thus far described have been those which the Judean captives already possess, but now the captives are placed into a learning environment that not only tests the intellectual skills and adaptability of the captives, but also tests the abilities of Ashpenaz to educate further and to select carefully qualified candidates.³⁵⁰

Training

Once the abilities, talents and traits sought after for the king's service are described, the further training that would occur for those Judean captives who meet the requirements is briefly noted. Three things are specifically mentioned: 1) the boys in

³⁴⁹ Leon Wood, p.33.

³⁵⁰ Danielic scholarship is divided concerning the meaning of Chaldean language and literature; some take Chaldean to refer literally to the ethnicity of the term while others believe that Chaldean connotes a specialized training tightly associated with magicians, diviners, astrologers, priests, etc. While I agree with those who advocate that Chaldean is more specifically associated with the specialized class of magicians, diviners, astrologers and priests, still the point is moot for our present discussion of establishing the qualities of the four Jewish youth.

training are assigned rations of food and wine from the king's table; 2) their training would last for three years after which; 3) they would enter into the king's service. The first item in the training process involves the dietary practice that would resemble a royal diet; this item sets the stage for the main conflict in this introductory chapter. Yet, as we have already discussed, chapter 1 is not simply one of six court-tales, and therefore we must be cognizant of its status as we read it in the light of its introductory nature. The conflict over the mandatory diet speaks more about the establishment of the integrity of the main characters and the possibility of living a Yahwistically-devoted life in the midst of a pagan environment than it does about the resolution of a dietary debate. The second item mentioned in v.5 is characteristic of the Narrator who regularly displays his sensitivity to temporal issues: "trained for three years"; this particular item assists in the reader's logistic comprehension of the general setting of the court-tale in chapter 2. And finally, the third item mentioned here foreshadows the careers of the main characters Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah as they proceed through the narrative. On another note, Daniel^c's selective acceptance of Babylonian life is interesting; though he refuses the royal food, or *patbag*, he has no problem accepting the free Babylonian higher education.³⁵¹ Indeed, as Lacocque points out, the education of the Chaldeans is never questioned as to its intrinsic worth.³⁵² This may be the case since Daniel^c's godly wisdom is the filter through which all Babylonian training will pass.

Establishment of Character – 1.6-16

The reader is introduced to the main character Daniel^c and his three companions as they are among the unknown number of Judean captives and other candidates who

³⁵¹ Towner, p.22.

³⁵² Lacocque, p.32.

meet the prerequisites and who will partake of the training for the king's service. The reader immediately becomes aware of the importance of the names of the Jewish boys because their Hebrew names are changed by the chief officer in order to accommodate and reflect the supposedly superior Babylonian culture. All four Hebrew names contain a referential suffix to the God of Israel in either the form of 'el' (god) or 'ya' (Yhwh); such an association would not be tolerated by Nebuchadnezzar.³⁵³ Daniel, a name meaning "God is my judge" or "my judgment is God's" conveys meaningfulness and purpose to the suffering endured by God's people; and as we shall notice repeatedly Daniel^c stands for the paradigm of the ideal Israel. Perhaps more pointed here is the suggestion that Daniel^c is his name, which also identifies him as a hermeneut. Thus the further suggestion is that the hermeneut is not simply one who reads text but one who is allowed to be read by text. In Daniel^c's case, the primary text Daniel^c seeks to interpret is Yhwh, the Ultratext, yet at the same time and perhaps more importantly, how he is read by the Ultratext is far more crucial. The shift from a name that is theocentric to a name that is king-oriented is indicative of the theological and political struggle against the ultimate sovereignty of Yhwh with which Nebuchadnezzar contends. To Daniel^c the chief officer assigns the name Belteshazzar, which means "protect the king's life."³⁵⁴

Hananiah, meaning "Yhwh has been gracious" is changed to Shadrach, meaning "I am very fearful (of god)" and is thought to be a distortion of Marduk.³⁵⁵ Mishael, meaning "Who is what God is?" is changed to Meshach, meaning "I am of little

³⁵³ Goldwurm, p.65.

³⁵⁴ Lacocque also states "Protect the king's life!" and cites that the name Bel is understood, p.29; likewise, Baldwin suggests "Lady, protect the king", p.81; also Heaton who states the name as "Protect the life of the king", p.118.

³⁵⁵ Heaton, p.118; Baldwin, p.81.

account.”³⁵⁶ Azariah, meaning “Yhwh has helped” is turned to Abednego meaning, “Servant of Nabu.”³⁵⁷ The notes of the historical significance of changing names are fascinating,³⁵⁸ but our interests here lay in the way this information functions within the framework of an introduction to the hermeneutical exercise we have in Daniel^B. The information serves the hermeneutical cause in several ways. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, is for the sheer informative value for the reader’s sake; several times in the narrative these characters are referred to by one name or the other, but rarely by both. Secondly, the two co-existing sets of names are foreshadows of both the integration into the larger pagan society on one hand and of the resistance to total cultural and theological assimilation into this society on the other hand. Thirdly, there is the didactic element that compels the reader to be aware of even the most minute of details.

In the introduction of Daniel^C, as well as his three friends, what is not said is as important as what is said. Though we are told that Nebuchadnezzar orders Ashpenaz to look among the children of Israel for those of royal or noble descent, any hint of lineage for any of the four Jewish boys is blatantly absent. Lineage in ancient Israelite, as well as other ancient Near Eastern cultures, was extremely important, yet here we find our heroes without a specific lineage. We cannot determine whether Daniel^C is indeed from a royal or noble ancestry. While Rabbi Malbim understands verse 3 to say, “from the children of Israel, from the royal seed, and from the nobles” as if these three are distinct and yet all eligible for training in royal service, Rabbi Alshich understands “from royal seed and from the nobles” to be explanatory of entire Israelite community, as if all Israelites are

³⁵⁶ Goldingay, p.17; Baldwin, p.81.

³⁵⁷ Lacocque, p.29. Heaton prefers “Servant of Nebo” who is the Babylonian god of writing, p.118.

³⁵⁸ See Lacocque, pp.29-30; Goldingay, pp.17-18; Baldwin, pp.81-82.

royal because of their giftedness in wisdom.³⁵⁹ In either case, ancestry succumbs to wisdom and ability. Regardless of their heritage, which is not explicitly cited, Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are accepted into training for the king's service by the evidence of their abilities. We have discussed earlier the historical-critical possibility of the identity of the authorial community of Daniel^b being from the aristocracy of Jerusalem, a group who would have a vested interest in retaining the esoteric nature of the wisdom conventicle,³⁶⁰ and yet the stress of religious ability over elite heritage is unavoidably obvious. Thus there is likewise a more-than subtle emphasis of ability over lineage by implication for the reader. In other words, the common reader who seeks to emulate Daniel^c as the paradigm of the theological interpreter is not automatically disqualified due to his/her lack of royal or noble pedigree. The reader, who may or may not have claims to nobility, may regardless seek to emulate Daniel^c on equal footing with anyone else. In the end ability supercedes pedigree.

Daniel^c spearheads the issue of defilement with his personal determination to refuse the prescribed diet of royal food and wine, also known as *patbag* from the Hebrew פַּתְבָּג. Later we find that Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah also join Daniel^c and become tenacious about their desire to avoid defilement. Suddenly we find that the mention of the children of Israel in verse 3 and the selection of the four young Jewish exiles in verse 6 are re-informed in the story of the dietary debate. Politically, the northern tribes of Israel as a nation ceased at the conquest by Assyria in 722 BCE; what we have then in the name of Israel is the theological rather than the political designation of the people of God. Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah become the paradigm of the ideal Israel; they are

³⁵⁹ Goldwurm, p.61.

³⁶⁰ Beyerle, p.226.

the embodiment of God's people. Furthermore, Daniel^c specifically becomes the paradigm of a true leader of Israel; the true Yahwists live vicariously through Daniel^c who refuses to be defiled in order to maintain his Yahwistic integrity. In this sense, Daniel^c is not only a leader who acquires followers, but he is also exemplary in his character and one counted worthy of his position of leadership.³⁶¹

The issue of the text is crucial in Daniel^b. As we have already noted, a text as treated in Daniel^b is pragmatically defined as "anything in need of interpretation."³⁶² The physical text we observe in this introductory chapter is royal food and wine, for indeed Daniel^c believes it needs interpretation, but we are completely unaware of the text behind the text. We see that Daniel^c interprets the royal food and wine as something that leads to or causes defilement, but the process by which he comes to this conclusion is a mystery. Scholars have debated whether Daniel^c and his friends abstain because it breaks kosher law,³⁶³ or whether their refusal was to avoid gentile paganism in general,³⁶⁴ or whether their denial of the royal food and wine is indicative of their refusal of total assimilation and allegiance,³⁶⁵ or whether their rejection of the *patbag* is a denial of the strong bonds of fellowship that accompany the communal consumption of food and wine.³⁶⁶ On this issue there is no consensus among Danielic scholars; the reason Daniel^c believes that the food and wine is defiling is far from explicit in the text. In fact, many scholars offer several of the aforementioned options as non-mutually exclusive possibilities. This is precisely the point in this introductory chapter: 'text' will receive serious attention in the

³⁶¹ Goldwurm, p.67.

³⁶² See discussion in Chapter 2, under 'Text'.

³⁶³ Collins, *Daniel*, p.24; Russell, *Daniel*, p.26; Wood, p.37; See Goldingay for the most complete survey of arguments, pp.18-19.

³⁶⁴ Heaton, p.119; Keil, p.80; Wood, p.37.

³⁶⁵ Baldwin, p.83; Fewell, p.18.

³⁶⁶ Goldwurm, pp.67-68; according to Goldwurm 'all' Jewish commentators believe the abstention was to avoid the temptations of intermarriage.

remaining narrative and each episode plays its part in defining and describing the text; the unidentifiable text of chapter 1 introduces the issue of the text in a nondescript fashion so as to cover the issue of the text in all its possible applications in the following contexts.

The issue of identity is also closely linked to the theory and practice of interpretation. As Daniel^c and his comrades refuse to be defiled by the king's food and wine, they are inevitably set apart from their colleagues.³⁶⁷ Once again Daniel^c and friends play the role of the ideal Israel, they set themselves apart for the purposes of holiness, a reflection of the character of Yhwh. As the narrative unfolds we will observe that a person's own identity has much to do with the capabilities that each one displays as an interpreter. Those who best understand themselves through the eyes of Yhwh and embrace their own identities perform better interpretations, and here Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah fully embrace their identities as Yahwists who are unwilling to compromise their beliefs, traditions and practices. Towner summarizes nicely, "Daniel's act—whether one of obedience, prudence, political sagacity, or simply symbol—had the effect of setting him and his companions apart from the common run of aliens and other students in the Babylonian academy of wisdom."³⁶⁸

In general throughout the narrative, Yhwh is not usually an actively participating character, though there are occasional exceptions to the rule. The role that Yhwh fulfills is usually that of something by which to interpret all other texts, in this sense he is a text but not just any text, he is the final and ultimate text by which all other texts must be interpreted, or as I deem him, the Ultratext. However, we see him fulfilling an active character role in verse 9 as he causes the chief official to show favor and sympathy

³⁶⁷ Towner, p.28.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.26.

toward Daniel^C. Thus, we expect that Daniel^C's alternative plan suggested to the chief official whose heart is softened toward Daniel^C by Yhwh will certainly be an acceptable alternative. Yet, initially the plan fails despite Daniel^C's pious dedication and Yhwh's persuasive hand on Ashpenaz, and so we are forced to ask "why?" The answer comes immediately in verse 10 from the mouth of the chief official himself, "I am afraid of my lord the king who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." The denial of Daniel^C's suggestion is a result of poor interpretation on behalf of Ashpenaz who has failed to understand himself as a servant of Yhwh, despite Yhwh's active persuasion in his life. This assessment can be succinctly summarized in his reference to the king as his lord (לַמֶּלֶךְ), the same root word used by the Narrator to describe Yhwh in verse 2. If we understand that the chief official regards Nebuchadnezzar as his lord with no regard to Yhwh as Lord, then the remainder of his statement makes perfect sense: according to Ashpenaz Daniel^C's plan is bound to fail and it will consequently cost him his head.

Daniel^C is determined in his resolve. Despite the favorable conditions that Yhwh establishes for Daniel^C, the initial plan fails, but what we see in the character of Daniel^C is earnest determination. Daniel^C has resolved not to defile himself, and despite any earlier setbacks, he will see his resolution to fulfillment. 'Plan B' is enacted using entirely different tactics. Daniel^C goes behind the back of the chief officer to the guard whom the chief officer appointed over the interns.³⁶⁹ This time Daniel^C appeals to the guard's sense

³⁶⁹ J.A. Montgomery, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (New York: Scribner's, 1927), p.134.

of practicality; there is no mention of defilement in this suggested plan.³⁷⁰ Daniel^C simply asks for a ten day testing period of vegetables and water during which time the regular menu of the king's food and wine is held in suspension. This period would conclude with a test of appearance between the four Yahwists and the other cadets at the Babylonian school of wisdom. The proposal of Daniel^C is prudent, and as Fewell points out, "The proposal is sweetened also by what is unspoken—the guardian is left to dispose of the king's food and wine (surely much better fare than that which the guardian is accustomed) as he sees fit! Small wonder the request is granted."³⁷¹ The test is an overall success: Daniel^C and his three companions remain undefiled, they look healthier and better nourished than their colleagues eating from the king's *patbag*, and the guard has acquired for himself food fit for a king. For the remainder of their training period, Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were given their vegetables and water instead of the royal *patbag*. Daniel^C displays that a good hermeneut is one who is likewise a pragmatist.

This account presents the reader with several observations, primarily that the active hand of God in the heart of Ashpenaz did not guarantee success, at least in the way that we might have expected it. Though everything seemed to be in place for a neat and tidy story, it does not happen this way. We are then forced to ask ourselves the reasons it does not happen the way it should. Firstly, even a man whose heart is touched by God can find himself at odds with God by refusing to yield his actions to the sway of his heart. Still, the devout must persevere to do that which it has been determined they should do in order to fulfill righteousness. Secondly, Daniel^C likely interpreted the hand of Yhwh on

³⁷⁰ Fewell, *Circle*, p.20.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.21

the heart of Ashpenaz and therefore asked for a change of diet on the basis of defilement. The denial of his request may have been shocking but could be a test from Yhwh to determine his dedication to his resolve. Thirdly, in his fine pursuit to remain undefiled, Daniel^C used his skills of diplomacy and wisdom to achieve his goal for the sake of holiness without the apparent aid of Yhwh, to whom his heart is devoted. Yet, we cannot help but to think that their healthy appearance must be credited to a supernatural sustenance.

God-Given Talents – 1.17-20

A direct correlation between the four Jewish exiles' dedication to holiness and the gifts that Yhwh grants them is especially relevant in this introductory chapter. The four boys overcome arduous obstacles in order to remain undefiled, and as a result and as a reward the four devout students schooled in Babylonian wisdom receive from Yhwh's school the abilities for success only available to those who are dedicated to Yhwh. God grants to them interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. Again, Yhwh plays an active role in this case; he 'gives' the boys added talents the same way that he 'gives' Jehoiakim and the temple vessels to Nebuchadnezzar as he also 'gives' the chief official favor and sympathy toward Daniel^C.³⁷²

We cannot possibly ignore the dialogical relationship that is being established so early in the narrative at this juncture. The integral constituents of this relationship are devotion to God, natural talents and supernatural gifts. Let us begin with the talents that are 'naturally' given to Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah from birth, implicitly by Yhwh. These individuals dedicate themselves and their talents to living devout Yahwistic lives; this in return is honored and rewarded by Yhwh in the form of greater talents and

³⁷² *Ibid.*, p.22.

abilities. These talents and abilities will then further be utilized for greater feats accomplished for Yhwh, at which time we would intrinsically expect the granting of greater capacities from Yhwh. This upward spiral becomes evident by its political parallel in the series of promotions that are granted to Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah at the end of chapters 2, 3, 5 (or at least offered), and at the beginning of chapter 6. Service to Yhwh is rewarded with abilities to do greater service to Yhwh; we can also say that knowing Yhwh is rewarded by a greater ability to know Yhwh. This spiral is in constant movement throughout the narrative in a variety of forms.

Beyond the gifts given to Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, Daniel^C is specifically given an ability to understand visions and dreams of all kinds. This ability, of course, is a predominant motif throughout the narrative and sets the stage for several episodes that follow, but as it stands in its context, this God-given talent vividly exposes the character of Daniel^C. All four Jewish exiles stand their ground to avoid defilement and are consequently rewarded for their resolute devotion, but it is Daniel^C who leads the charge by making the resolution in his heart, spreading his convictions to his companions, proposing his plan to Ashpenaz, and finally convincing the guard to meet his proposal. For his leadership and initial dedication to piety, Daniel^C is rewarded above and beyond the additional skills granted to the other three. Daniel^C is the one who put his life on the line to maintain purity and therefore Daniel^C is the one to receive the greater reward from Yhwh.³⁷³ The hermeneut is one who takes risks, drawing conclusions that others cannot or will not apprehend, knowing that risks are by their nature precarious, success or reward is certainly not guaranteed. The great hermeneuts of the past and present have been and are fully aware of this just as we see Daniel^C's cognizance of it in

³⁷³ Goldwurm, p.71.

his own circumstances. “Nothing ventured, nothing gained,” or “sow sparingly, reap sparingly; sow liberally, reap bountifully,” or so the sayings go; they can be powerfully appropriated to the issue of hermeneutics.

When the three year training period is complete, the chief officer presents the graduating cadets to the king. We do not know whether or not the chief officer has become aware of the dietary arrangement between the four boys and the guard in charge over them; it makes precious little difference at this point since they all appear healthier and we have come to realize that he was unwilling to take the risk of trusting in Daniel^C or his god. And so we must say good-bye to Ashpenaz who served well his role as a character but in the end failed to comprehend Yhwh as deity or text.

As the final exam for their three year period of training, they engage in an exit interview with King Nebuchadnezzar. At this point, Nebuchadnezzar finds that the four devout Jewish boys are ten times superior to their colleagues. The reader knows the secrets to their success, and though the reader can affirm Nebuchadnezzar’s assessment of these four boys, the reader is granted a privileged position above Nebuchadnezzar who is denied such access. Assuming that all candidates of the Babylonian school are on equal footing going into the training as far as meeting the prerequisites (v.4), their personal devotion to the issue of purity is honored and rewarded by Yhwh who gives them their additional talents and abilities, placing them ahead of their class. While Nebuchadnezzar would likely assume that credit would be given to the Chaldean training and royal *patbag*, the reader knows that credit and glory belongs to Yhwh for his gifts, and also to Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah for their devotion to Yhwh. The irony is that those who are found to be the best are those who resisted total assimilation into

Babylonian life and whose diets and talents stem from a source that is clearly not Babylonian.³⁷⁴

The Career Span of Daniel – 1.21

Already several times I have made a reference to this verse as being an important piece of the hermeneutical puzzle. There are several reasons that this seemingly-trivial verse needs to receive emphasis. Firstly, unlike any other chapter in Daniel^B, this story ends by revealing the lengthy span of Daniel^C's career from King Nebuchadnezzar to the first year of King Cyrus, thus attesting to the introductory nature of this chapter. Secondly, the career span of Daniel^C parallels the national life of Judah, offering a strong sense of optimism. The chapter begins with Nebuchadnezzar known as the king who ransacks Jerusalem and who brings the independent life of national Judah to an end, but the chapter ends with Cyrus who is known for his generosity toward the Jews in encouraging them to return to their beloved land to rebuild their temple.³⁷⁵ Once again, we see that Daniel^C is the embodiment of the ideal Israel, and perhaps more specifically at this point, 'the remnant.' Thirdly, Daniel^C is locked into a given biographical span, distinguished from the Narrator who is under no such temporal constraints. In other words, while the Narrator is a 'living' literary construct, Daniel^C is assumed from the beginning to be a character who has indeed already died. We must keep this in mind as we read through the narrative since this detail will ultimately leave the reader with some serious implications. One such implication is that while the Narrator presents the stories of Daniel^C with a sense of aural texture, the presentation of Daniel^C as narrator is undoubtedly and conscientiously literary. The resemblance of the preference of writing

³⁷⁴ Fewell, *Circle*, p.23

³⁷⁵ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.28.

over speech with postmodern literary criticism is noteworthy. Another implication is that Daniel^C remains within the confines of the narrative, while the reader must go beyond it to do the things that Daniel^C has already accomplished within the narrative. These issues will be explored further in the 'Danielic graduate courses' in the next chapters, but the groundwork to these theories is primarily laid in this short and often overlooked verse.

CHAPTER 5
THE UNDERGRADUATE COURSES –
DANIELIC HERMENEUTICS IN THEORY

“The body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever.”
- Martin Luther³⁷⁶

The introduction to Danielic hermeneutics is laid out in Daniel 1, as we have seen in our previous chapter. The next five chapters of Daniel^B are presented to the reader primarily by the Narrator with one remarkable story narrated by Nebuchadnezzar. Essentially the reader in Daniel 2-6 is being given the theoretical side of hermeneutics, which we shall deem here as the ‘undergraduate courses’ in this Danielic school of hermeneutics.

Daniel 2 – Disclosing Dream and Identity

We have established the introductory nature of Daniel 1; chapter 2 is therefore the first court-tale in a series of five that follow. The initial linguistic switch occurs in this chapter from the more difficult Hebrew to the more vernacular Aramaic at 2.4b. In this episode we will notice the strenuous and slippery nature of interpretation and the stringent demands that often accompany the task. We will also observe theoretical and practical discussions revolving around the very issue of hermeneutics and their implications for carrying out the business of interpretation. Furthermore, we have already discussed in our treatment of hermeneutical theory the link that exists between interpretation and the identity of the interpreter; this present story seems to capture this notion in a compelling manner.

³⁷⁶ Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress is our God”; translated by Frederick H. Hedge.

Additionally, the issue of text is once again at the forefront. We have noted the ambiguity of text in the previous episode of chapter 1, but now we are faced with a text in the form of a dream. What the reader has is a written text before him/her, what Daniel^C is challenged with is a dream-text, behind which is Yhwh the Ultratext. The reader is challenged likewise to interpret the Ultratext in this written text as well as in other texts encountered in life. Knowing Yhwh as text is the beginning and the end of all interpretation of the multitude of texts. Furthermore, the presentation of a variety of texts parallels the metaphysical dualism in the narrative. Quite explicitly two realms exist in Daniel^B, the material and the spiritual; likewise two types of texts confront the reader, the written and the other. Though these two metaphysical realms and these two text-types coexist, both succumb to the sovereignty of Yhwh, and ultimately these disparities are linked by hermeneutics and hermeneuts. Thus dualism in the Danielic context is radically redefined.

Temporal Context – 2.1

In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, he has troubling dreams that lead to an acute case of insomnia. We must understand that chronologically Nebuchadnezzar accomplished his feat against Jerusalem in the first year of his reign, shortly after which young exiles were selected for special three year Chaldean training. This dream, therefore, takes place while Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are still in the middle of their program. The mysterious initial absence of the four Jewish exiles becomes more sensible when we keep this temporal marker in mind.

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar becomes the primary, but certainly not the only text with which Daniel^C as interpreter must handle in this episode. In setting the scene the

Narrator reveals the text to be interpreted as a dream, around which other interpretive acts also revolve.

The (Im)possible Demand – 2.2-11

In order to settle his troubled mind, Nebuchadnezzar summons his professional staff including magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans. The dialogue that ensues between Nebuchadnezzar and his group of wise men becomes an enlightening insight into the nature of theological hermeneutics. In his own mind, Nebuchadnezzar makes his request known quite clearly; he wants to understand what his troubling dream means. In response, and after the customary introductory remark, “O king, live forever,” the Chaldeans, also believing they have grasped the king’s meaning, routinely answer, “tell your servants the dream and we will interpret it.” We can derive from this attitude that the Chaldeans are confident—perhaps overly confident—in their skills as interpreters, yet they have not, as of yet, engaged the text. How then can they be so sure of their abilities to interpret the dream correctly? Perhaps correctness in interpretation is not really their goal, or at least as much as satisfying the king’s request.

What the wise men think to be standard operating procedure is unexpectedly turned completely upside-down. Nebuchadnezzar responds by stating that he has firmly made up his mind that they must tell the dream and then its interpretation; failure to comply results in fatal bodily mutilation to the wise men and the demolition of their houses. The conversation between the king and the wise men becomes viciously circular: the wise men promise to interpret the dream’s meaning if the king will reveal the dream’s contents, but Nebuchadnezzar demands the revelation of the substance of the dream prior to its interpretation, and back and forth the verbal dual goes for three rounds, and with

greater intensity at each interchange.³⁷⁷ The exchange between Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans functions much like a type of negative hermeneutical circle; instead of gaining greater information at each turn, they only realize that at each turn they are farther from understanding each other, and meanwhile animosity is mounting.

What is the reader to make of Nebuchadnezzar's irrational request? We have but two logical and mutually exclusive possibilities: 1) Nebuchadnezzar has forgotten his dream and really does need both the dream's content and its interpretation; or 2) Nebuchadnezzar has not forgotten his dream, but intends to use the comparison of the versions of the dream's content to judge the validity of the interpretation. At this point the Narrator affords the reader no dramatic irony, which is ironic itself; just as the wise men are uncertain if Nebuchadnezzar has forgotten his dream or not, so also is the reader equally unsure. In fact, to push the matter further, we are left unsure as to whether the Narrator knows if Nebuchadnezzar has forgotten his dream or if he is withholding it to ensure a legitimate interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar keeps the wise men—and the reader—in suspense whether he knows the dream and withholds the content in order to verify their ability, or whether he has truly forgotten the dream and is in complete need of their assistance.³⁷⁸ In either case Nebuchadnezzar is unrelenting; and in either case, without surprise, the wise men fail to deliver to Nebuchadnezzar the content and consequently the interpretation of his dream.

Finally we reach a point at which the Chaldeans realize that the seemingly ridiculous request of the king is indeed his actual demand: the absurdly impossible task of telling the king his own dream. They firstly assert the impossibility of the task to be

³⁷⁷ Fewell, *Circle*, p.24.

³⁷⁸ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p. 46.

performed by any man on earth. Secondly, they claim that no other great king has—or would—ask such a thing from his council of wise men because, thirdly, it is simply too difficult. Fourthly, this task can only be completed by the gods who, by the way, do not live among mortals. Though their response to the king is this thorough and well thought out, it is still completely insufficient in the eyes of the reader. After making these four claims, they disappear from the scene and their executions are ordered by the irritated Nebuchadnezzar.

In assessing these wise men as interpreters, several conclusions avail themselves. In the first place, the reader already knows that these men are considered to be the best that Babylon has to offer since they are called to offer their services to the king himself. Their prior credentials do not have to be proved, they are already assumed to be worthy of the task at hand. Their rigorous training has prepared them for such an occasion as this, at least in the mind of Nebuchadnezzar. Yet in the mind of the reader, prior to the king's summons to the wise men, the reader has already been told that there are four Yahwists who are ten times better than these wise men. Thus, the credentials of these wise men become baseless since they do not involve acknowledgment of Yhwh, the one who is the true giver of 'credentials'. Furthermore, the problem revolves around the issue of a dream-text, a specialty of Daniel^C granted by Yhwh in chapter 1. By way of silence, the reader may also justifiably assume that dreams, visions and their interpretations are not a specialty of any other wise men, not even Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. While Nebuchadnezzar rightfully expects results, the reader intrinsically anticipates failure from the wise men.

The wise men's belief that the task of revealing the contents of the dream are impossible is indicative of their own hermeneutical terms. Nebuchadnezzar's demands essentially redefine the terms necessary for interpretation, and the wise men are unable to meet the demands of the new terms. Again, their training and credentials are called into question, and again the irony is that their failure to meet the king's demands is a result of their 'Yhwh-less' higher Babylonian training, which could not prepare them to fulfill such a task. This is no surprise to the reader who knows that reason without scripture is unreliable, and training without devotion is likewise futile.³⁷⁹ In their traditional hermeneutical model, a text must be provided, but they are granted no such access in this case. Unfolding before the reader is a parable of the death of old hermeneutics; as a result of the king's demands, a new hermeneutical paradigm emerges, and with it implicitly, the necessity of a new breed of hermeneuts.

According to the first two responses of the Chaldeans to Nebuchadnezzar, we can see that they are rational people who expect a certain degree of rationality from their king. This indeed turns itself against the Chaldeans with regard to their methodology of interpretation; their rational hermeneutics become futile in the new paradigm. Their expectation for rationale begins to unravel as they now ask—as opposed to their command of their first retort—the king to tell them the dream.³⁸⁰ The rationality of the wise men leads them to expect rationale from their associates and when a matter does not meet their ideals of rationale, they make room to rationalize the difficulty; thus they continue to attempt amending Nebuchadnezzar's first two demands to reveal the contents of his dream. Nebuchadnezzar's first command to know the meaning of the dream is

³⁷⁹ Jacob Neusner, *What is Midrash?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), p.11.

³⁸⁰ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.33.

ambiguous, but his second imperative to tell and interpret the dream is emphatically clear. Yet there is such a breach in rationale in Nebuchadnezzar's request that they are still inclined to amend the irrationality of the order into something that makes sense to them. They display an initial inability to interpret the command as literal when the statement to be interpreted lacks the logic to which they are accustomed. So on one hand, they disregard and violate a simple hermeneutical principle stating that one must understand the literal and grammatical structure of a text before one proceeds to interpret that text.³⁸¹ Yet on the other hand, the rules of hermeneutics are radically changing before their very eyes and they find themselves utterly incapable of changing with them.

The third and final response of the wise men to Nebuchadnezzar is the most revealing about their abilities as interpreters and is packed with ironic overtones. Their last address to king Nebuchadnezzar before he orders their executions is communicated by four distinct statements. Before we examine these four statements, keep in mind that thus far the Narrator has not revealed the dream to the reader, and therefore, has allowed a certain degree of sympathy for the wise men who know little more than the reader with regard to Nebuchadnezzar's dream.³⁸² The first statement is overtly ironic: "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks!" The reader is privy to the material presented in the introductory episode and knows that Daniel^C is one gifted by Yhwh to understand visions and dreams. The reader anticipates the arrival of Daniel^C on the scene to fulfill the role of the paradigm of the new (theological) hermeneut. Yet, even in this statement clues are emerging with regard to the new rules of hermeneutics. Thus, the employment of irony emphasizes the ideal paradigm over against the wise men's prior

³⁸¹ Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, p.5.

³⁸² Fewell, *Circle*, p.26.

misconceptions, thus they fall prey to their own ironic statement. Indeed, there is no man on earth who can do what the king asks; the good hermeneut is one who stands between heaven and earth and bridges this gap. The second statement: “No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer.” This statement is less about any historical survey than it is about exerting some sort of counter-leverage against the king. If commentators like Fewell³⁸³ and Baldwin³⁸⁴ see in Nebuchadnezzar political insecurity, then the wise men are attempting to play upon this condition to their advantage. Their statement seems to imply, “if other great and mighty kings of the past have not asked for such an absurd feat, then how can you?!” The expected but implied response to this statement is to revoke the absurd demand. The third statement, “What the king asks is too difficult.” This statement follows closely on the heels of the previous one and communicates the reason that no other king has asked for such a request is simply because it is ridiculous to ask something that is nearly impossible to accomplish. As a generalization, and in their old and familiar model of interpretation, their assessment is correct, the request is just too difficult. True enough, as even the reader does not know the dream at this point and can likewise identify.

The last statement of the wise men kindles our greatest interest for our purposes of revealing their potential as theological hermeneuts. Indeed, we may see that their last statement is theological: “No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men.” As a theological truth their assertion is not necessarily inaccurate, on the contrary, both the Narrator and the reader can and will concur with their statement. However, as opposed to the opinion of the wise men who leave the scene with this claim

³⁸³ *Op cit.*, pp.24ff.

³⁸⁴ p.86.

on their lips, neither the Narrator nor the reader would dare leave the statement as it stands. There must be a 'BUT' clause added to their proclamation. What is true as stated by the wise men and accepted by the reader is the existence of the supernatural, and what is also true is that the dwelling place of the supernatural is not a habitat among men. They rightfully recognize the gap that exists between divine and mortal, but they fail to realize the existence of a bridge. The Babylonian wise men therefore, find no connection between the knowledge possessed by the gods and the knowledge possessed by man. In other words, the gods know what they know, and men know what they can know, but men cannot gain access to that to which the gods are privy.

Here in this short statement is their admission that they cannot possibly attain any status as theological hermeneuts. A hermeneut is precisely one who, while acknowledging the supernatural and being aware of the supernatural 'otherly' habitat, acts as a link to bridge the gap between a transcendent deity and immanent mortal. By the very nature of hermeneutics, we must conclude that a hermeneut is one who is the messenger—and hence interpreter—of the gods. Knowing the two former truths, as the Babylonian wise men do, without accepting responsibility of the latter is to accept simultaneously the fact that they will never be 'good' hermeneuts. The wise men of chapter 2 fail to be 'good' hermeneuts on two accounts, therefore: 1) they fail to recognize the true deity in Yhwh; and, 2) they fail to realize that he is the Ultratext through which all interpretations must be accessed. By their own words they confirm the reader's judgment of them and establish their identity as anything but theological hermeneuts.

In the final assessment of the Babylonian wise men of chapter 2, the Narrator, Nebuchadnezzar, and the reader all concur with the conclusion that the wise men are of no value when the time comes to interpreting the message of the supernatural dream-text. Perhaps it may best be summarized by Towner, "They twist and squirm and play for time, finally tacitly admitting what Jeremiah had already said about false prophets long before them (Jer. 23.18), they cannot perceive and hear the word of God. They cannot gain access to the divine message vouchsafed to the king."³⁸⁵ They prove to be insufficient interpreters by both their interpretive inadequacies and by their lack of perception of the text they cannot know.

Nebuchadnezzar's Death Threat – 2.12-16

After the final frustrating interchange between the king and the wise men, Nebuchadnezzar discharges them professionally and ultimately, mortally. Not only does Nebuchadnezzar order the execution of the wise men standing before them, but he furthermore extends his orders to include all wise men of Babylon including the interns still in training, thus also including Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. As the story now involves Daniel^C and his three friends the reader's involvement and interests intensify.³⁸⁶

The role of the executioner is played by a new character who enters the story and has both a name, Arioch, and a title, captain of the royal guard.³⁸⁷ Arioch begins to fulfill the will of the king to put to death the entire lot of Babylonian wise men, and therefore his role is one displaying power and authority on a political level. At what point Arioch has come to execute Daniel^C and his three friends in relation to other wise men and

³⁸⁵ Towner, p.32.

³⁸⁶ Fewell, *Circle*, p.26.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.27.

interns is unknown. In a face to face confrontation, Daniel^C inquires into the matter using his wisdom and diplomatic tactics and consequently diverts Arioch from fulfilling his task. This diversion is enough to allow Daniel^C to approach Nebuchadnezzar in order that he may be given some time in order to meet the king's demand. Daniel^C does indeed win an audience with the king who implicitly grants Daniel^C the time to fulfill the task.

Already we can see that the diplomatic persona of Daniel^C is greater than those of the Chaldeans, who were afforded no additional grace period as they stood before the king earlier in the episode.³⁸⁸

The appeal that Daniel^C makes to Nebuchadnezzar is indicative of his confidence in his God-given abilities and more importantly, in Yhwh. Daniel^C knows himself and his skills, he furthermore knows that the source of his skills is found in Yhwh. This is a partial contrast to the other wise men who could not perform the task demanded by Nebuchadnezzar. On one hand, the Chaldeans did in fact accurately understand themselves to be incapable of accomplishing the required feat; on the other hand, their belief that there is no such bridge that exists between the material world of mortals and the spirit world of deities is a display of their ignorance. In other words, the wise men are not faulted for understanding the limitations of their own abilities, indeed this is a healthy condition; they are rather faulted for not understanding the limitlessness of Yhwh who does involve himself in human affairs. In essence, knowing one's identity and talents is not sufficient, the theological hermeneut must know his/her identity and talents in relation to Yhwh the Almighty.

³⁸⁸ Porteous, p.40.

Daniel's Plea – 2.17-23

Up to this point Daniel^C does not know the dream-text, but he does know the source behind the text, that is, Yhwh the Ultratext. Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah make their plea to Yhwh the source of the dream-text. Daniel^C's strong sense of self-preservation is the driving force behind his request to the king for time to solve the mystery, and now it also compels him to implore Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to join him in pleading for mercy from Yhwh that they might not die with the other wise men of Babylon. In this theory of knowing that Yhwh holds the solution to the mystery and practice of beseeching him for revelation, we find the key to Daniel^C's success. Daniel^C too knows his limitations as well as his abilities, but he also knows to access the Ultratext that holds all wisdom and power and all solutions to mysteries.

Furthermore, we also have to notice that the search for the dream-text and the Ultratext behind it is sought for in a communal setting. Phillips and Fewell in making several observations about reading state that “the ability to discern moments of crisis and read responsibly in such settings is more likely to happen in a community with others than alone. Reading arises first and foremost in relation to some other or others.”³⁸⁹ Though this scenario will not always be the case throughout the narrative, it should certainly not be overlooked at this juncture since with it serious implications for the readerly pistic community lie. Phillips and Fewell also advocate that we must read as if our life depends upon it;³⁹⁰ in no uncertain terms this is precisely the predicament in which we find Daniel^C, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. If they do not apprehend the text or if they improperly read the text their lives may literally be at stake. Though the

³⁸⁹ Gary Phillips and Danna Nolan Fewell, “Ethics, Bible, Reading as if” in *Semeia* 77 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) p.2.

³⁹⁰ *ibid.* p.3.

experience of these four Jewish exiles may not be precisely mirrored in the life of the readerly community, still the admonition to read as if one's life depends upon it is exemplified by these four youths.

The plea of Daniel^C and his three companions is honored by Yhwh who reveals the solution to the mystery in a vision Daniel^C has during the night. Once again we see the leadership Daniel^C exercises in his relationship with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; though all four seek mercy from Yhwh, Daniel^C is the one who initiates the plea and is the one who consequently receives the solution to the mystery in a vision.

The pace of the narrative slows as we are shown the prayer of praise and thanksgiving by Daniel^C to Yhwh. Considering the urgency of the situation, we might expect that Daniel^C and friends would rush off to relay the demanded material to the king. However, Daniel^C pauses to give credit to Yhwh in a prayer that reveals more about the theological hermeneutical circle so predominant in Daniel^B. The name of *elohim* is blessed for ever and ever; reference to the 'name' conjures up association to the revelatory character of Yhwh—or *HaShem*, the Name—who chooses those to whom he reveals his name and what may be known of him, just as he chooses in this case to reveal to Daniel^C the mystery of the dream.³⁹¹ Wisdom and power belong to God, and therefore they are his to distribute to whomever he wishes. Furthermore, the wisdom and might of Yhwh trumps the oppressive power of Nebuchadnezzar and his apparent control over life and death. The mention of Yhwh's practice of changing times and seasons and setting up and deposing kings is indicative of his ultimate wisdom and power. Daniel^C further praises God for giving wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning; these are motifs that have already been introduced in the first chapter: 1) the emphasis on the

³⁹¹ Baldwin, p.90; Ex. 6.3, Jdg. 13.17,18.

giving nature of God;³⁹² 2) granting gifts to those who are devoted to Yhwh; and, 3) additional giftedness is bestowed on those proven to be capable of the responsibility that accompanies the additional talents.³⁹³

The contrasts between revelation and the deeply hidden things, and knowing things in the dark while light dwells with him are reflexive and circular. Whatever is hidden from man is not hidden from God, and if man is to come to know the hidden things, it must be Yhwh who reveals them. God's knowledge, unlike man's, is not acquired from outside himself; we may also say that man's knowledge is in the dark and only grows from illumination, whereas in God there is nothing but light and knowledge. God is the knower and he is that which is to be known.³⁹⁴ Man acquires knowledge from illumination that comes only from the light of Yhwh. Additionally, we must note that the mystery dream-text comes to Nebuchadnezzar at night in the dark, furthermore the solution to the mystery comes to Daniel^C at night in the dark, thus attesting to the ability of God's light of illuminating revelation to pierce the darkness of ignorance.

A narrational shift from speaking about Yhwh in the third-person to addressing praise directly to God in the first-person at verse 23 should not be overlooked. Again, a theological hermeneutical circle is displayed: knowing about God compels us to know God; knowing God sparks our interest to know more about God. Hermeneutics is not a neutral endeavor, it is unabashedly personal. Daniel^C speaks personally to Yhwh and acknowledges that Yhwh personally knows Daniel^C and reveals mysteries to him in his good will. The display of Daniel^C's healthy and theological self-awareness stands in stark

³⁹² Baldwin, p.90; Fewell, *Circle*, p.22.

³⁹³ Goldwurm, pp.94-95; see also our previous discussion on the hermeneutical circle revolving around natural and supernatural gifts.

³⁹⁴ Goldwurm, pp.95-96.

contrast to Nebuchadnezzar's lack thereof. Furthermore, as Daniel^C makes the prayer personal, he thanks the God of his fathers. In this case we can reflect on our previous discussion on narrative theology; Daniel^C is making a connection with the past Yahwistic community and stands as the continuation of a long rich tradition. A 'good' hermeneut is always aware of his place in the historical continuum and understands that part of the hermeneutical job description is to bridge the gaps left open by temporality. This carries implications for the hope of the reader when seen in the light of the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The next three statements work to narrow the scope of the prayer as Daniel^C moves from general praise to more specific thanksgiving.³⁹⁵ Firstly, he acknowledges Yhwh for giving him wisdom and power, then moves to thank God for giving him what was asked for, which is then more specified as making known the dream of the king. In a hermeneutical fashion, Daniel^C paradigmatically moves from universal truths about God to case-specific assertions concerning his miraculous revelation.

Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar Interact – 2.24-30

Daniel^C approaches Arioch either to cease or prevent him from carrying out his executions of the Babylonian wise men by asking him to present him to Nebuchadnezzar that he may interpret the king's dream to him. Arioch's words to the king are noteworthy: "I have found a man among the exiles..."; thus taking credit for something in which he has had no participation. Though the role played by Arioch is small and essentially functional, it is set in a context that has much to say about the interrelationship between identity and interpretation. Whatever his motivations may be to take credit for Daniel^C's

³⁹⁵ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.57.

revelation, he misrepresents his own role, and therefore his own identity. No further attention is given to Arioch and he altogether fades from the remainder of the narrative.

Nebuchadnezzar's attention is immediately directed toward Daniel^C as he asks Daniel^C if he is truly able to reveal the dream and its interpretation. Daniel^C's response to this pivotal question works to establish the true identities of several persons or groups. Unlike Arioch, Daniel^C is not overly anxious to seek credit by identifying himself as the bearer of the solution to the mystery; rather he reserves mention of himself to last in a series which identifies the role and participation of others. Firstly, he verifies the Babylonian wise men's claim of inability; indeed no wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can perform the task requested by the king. Secondly, he follows the previous statement about the wise men with an affirmation concerning the revelatory nature of the true God of heaven. Thirdly, he identifies Nebuchadnezzar as a receptor of God's special revelation of the things that will come to pass in the future. Fourthly, he identifies himself as one who receives this revelation from Yhwh, not because of his special talent, but rather so that Nebuchadnezzar may know the interpretation and understand the things in his mind. Before he begins to reveal the dream and its interpretation to the anxious king, he takes the time to establish correctly the respective roles of all those involved.

Daniel Reveals and Interprets the Dream-Text – 2.31-45

As Daniel^C reveals the contents of the dream and moves into interpretive mode without any interruption from Nebuchadnezzar, we may assume that Nebuchadnezzar believes that Daniel^C has truly captured the sense of the dream. At last Daniel^C reveals to Nebuchadnezzar the identity by which Yhwh, the Narrator and reader have known him since the opening statement in the first chapter. With a little initial embellishment by

stating that Nebuchadnezzar is king of kings, Daniel^C reveals that Nebuchadnezzar has been given his dominion, power, might and glory from Yhwh. God has placed mankind and all living creature under his control, and Nebuchadnezzar is indeed the head of gold seen in his dream. Again there is no interruption to the humbling news that his power is given by the God whom he supposedly defeated, or to the prideful aspect that he is the head of gold.

This makes for interesting implications regarding the identity of Nebuchadnezzar and his own self-awareness. The dream-text is at least partially about Nebuchadnezzar and is given directly to Nebuchadnezzar, yet in it he does not even recognize himself when he 'sees' it. The king is unaware of himself and his identity, perhaps because he does not know himself in relation to the dream-text giver. Gadamer claims, "Self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self";³⁹⁶ in this case, the other is Yhwh whom Nebuchadnezzar fails to understand, which directly affects his hermeneutical ability.

The remainder of the statue is interpreted by Daniel^C as historically-bound earthly kingdoms that will arise after Nebuchadnezzar, and implicitly Babylon, passes away. Suddenly implications arise with regard to the identity of Israel. With Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem and the end of an autonomous Judah, the political Judah is absorbed into secular history;³⁹⁷ the line of demarcation between sacred and profane histories has faded. The outcome of human history, which includes Judah, is interpreted by the fate of the statue. Furthermore, as Jean Steinmann points out, all human empires are brought together in a single symbolic empire, and in order to add emphasis to this

³⁹⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.97.

³⁹⁷ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.57.

notion, the symbol of this unity is the form of a man.³⁹⁸ Ultimately, the structure proves itself not only to have characteristics of brutality but to have also a fragile existence as displayed by the clay and iron mixture in the feet, all of which speaks of the fragility of human existence. We must note that when it falls the entire statue crumbles into pieces; not just the fragile feet are affected by the supernaturally honed rock, every part of the statue is 'fatally' damaged.

The kingdom that brings an end to the conglomeration of human kingdoms is unique from those represented by the constituent parts of the statue on three specific accounts: 1) the new kingdom is established by God without human involvement; 2) it belongs to Yhwh; and, 3) it will never have an end. In this kingdom a new identity is created and hope is revived. In other words, Yahwists no longer need to put their hope in a resuscitated national or political Judah; their hope is found in their identities as Yahwists rather than Judeans. Judah has been consummated into human history, never to accomplish freedom from its association with human world history. As true people of God, Yahwists will see once again a kingdom built upon righteousness that will last forever. As Goldingay points out, they can live and anticipate the eternal kingdom which, by offering a new hope for the future, brings to them a renewed hope for the present.³⁹⁹

On a final note to the king, Daniel^c boldly asserts his confidence in Yhwh as the source of knowledge and as revelator of mysteries, and therefore in himself as hermeneut, who has faithfully interpreted the text. In his own words Daniel^c states, "The great God has shown the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is reliable." Hence, the wise men's earlier misconceptions of the

³⁹⁸ Jean Steinmann, *Daniel* (Paris: Bruges, 1961), p.49.

³⁹⁹ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.61.

transcendent roles of gods and of men who cannot know the things of the gods are seriously corrected.

Nebuchadnezzar's Acknowledgments – 2.46-49

The awe-struck king falls prostrate before Daniel^c, pays him honor, and orders that offering and incense be presented to him. Nebuchadnezzar is quick to reaffirm the power and wisdom of Yhwh, just as Daniel^c does in his earlier prayer of praise and thanksgiving. More specifically, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the deed of revealing the mystery of the dream. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges Yhwh as the revealer of mysteries and honors Daniel^c as the hermeneut that bridges the gap between mortal man and immortal deity, but he never comes to a better understanding of his own identity as a result from this entire experience. This is evidenced by the events that transpire in the following chapter. Yet, despite his lingering lack of self-perception, Nebuchadnezzar's acknowledgment of Yhwh in this episode takes him one step closer in the right direction to his ultimate conversion to Yhwh.

As we have discussed the hermeneutical circle with regard to the gifts that one possesses and how that can lead to the acquisition of greater abilities, which are then used to acquire more talents, and so forth; here Daniel^c is promoted to governor over the province of Babylon and is in charge of the other wise men. Essentially the promotion and gifts from Nebuchadnezzar is a political parallel to the bestowal of gifts by Yhwh upon Daniel^c. The reflexive relationship between Daniel^c and his companions is displayed as he requests promotions for them as well since they participated in the communal plea to Yhwh for the revelation of the mysterious dream-text.

Daniel 3 – The Exit Exam for the Unbending Boys

Though Daniel^c has been the central focus in the narrative thus far, he is mysteriously absent during this episode. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah take center stage as they stand up for their integrity and their devotion to Yhwh. Essentially, we have two objectives in our study of this chapter: 1) the material that is set before us in the form we find it; and, 2) what is implied by what is not set before us, or in other words, what the absence of Daniel^c means. Both of which have distinct ideological implications that contribute to our ongoing discussion of hermeneutics in Daniel^B.

Erecting Nebuchadnezzar's Ego – 3.1-7

Two distinct factors work to establish congruity between this story and the former episode concerning the dream of the statue; and again, one is mentioned and one goes unmentioned. The large ninety by nine foot golden image that is erected creates a link with the enormous dream-statue with a golden head of the previous chapter. Additionally, the Narrator does not cite a new time in which this story takes place, and therefore the reader is led to believe that this episode is connected with the previous one.⁴⁰⁰ This connection is the business left unfinished in the previous episode, that is to say, that Nebuchadnezzar still misunderstands his own identity despite the lucid interpretation of his dream that Daniel^c gives him. The reader cannot help but notice that what was so grand about the dream-statue becomes the entire composition of his erected statue; furthermore the reader can deduce that the vulnerability of the dream-statue has been corrected. Though neither Narrator nor Nebuchadnezzar informs us as to the motivation for the establishment of the statue or even what it symbolizes, the interconnectedness of

⁴⁰⁰ Fewell, *Circle*, p.38.

the two episodes invites the reader to fill in the gaps by inference.⁴⁰¹ By composing the entire image of gold and by remedying the weakness of the feet, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar is making attempts to symbolize a belief that his kingdom will not pass unto another, nor will it eventually crumble,⁴⁰² though he is explicitly made aware by the interpretation of his dream that his kingdom is inescapably temporal.⁴⁰³

We will notice several accounts of repetition in this chapter, which begin with a list of politically involved figures who are summonsed to attend the dedication of the statue. Immediately following this list, the Narrator tells the reader those in attendance are precisely those who are called. As Fewell rightly observes, “Thus, through repetition, the narrator pictures a setting in which conformity is normative, disobedience is unthinkable.”⁴⁰⁴ Yet we soon learn that this dedication is not solely for the political heads, rather the assembly is an occasion at which a proclamation is made to all peoples, nations, and men of every language. The proclamation consists of the demand that all people must fall down and worship the golden image when they hear the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music. Failure to comply will result in incineration of the nonconformists. Then immediately following the proclamation of the edict, the edict is enacted by the sound of horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, and all kinds of music⁴⁰⁵ and the people in accordance with the proclamation fall down and worship the image. To follow the edict is synonymous with the act of swearing allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar whole-heartedly and without reservation.⁴⁰⁶ With the establishment of

⁴⁰¹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰² Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1954), pp.29-30; Baldwin, p.99.

⁴⁰³ Goldwurm, p.112.

⁴⁰⁴ Fewell, *Circle*, p.39.

⁴⁰⁵ Only the pipes are mysteriously dropped off the list.

⁴⁰⁶ Fewell, *Circle*, p.40.

the statue, Nebuchadnezzar has presented the text to be interpreted in the ensuing narrative.

Thus far every significant piece and player of the story receives repetition: the image that Nebuchadnezzar sets up (no less than five times), the list of political figure heads, the assembling of the figure heads around the image, the list of musical instruments, the list of the general populace, and the edict and action of falling down and worshipping the image. Only one critical piece of information stands out as not receiving repetition, the punishment for any nonconformists who are to be thrown into the blazing fire. Thus, the lack of repetition for this particular item causes the reader to anticipate its return in the unfolding narrative.

A Tale of Tattling – 3.8-12

Though we are told of the statue, the command to worship it, and the obedience to do so by the general populace, we are not told of any exceptions to the rule until some Chaldeans reveal to Nebuchadnezzar—and the reader—that there are indeed some nonconformists. They begin their speech with the customary pomp and circumstance, “O King, live forever!” Yet, the reader cannot help but to judge these seemingly innocent words against what the reader already knows. Firstly, the last time we encountered this phrase was from the mouths of the wise men of chapter 2 who utterly failed to deliver to Nebuchadnezzar what is demanded of them. By association the reader has no positive expectations from the words that will follow. Secondly, according to the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, their proclamation smacks of severe irony on one hand, and complete compliance to Nebuchadnezzar’s misconceptions of the eternity of his kingdom on the other hand. In any case, despite their motivation in their address to the

king, one thing is clear: they have no convictions about or similar ascriptions to Yhwh as the universal king.

The details of the edict are once again repeated including the list of musical instruments, the response of bowing down to worship the golden image, and for the first time, the punishment is also repeated. The Chaldeans identify the nonconformists nationally as Jews, politically as ones whom Nebuchadnezzar set over affairs in Babylon, personally by the use of their Babylonian names, and finally, and perhaps most importantly, theologically as ones who neither serve Babylonian gods nor the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar (sixth mention of this item). Suddenly, we must realize that the image is not purely a political ploy, it involves the religious dimension. The image is the material text, but there is a text behind the text that must receive attention.

Before we proceed to discuss the face to face confrontation between Nebuchadnezzar and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, we need to pause and consider the interpretive roles being played out by these Chaldeans. Firstly, the Chaldeans and other wise men of chapter 2 struggle to believe that what Nebuchadnezzar has absurdly requested from his council is his actual and literal demand. In chapter 3 the wise men are eager to accept and interpret the words of Nebuchadnezzar literally when it seems advantageous to them. There is no miscommunication between the words of Nebuchadnezzar and the understanding of the Chaldeans. They are able to repeat accurately back to Nebuchadnezzar his precise instructions regarding the music and the act of bowing down to the golden image. Secondly, the motivation for their tattling seems to be politically prompted and performed out of a sense of jealousy. Unlike the wise men of chapter 2 whose motivations are simply self-preservation, these Chaldeans are by no

means threatened mortally; they are only threatened politically by the advancements of these three Jews. Notice also how they accentuate the fact that the positions held by Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are appointments given to them by Nebuchadnezzar himself, thus insinuatingly suggesting that the insult delivered by the three Jews is nothing short of a personal attack. In this case their malicious intent seems to be on a horizontal level rather than on a vertical one. They are not faulted for being found against Yhwh but rather for being ignorant of Yhwh and against the servants of Yhwh.

The Last Chance and the Final Refusal – 3.13-18

The infuriated Nebuchadnezzar summons Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah before him to confirm the report of the Chaldeans. Nebuchadnezzar confirms the connection drawn between the service to his gods and bowing down to the image he has set up (the seventh mention of this act). The question has a texture of being rhetorical since he does not pause to wait for an answer, rather he once again reiterates the instructions so there can be no confusion. In his instructions he repeats the list of the instruments that will play, their appropriate action to bow down and worship it, and for the eighth time, states that it is the image that he has ‘made’ (a slight variation from ‘set up’). If they will comply with the edict, then all is fine and their past incompliance will be overlooked; if they do not concede then they will be thrown into the fiery furnace as it has been stated in the proclamation.

As of yet we have heard nothing from Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Yet in the last rhetorical statement to the three Jews, Nebuchadnezzar intuitively knows or somehow becomes aware that their objection is founded in their religious devotion.⁴⁰⁷ He asks, “what god will be able to rescue you then?!” believing that no such god can rescue

⁴⁰⁷ Goldwurm, p.122.

them from his hands. In this respect Nebuchadnezzar seeks to put himself above any deity; the fear of Nebuchadnezzar should outweigh the fear they might have in any god. This last statement of Nebuchadnezzar works to bring a final confirmation to the notion that their apparent civil disobedience is really a case of theological resistance to paganism. The three Jews interpret the worship of the image-text as a violation against their worship of Yhwh, the Ultratext by which they reach these conclusions.

The actual presence and verbal participation of the three Judean captives are found in the few words uttered in 3.16-18, a relatively minuscule part of the storyline that shapes and determines the entire chapter.⁴⁰⁸ The defiance to the command to bow is not really the conflict itself, it is only the foreshadow of the conflict. The real conflict comes when the three youth stand before the king and boldly and verbally respond to his threats. Their short but powerful words break the verbal norm of this episode, for they do not answer with the extensive repetition so common in this chapter.⁴⁰⁹ Therefore they stand in relief to the other characters both verbally and theologically. However, we must point out that they too reiterate the fact that Nebuchadnezzar is the one responsible for setting up the golden image, and thus turn that which was an object of pride into an object of shame.

In Nebuchadnezzar's speech to the three youths, he essentially asks two distinct—though likely rhetorical—questions. The first is, “Is it true that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?” and the second is, “Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?!” Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah refuse to accept as rhetorical the questions of Nebuchadnezzar and take the questions as an opportunity to

⁴⁰⁸ Their retort is three sentences consisting of only 41 words in Aramaic. BHS, Daniel 3.16b-18.

⁴⁰⁹ Fewell, *Circle*, p.48.

answer boldly.⁴¹⁰ Yet, we must understand that Nebuchadnezzar is offering them a chance to correct what he believes to be poor judgments, but they refuse to justify their actions politically; their answers are theologically unrelenting. The order in which they answer these questions are the reverse of the order in which Nebuchadnezzar poses them. To the latter question in which Nebuchadnezzar clearly suggests that no such god exists, they respond, "If our god, whom we honor, exists, then he will rescue us from your power."⁴¹¹ And to the earlier question in which Nebuchadnezzar is flabbergasted by their gall to defy a royal edict, they respond, "Even if he should not, be assured that we are not going to honor your gods or bow down to the gold statue which you have set up." By the force of the second statement, they do not question the existence of Yhwh, but rather they intend to answer fully all questions from Nebuchadnezzar, and at the same time, understand that Yhwh moves as he sees fit, and chances of their rescue are not guaranteed.

Clearly on one hand, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah have complete devotion to Yhwh and likewise have utter confidence in him; yet on the other hand, they fully understand the risky nature of their interpretation as they potentially have everything to lose. When weighed in the balance, they choose to retain their integrity in Yhwh. These three Jewish boys become the paradigms by which the Talmud states, "One should submit to martyrdom rather than transgress."⁴¹² In this case and to an acute degree we can witness the theory and the praxis of interpretation. How they interpret the command to worship the image and the theological assertions they make about Yhwh are theoretical, but when they put their lives on the line they turn their theory into praxis. Furthermore,

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.49.

⁴¹¹ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.64,66.

⁴¹² *Sanhedrin*, 74a.

the conviction concerning their interpretation is resolute and strong as evidenced, paradoxically, by the pithiness of their assertions, and thus contrasting with the highly repetitious nature of the actions and words of the other characters in this chapter. In this case, the 'good' hermeneut is the one with few but highly potent words; or in the American tradition we might quote Theodore Roosevelt who said, "Talk softly and carry a big stick."

Sights that are Amazing in the Fires Blazing – 3.19-27

At the conclusion of the verbal justification for the three boys' act of insubordination, the attitude of Nebuchadnezzar makes a turn for the worse and he determines in his mind that there will be no escaping execution for these three boys. Nebuchadnezzar continues to struggle with the issue of self-understanding as he interprets their apparently-assumed religious defiance as a personal attack against himself (as god?).⁴¹³ As the furnace is heated up symbolically seven times hotter in order to consume utterly these insubordinate Jews, the strongest soldiers are commanded to throw these three into the blazing fire, and in the process the soldiers whose responsibilities were to cast them in were burned by the all-consuming heat. Perhaps the reader anticipates that these three boys should be miraculously rescued from the fire, but they are not. The fire is so intense that even those who are not directly in the fire are burned by its heat; what hope is there for those who are in the fire? We can recall the words of Nebuchadnezzar, "then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" In fact, not even Nebuchadnezzar can rescue his own soldiers from his own hand.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³ cf. Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.74.

⁴¹⁴ Fewell, *Circle*, p.53.

The reader is denied the access to follow the three into the fire; instead the reader follows the three Jewish boys by means of Nebuchadnezzar's commentary. From the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar alone, the reader comes to know that the three bound boys are loose and walking about and that they are accompanied by a fourth figure.⁴¹⁵ Whether anyone else sees the things that Nebuchadnezzar sees, the reader does not know, but the report from Nebuchadnezzar is considered trustworthy in this scenario since he has so much to lose in terms of his personal pride and ego. What we are essentially left with is a type of reader-response paradigm in which the text becomes the condition of the three Jews, the position of the implied reader is fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar and the role of the critic is played out by the 'real' implied reader. A miracle occurs, not that we are told so by the Narrator, but we come to know this because we see the astonishment of Nebuchadnezzar, and we hear his words saying that he sees the three boys with a fourth man, like the son of the gods, walking about unharmed and unbound. At last Nebuchadnezzar identifies them as servants of their god and calls them out from the fire; meanwhile, the reader waits to see the results for him/herself.

The trustworthiness of Nebuchadnezzar's report is confirmed when he calls the three boys out from the fire. Indeed they are unharmed; in fact, their full array of clothes (as thoroughly listed in v.21) does not smell of smoke and their hairs are not singed. Furthermore, what Nebuchadnezzar saw as a 'son of the gods' is also confirmed to be the justification of their good welfare. Nebuchadnezzar's sight of the fourth figure also carries its implications; for as many rabbis believe, angels are spiritual and can only be seen by those chosen to do so.⁴¹⁶ Certainly Nebuchadnezzar does not merit the vision of

⁴¹⁵ Porteous, p.60; Lacocque, p.66.

⁴¹⁶ Rabbi Ramban, in Goldwurm, pp.128-29.

the angelic being, but is chosen nevertheless to do so in order to serve an ultimate purpose. And this purpose gains an ironic overtone: “the assembly is called for one purpose, but an entirely different purpose is served.”⁴¹⁷ In addition, Nebuchadnezzar comes to a point in verse 28 when he redefines his previous term ‘one like the sons of the gods’ to be re-qualified as ‘an angel’ who is sent by the God of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to rescue them. In this sense, Nebuchadnezzar more clearly demonstrates his keen perceptiveness of the hermeneutical role that is played by this fourth figure-hermeneut.

The identity of the fourth man in the fire deserves some attention. Firstly, we cannot help but to entertain briefly the fanciful idea that in this episode in which Daniel^c is mysteriously absent, that the figure in the fire is Daniel^c. After all, elsewhere in the narrative we encounter such a premonition; 4.8,9,18, and 5.14 all attest to the connection between Daniel^c and ‘one in whom the spirits of the gods dwell.’⁴¹⁸ However mystically attractive this notion may be, it seems to lack substance and support, especially in light of the latter half of the narrative at which time the overtly mortal Daniel^c comes face to face with certain angelic entities. While the identity of Daniel^c as the fourth figure in the fire seems highly unlikely, the symbolic role played by Daniel^c as hermeneut is worthy of our musing. The identity of this fourth figure is far less important than the role played by the fourth figure in the fire. The position of this fourth figure is that of hermeneut, one who bridges the gap between the human and divine, between mortal and deity. This angelic messenger and protector in this episode is a foreshadow of the heavy angelic involvement in the latter half of the narrative. Kaufmann catches the cyclical aspect of angels as those

⁴¹⁷ Fewell, *Circle*, p.55.

⁴¹⁸ Lacocque, p.66; though he lists the vv. as 4.5,6,15; 5.12; 6.3.

who reveal at the same time they conceal and stand as both a barrier and a bridge between God and man.⁴¹⁹

Nebuchadnezzar's Decree of Reverence – 3.28-30

Nebuchadnezzar recounts the story in brief and concise phraseology, unlike what we might have expected from him earlier in the episode. To his credit he now sees the insubordination of the three Jews against the king in order to avoid the worship of a false god as admirable. What is implicit from the initial confrontation between Nebuchadnezzar and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah now becomes explicit as we now ascertain that their act of nonconformity is emphatically a theological and religious issue. The king who thought that no god could save them from the power is the one who perceives Yhwh's intervention.⁴²⁰ Nebuchadnezzar thus far has struggled with his self-understanding and identity, and though his struggle is far from over, he has made no uncertain progress toward a more ideal perception. Whether we can view it positively or negatively, Nebuchadnezzar sees fit to make a decree banning any slander against the god of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; failure to comply results in dismemberment and demolition of home. For now the struggle is still reticent; after all of this he still believes himself to be in control of life and death, and in godlike fashion decides the destinies of his subjects.⁴²¹

As for the reader, deliverance comes for Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, but this is not the point entirely. Firstly, though the three Jewish exiles demonstrate their faith in Yhwh that he will deliver them, they grapple with the possibility that he will not. The possibility that Yhwh will not rescue them does not deter them from sticking to their

⁴¹⁹ Y. Kaufmann, *History of the Israelite Faith*, vol.II (Tel Aviv, 1952) pp.442-32, from Lacocque, p.67.

⁴²⁰ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.74.

⁴²¹ Fewell, *Circle*, p.58.

theological convictions. To take things a step further, they are delivered but not *from* the fire but *in* the fire.⁴²² This reiterates the risk that is inherently involved in the business of hermeneutics, that is to say, both the theory and praxis of interpretation. It is one thing to theorize about an issue, it is quite another to put one's very life on the line for its practice. Both must be in place. Not only do they theorize about their deliverance, they unhesitatingly accept the consequence that affords the opportunity for deliverance. In addition, a great deal of wisdom and interpretation is also required to know when such a time is appropriate to take such high risks; indeed, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah found such a time to take the ultimate risk.

As our episode concludes, we come to learn that like chapters past, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are promoted in the province of Babylon. Disobedience to Nebuchadnezzar and commitment to Yhwh eventually brings political prosperity to the three nonconformists. Once again, this is a political indicator to the aspirations of spiritual prosperity that are occurring in a theological hermeneutical circle. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah reach a point in this literary hermeneutical circle where their services to the narrative are no longer required. They have served their purposes well as we will soon notice, and they graduate with honors from the Danielic school of hermeneutics.

Reasoning the Absence of Daniel in Chapter 3

As 'independent' characters apart from the roles they play as Daniel^C's understudies, the making or breaking of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah comes in their solo appearance in chapter 3. Naturally the question that comes to the reader's mind is, "Where is Daniel^C?" The Narrator does not even remotely hint at his whereabouts. This

⁴²² Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.74.

story is effective in several ways despite—or perhaps, as I suggest, due to—the absence of Daniel^C. Firstly, the Narrator challenges the reader to fill in the gaps left by Daniel^C's absence; in essence, to make an interpretation of his/her own. Already knowing that Daniel^C would not even defile himself with the king's food, the reader can then also conclude that he would surely not defile himself by worshipping a fabricated image. The reader is forced to put his trust in Daniel^C, even when the Narrator has not explicated Daniel^C's own personal actions in this episode. The reader must make sense of the situation for him/herself. Some Danielic commentators go so far as to guess Daniel^C's location, and by doing so they are doing readerly activities, not expositions. They too feel the need to justify the whereabouts of Daniel^C, thus doing what the Narrator has led them to do, make some kind of excuse to explain why Daniel^C is not among the bowers. For instance, Keil boldly states, “he also would certainly not have done homage to the image” and says that Daniel^C was either prevented from being present or he was present, did not bow but no one informed against him as they had against Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.⁴²³ Leon Wood suggests that Daniel^C could have been away on business for the king or been ill,⁴²⁴ and Walvoord concurs that he is apparently away.⁴²⁵ These comments surely suggest the achievement of the Narrator in his plight. The goal of the Narrator is to introduce the reader to Daniel^C and to create in him/her a deep sense of admiration for Daniel^C as a character; these preceding examples stand as evidence that Narrator is successful in his attempts.⁴²⁶

⁴²³ Keil, pp.116-117.

⁴²⁴ Leon Wood, p.78.

⁴²⁵ Walvoord, p.80.

⁴²⁶ Many Danielic commentators claim that due to the odd absence of Daniel^C at this particular point in the narrative, this story has a different origin of tradition, but has been imported from another exilic source to serve a useful purpose in the Danielic corpus, but these concerns are beyond our current scope. Heaton, p. 140; Collins, p.42; Porteous, p.55; Lacocque, p.58; Russell, p.59.

The absence of Daniel^c in this episode provides a prime opportunity to prove the integrity of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah apart from their mentor. Thus far, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah have been there all along as Daniel^c takes steps to avoid defilement, and while he seeks Yhwh in order to receive the content and interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. However, it really is Daniel^c who makes the resolution against defilement and suggests the alternative diet; Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are more passive participants in Daniel^c's overall scheme. Additionally, Daniel^c is the one who approaches Arioch in order to save their lives from execution. Daniel^c pleads with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to pray that they may receive the solution to the mystery of the king's dream, but it is Daniel^c who actually receives the content and interpretation, and who ultimately stands before the king. In other words, thus far in the narrative Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are 'good' primarily because of their tight association with Daniel^c. Now, with Daniel^c out of the scene, the three understudies of Daniel^c are put to the test. They prove themselves to be good disciples of Daniel^c and fully successful in the eyes of the reader, and thus they exit the scene as graduates in Daniel^c's school of hermeneutics.

The success experienced by Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah as students of Daniel^c leads to the final point of effectiveness in this chapter in which the presence of Daniel^c is lacking. Because Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah have been in the understudy roles in the previous episodes, and because Daniel^c has been the active leader of the three understudies thus far, the success of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah in chapter 3 points directly to the skill and mastery Daniel^c possesses as a master-teacher. Though Daniel^c is absent, the Narrator's promotion of Daniel^c continues to extend further by implying his

ability as a teacher and leader. In effect, Daniel^c is not absent; the success of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah as interpreters of integrity becomes the success of Daniel^c as a mentor of integrity. In short, only through the absence of Daniel^c is he proven to be a highly successful mentor-teacher. This point cannot be understated and is a necessary requisite to the transition that occurs in chapter 7 when the Narrator turns the teaching of the reader over to the hands of Daniel^c himself. This chapter subtly stands as a proof-text that the reader can succeed as interpreter under the tutelage of Daniel^c.

Daniel 4 – Nebuchadnezzar’s Conversion to Yhwh

Chapter 4 is the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion to Yhwh as partly told by Nebuchadnezzar himself. Before we proceed to read this episode closely and examine it for hermeneutical implications, a few things concerning this chapter necessitate a quick review: the ongoing plight of Nebuchadnezzar in terms of his self-identity,⁴²⁷ its narrational characteristics,⁴²⁸ and the placement of this chapter in the larger chiasmic structure of chapters 2-7.⁴²⁹

We have already noted in our observation of previous chapters in Daniel^B that Nebuchadnezzar struggles with his own identity. We have also noticed that a healthy self-awareness is exemplified by Daniel^c who is fully cognizant of his own skills and abilities, who sees himself only in relation to Yhwh whom he serves, and uses his gifts and talents to bring glory to Yhwh, who in return then further blesses him with special gifts and abilities, which then are utilized to bring all the more glory back to Yhwh. This is not the case with Nebuchadnezzar who firstly fails to see that he too is an unbeknownst servant of Yhwh. Nebuchadnezzar is given a dream implicitly by Yhwh concerning himself and a

⁴²⁷ See earlier treatments in this chapter.

⁴²⁸ See Chapter 3.

⁴²⁹ See Chapter 3.

dispensational and political progression, but he is unable to come to grips with its meaning and application to himself, though in the end he makes attempts to honor the God who made known the mystery. As a demonstration of his misunderstanding of his identity in his dream, Nebuchadnezzar constructs a golden image signaling that he is not only the greatest, but the only political sovereign, and one after whom none will follow in his great kingdom. When Daniel^c's three friends defy him and are rescued from his hand, he comes to understand that there is a deity who is more powerful than him and does indeed have relationships with mortals. Though twice Nebuchadnezzar makes attempts to show Yhwh a degree of honor and reverence,⁴³⁰ he has yet to make any connection between his own identity and the person of Yhwh, but this will all change in this episode.

As we have already noted, Nebuchadnezzar is partly the narrator of his expressly written story. The reader is aware of the 'written' status of Nebuchadnezzar's narration on two accounts: 1) the epistolary format and texture; and, 2) because the Narrator has already revealed to the reader the temporal scope of the narrative that extends from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus, thus revealing that this is a dead man's letter, not a living man's telling. Yet Nebuchadnezzar is not solely responsible for the entire narration of this episode; the Narrator also fills in the gaps, especially during the period of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity. We have also noted that the narrator of verses 19-27 is indistinguishable, thus attesting to the notion that Nebuchadnezzar and Narrator are

⁴³⁰ "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this secret," Dan 2.47; "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their house be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way," Dan 3.28-29.

indeed in full agreement with one another, thus further confirming the genuineness of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion, at least by the Narrator.

The third thing that we must keep in mind as we read through this chapter is that it is positioned as one of two middle episodes in a larger chiasmic structure comprised of chapters 2-7. Chapters 2 and 7 spell out that four earthly kingdoms will rise and fall but will be followed by an eternal kingdom of God; chapters 3 and 6 are stories of miraculous rescues for those who are more concerned with righteousness than with life itself; chapters 4 and 5 display the pride of earthly kings and show the judgments of Yhwh upon them. In these two central chapters of the chiasm, though the themes are similar, the outcomes for these haughty kings are radically different.

Nebuchadnezzar's Opening Doxology – 4.1-3⁴³¹

From the Hebrew canon the miraculous rescue of the three Jews is what appears to be the factor that compels Nebuchadnezzar to give God praise. Though according to Hersh Goldwurm a consensus of Jewish commentators also find that Nebuchadnezzar's first doxology more properly fits the context of chapter 4,⁴³² we cannot too hastily dismiss the connection the following story of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion has with his witness of the miraculous rescue from the fiery furnace. Further evidence of the connection between the two episodes is found in the specific addressee; the command forbidding slander against the God of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and Nebuchadnezzar's own story are both addressed to all people of all languages.

⁴³¹ The numbering of the verses in this chapter of the Christian Bible, which we follow in this treatise, differs from the Hebrew Bible, which incorporates vv.1-3 into chapter 3. as vv.31-33.

⁴³² Goldwurm cites as examples of consensus: Ralbag, Ibn Yachya, Abarbanel, Metzudos, Malbim, R' Yeshaya; p.133.

Nebuchadnezzar's doxology and address are directed to all people and nations of every language of the world; there are none, at least according to Nebuchadnezzar, who should not heed the words of his story. His power and influence are still mighty enough to demand such loyalties in his readership; and indeed such an assumedly widespread audience is inclusive of both implied and actual readers alike. Nebuchadnezzar has something to say about the Most High God who performed great and mighty signs and wonders for him, and whose kingdom and dominion are without end.

These words may be initially shocking to the reader who understandingly has some reservations about embracing his sentiments as genuine for several reasons. Firstly, although these statements are accurate as the reader already knows and may even be sincere, they cannot be fully regarded as signs of conversion or of submission to God. All the statements may indicate is that Nebuchadnezzar has a respect for the God of the young Hebrew men. Secondly, Nebuchadnezzar is prone to backslide. Even after Nebuchadnezzar makes these proclamations about Yhwh, he finds himself in another position where he is opposing God, and consequently the reader has a right to judge his supposed words of praise as being less than genuine.

Though the Narrator has always brought to the attention of the reader the potential theologically-mindedness of Nebuchadnezzar, here in a post-converted state, Nebuchadnezzar likewise gives the same impression. Who he is and the story he has to tell are inseparable from his relationship with Yhwh. Furthermore, as Fewell points out, his self-proclaimed purpose is to 'disclose' the miraculous signs and wonders of the Most High. The use of the word 'disclose' (לְהַקְנִיחַ) is reminiscent of the activities of Daniel^c in chapter 2 who 'discloses' the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and the interpretation or

intention of Yhwh to Nebuchadnezzar.⁴³³ For our particular purposes, Nebuchadnezzar is claiming to hold the position of mediator between the knowledge of Yhwh and the knowledge of man; Nebuchadnezzar is presenting himself as the hermeneut to his readership much like Daniel^c is viewed as hermeneut up to this point. We will see a hermeneutical paradigm shift unfold; the position of king in itself does not qualify Nebuchadnezzar to be a hermeneut between the gods and mortals like he might have supposed, submission to the one true God is the primary requisite.

Nebuchadnezzar's Recall of the Dream – 4.4-18

The connection between Nebuchadnezzar's first doxology and the material of this chapter become more clear at this point. The doxology recited in the first-person is strongly linked to the story being told in the first-person by Nebuchadnezzar; the reason for the doxology may have more to do with what is about to be revealed than with the story of the rescue of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Nebuchadnezzar reveals to the reader that he was living serenely at home in his palace and 'flourishing'—an interesting foreshadowing botanical metaphor⁴³⁴—when a frightening dream haunted him. This calls to mind the episode that takes place in chapter 2 when a similar scenario occurs, however the text has generated some competencies in the reader since that episode, namely: 1) the character of Daniel^c is well established in his abilities, which therefore reduces the tension of this episode; 2) Nebuchadnezzar has been the recipient of a divinely inspired dream already; 3) Nebuchadnezzar struggles with his own identity; 4) Nebuchadnezzar has the potential to recognize the one true God; and, 5) and most obviously, that this retelling occurs as a flashback after he has given God words of praise from his own pen.

⁴³³ Fewell, *Circle*, p.63.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.66.

The focus of this episode is clearly not the same as the previous account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In the previous dream-narrative, the ability of Daniel^c to tell the dream and its interpretation was central, but in this story, and because it is Nebuchadnezzar's story, Nebuchadnezzar is the primary focus. The dream itself does not become the mystery, it is not a hidden text, only the interpretation of it is mysterious. Thus the ability to tell and interpret the dream does not avail itself as the climactic point, rather the story must move along more quickly to get to the 'real' point. To be sure, the necessary elements for another court contest are in place, but pitting the wisdom of God against the wisdom of man in the play between Daniel^c and other wise men is not the emphasis. Instead, the wisdom of God is set against the wisdom of man as an internal conflict of Nebuchadnezzar. The former life of the arrogant king will stand in contrast to the new life of a Yahwistic devout Nebuchadnezzar. As a result of his dream, Nebuchadnezzar summons the lot of wise men (not including Daniel^c) to give the interpretation of the dream, but they find the task impossible. Daniel^c is not a necessary presence because Nebuchadnezzar, like the reader, remembers the claims of the wise men who assert that they can interpret a dream once it is given to them; after all, he is not demanding that the contents of the dream itself be revealed.⁴³⁵ The reader now doubts if those claims could have been accurate then if in the scenario that now matches their requests they cannot perform. Their overconfidence in their own abilities has clearly been overstated.

According to Moshe Alshich and followed by Goldwurm, the wise men did indeed come up with interpretations, but Nebuchadnezzar sensed that theirs were not the

⁴³⁵ Goldwurm, p.136.

correct interpretation.⁴³⁶ If the text leads us to believe that the wise men gave interpretations of the dream, then we are left with several implications concerning Nebuchadnezzar. Firstly, Nebuchadnezzar has been presented by the Narrator as one having great potential as a hermeneut, and here we can see that he does possess a kind of intuition with regard to interpretation. Secondly, perhaps he has finally and intuitively realized that the dream does involve himself, and is therefore able to critique the wise men's interpretations based upon this realization. Thirdly, he holds the view that there are good interpretations and there are bad interpretations, and not all interpretations are equally valid.

After the failure of the wise men, Nebuchadnezzar finally realizes what he needs is a hermeneut in the person of Daniel^c, "one in whom the spirit of the holy gods is." Nebuchadnezzar's confidence in Daniel^c is not solely a credit to Daniel^c; his expectation from Daniel^c is not exceptionally greater than other wise men, but Nebuchadnezzar's confidence comes from Daniel^c's tight association with someone in whom dwells the spirit of the holy gods.⁴³⁷ As Fewell points out, Daniel^c is still a curious mixture of human and divine in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar;⁴³⁸ or as we might say, Daniel^c is someone who is in a state of understanding with both God and man, and bridges the gap between the two. In this case we can witness a progressive movement in the hermeneutical potential of Nebuchadnezzar. In the previous dream-narrative Nebuchadnezzar orders the execution of all wise men including interns Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah who never would have received the opportunity to meet the king's demands; in this episode

⁴³⁶ *Op. cit.*, p.137.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.138.

⁴³⁸ *Circle*, p.65.

Daniel^c is personally and individually called upon to perform the task. Nebuchadnezzar recognizes a good hermeneut and seeks understanding according to his counsel.

Nebuchadnezzar describes in his dream an enormous tree of grandeur, a home for birds and animals, abundant in fruit and shelter, and reaching to the heavens. Then a wakeful one, or watcher, or angel⁴³⁹ descends from heaven and makes a loud pronouncement of judgment upon the tree: it is to be cut down, branches cut off, leaves are stripped off, fruit is scattered, animals and birds desert it, and the stump and roots remain and are bound with iron. Suddenly the metaphor shifts from tree to a man like a beast: dripping with dew, living with the animals among plants, and having the mind of an animal for seven times over. The decision to bring Nebuchadnezzar to this state is made by the angels who declare this verdict in order that all living people may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to whomever he wills, even the lowliest of men. After reciting his dream, he finishes his speech to Daniel^c in much the same way he initially addresses him by calling him by his Babylonian name, Belteshazzar, asking for the interpretation, and reaffirming his belief that in Daniel^c dwells the spirit of the holy gods.

Before we proceed to Daniel^c's interpretation, we must firstly realize that Nebuchadnezzar's rendering of the dream is itself an interpretation. Regardless of how accurate, misconstrued or exaggerated the recounting of the dream may be, it is his interpretation. Unlike the previous dream-narrative, Nebuchadnezzar tells the contents of the dream; but like the previous dream-narrative, this dream too concerns the life of Nebuchadnezzar. The dream is clearly troubling to Nebuchadnezzar and we might guess

⁴³⁹ Angels are constantly awake and alert, and are therefore called 'wakeful ones' (Hebrew); Goldwurm, p.140.

that it so for hermeneutical reasons. Firstly, he can interpret the content of the dream without the ability to interpret its meaning or significance, thus causing distress in a fruitless search for meaning. Secondly, according to the theory of the circular movement of understanding in hermeneutics, the interpreter fluidly moves forward and backward along the text relentlessly between parts and whole and between pre-understanding and understanding until s/he believes understanding has been accomplished. In the case of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, this movement is indeed relentless and altogether unproductive.⁴⁴⁰ Thirdly, the matter of interpretation is not a single conscientious decision, but is the first, last and constant task of the interpreter;⁴⁴¹ yet in an acutely disturbing way the task of interpreting this dream is constantly before him but without any progress.

Daniel Responds and Interprets the Dream – 4.19-27

The initial response from Daniel^c is nonverbal alarm and perplexity in his thoughts. Whether Nebuchadnezzar interprets the troubled face of Daniel^c or whether he intuitively knows the ominous character of the dream, Nebuchadnezzar reassures Daniel^c in his task to reveal the meaning of the dream. The reader is fully confident in the abilities of Daniel^c from past experience and this time there is no waiting period to discover the meaning of the dream. Daniel^c immediately knows the meaning of the dream without consultation from Yhwh; in other words, Daniel^c is already in tune with the mind of God through means to which previous hermeneutical circles have led. More specifically, Daniel^c using 'naturally' God-given talents for Yhwh makes him eligible for special endowments of abilities, which are then used for further glorification of Yhwh,

⁴⁴⁰ Gadamer, p.293.

⁴⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.267.

etc.; Daniel^c reaches a point here where he so intimately knows Yhwh and his own giftedness, that divine consultation is presently unnecessary. Daniel^c is immediately ready to stand in the gap and be the hermeneut he is required to be explicitly by Nebuchadnezzar and implicitly by Yhwh. This position is particularly precarious when we consider the unfolding interpretation of the dream. Yet, once again we are faced with the reality that the often uncertain position of hermeneut is repeatedly a delicate balance requiring the utmost use of wisdom.

Nebuchadnezzar urges Daniel^c not to allow the dream or its meaning to distress him, even though this is exactly what it has done to Nebuchadnezzar and is the reason that Daniel^c stands before him now. We have already noted the diplomatic skill possessed by Daniel^c but what we read into Daniel^c's response to Nebuchadnezzar extends beyond mere diplomacy. The words of Daniel^c are genuinely sympathetic,

“My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies
 and its meaning to your adversaries!”

Through this Hebraic poetical structure we can more carefully consider what Daniel^c is saying about text and the meaning of text; on one hand they are not the same inasmuch as he lists them separately, but yet on the other hand they are tightly and inseparably interwoven inasmuch as their desired outcomes are synonymous. In short, at this juncture Daniel^c advocates that texts have meaning, and that these two entities are interconnected.

Daniel^c briefly interprets the words and actions of the holy watchers, and by doing so he deals with the angels as hermeneuts. As we will see later, angels play a big role in the latter half of the narrative as hermeneuts, yet their roles are not solely reserved for the later apocalyptic visions. Indeed, intrinsically angels are hermeneuts by design and function and in the three roles played by angels in the early half of the narrative, they

perform hermeneutical tasks. We have already seen the rescuing hand of Yhwh who performs this miracle through an angelic messenger sent to secure the three Hebrew youths from the fiery furnace. In this present case according to the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar, they pronounce judgment against the tree/animal-man and reveal their motives as making known to all people that the Most High rules over kingships of men and gives it to whomever he wills. As far as Nebuchadnezzar is concerned, the fate of the tree is a decision made by the decree of the watchers and is a sentence by the word of the holy ones. He assumes that these angelic entities act and speak on their own accord; he fails even now to see that as hermeneuts they speak on behalf of another and higher deity. He hears the text of their words but does not apprehend the Ultratext behind the text. After recounting the king's dream, Daniel^c clarifies the issue quite succinctly. As a prefatory note to his more elaborate interpretation, he exchanges the angels, who make the proclamation, with Yhwh who ultimately makes the decree concerning the king. Though what Nebuchadnezzar recounts as watchers or holy ones is likely accurate by description, Daniel^c clearly identifies the source behind their proclamation as Yhwh. In other words, Daniel^c reveals the Ultratext behind the angelic-text to Nebuchadnezzar.

In boldness Daniel^c reveals the tree as Nebuchadnezzar quite early, before he formally announces that what he is about to say is the interpretation of the dream. Given the description of the great tree by form and function, Nebuchadnezzar seems to be the only likely human candidate. Perhaps, the other wise men did understand the gist of the dream but were unwilling to take the risk now being taken by Daniel^c. Finally, Daniel^c elaborates on his interpretation by spelling out the future fate of the king is to be that he will be driven from men, live and eat like an animal, be drenched with dew, all for a

seven time period until he comes to recognize Yhwh as the ruler of all men and realizes that the Most High gives kingdoms to whomever he pleases. As a promise of return, Nebuchadnezzar will retain his kingdom but only after he knows who really rules.

In a similar mode that caused Daniel^c to desire the dream and interpretation to apply to Nebuchadnezzar's enemy, Daniel^c also suggests routes that Nebuchadnezzar might take in order to avoid the retribution. In this regard Jewish Sages fault Daniel^c for his attempts to divert retribution away from an idolater and blasphemer.⁴⁴² Despite the possible good intentions of his philanthropic suggestions, Daniel^c was wrong to make these suggestions.⁴⁴³ However, Daniel^c is challenging Nebuchadnezzar to become the hermeneut that implicitly accompanies his role as king. On one hand, he is great, perhaps too great for his own ego and sees himself as glorious and as benevolent as the enormous tree of grandeur, but he refuses to recognize that the source of his greatness is Yhwh, who, we must remember, is mindful of the lowliest of men. On the other hand, Nebuchadnezzar likewise lacks compassion for the lowliest of men. In this case, Nebuchadnezzar is an incomplete—and therefore worthless—bridge between the God he does not recognize and the common people to whom he offers no charity or kindness. Daniel^c's suggestion may not be motivated by an urgency to avoid retribution, but be a subtle reminder of his failure as bridge between divine and mortal.

On another note Daniel^c's suggestions makes other demands of Nebuchadnezzar as hermeneut. The dream and interpretation seem to indicate that what Nebuchadnezzar is in need of is intellectual cognizance of Yhwh as supreme sovereign, whereas the advice of Daniel^c would lead Nebuchadnezzar to believe that proper behavior would lead to an

⁴⁴² *Bava Basra* 4a, cf. *Rambam Hilchos Rotzeach* 12.15 in Goldwurm, p.148.

⁴⁴³ *Maharsha (Chiddushei Aggados Sotah* 21a) in Goldwurm, p.149.

escape route from retribution.⁴⁴⁴ The intellectual recognition of Yhwh as supreme ruler has already been emphasized in the dream and interpretation but nothing has been said about action. Here Daniel^c makes the text applicable to Nebuchadnezzar, who must acquire harmonious integrity in thought and deed. Daniel^c's advice by no means is a substitute for the demand to recognize the sovereignty of Yhwh, but by heeding to the suggestions of Daniel^c he will demonstrate his acceptance of the truth of Daniel^c's words,⁴⁴⁵ which will lead to his recognition of the Most High, which will in turn secure his rightful place as royal hermeneut. In this role of royal hermeneut Nebuchadnezzar will perform both intellectual and behavioral—or theoretical and practical—parts efficiently. In essence, Daniel^c creates for Nebuchadnezzar a hermeneutical circle and vividly provides for him a suggested entry point into this circle.

Nebuchadnezzar Lives out the Dream – 4.28-33

The Narrator clearly resumes control at this point as he recounts the fate of Nebuchadnezzar's lycanthropy. The occasion is twelve months after the previous conversation between Daniel^c and Nebuchadnezzar concerning his dream and its interpretation. As he stands atop his palace in Babylon, he begins to speak boastfully about the greatness of his kingdom that has been built according to his mighty power and for the glory of his majesty. At this point a voice sounds from heaven reiterating the decree against Nebuchadnezzar according to the dream and its meaning. The reader can reasonably assume that the voice that is heard is that of an angel who speaks on behalf of the Almighty. The Narrator affirms the fulfillment of the decree as Nebuchadnezzar is

⁴⁴⁴ Fewell, *Circle*, p.71.

⁴⁴⁵ Baldwin, p.114.

driven from men to live, eat and maintain hygiene like an animal. Politically and socially speaking, Nebuchadnezzar is “put out to pasture.”

Several implications arise with the clear reintroduction of the Narrator. Firstly, the Narrator confirms both interpretations of Nebuchadnezzar in recounting the content of the dream and of Daniel^c in his assigning meaning to the dream. Secondly, though the Narrator avoids any lengthy and elaborate description of Nebuchadnezzar in his unfortunate state, still his perception of Nebuchadnezzar is considered far more reliable than a madman, who would make for an unstable narrator.⁴⁴⁶ Thirdly, the very presence of the Narrator works to reaffirm the underlying message of the episode; that is to say that Nebuchadnezzar is not even sovereign of his own story,⁴⁴⁷ as the Narrator, who is already well established as a Yahwist and one who speaks for Yhwh, controls this pivotal point of the narrative.

Nebuchadnezzar’s Closing Doxology – 4.34-37

The recovery of Nebuchadnezzar comes at the end of this enigmatic ‘seven time’ period, when at last Nebuchadnezzar comes to acknowledge personally the sovereignty of Yhwh over the kingdoms of men. Three distinct events occur simultaneously at the end of his time of insanity: 1) his sanity is restored; 2) he raises his eyes toward heaven; and, 3) he honors and glorifies Yhwh. The restoration of Nebuchadnezzar’s sanity is mentioned in verse 34 after which he praises God and is again mentioned in verse 36 after he praises Yhwh, though Nebuchadnezzar states the events occur simultaneously. The ambiguity of the succession of events leaves room for hermeneutical conjecture. Did the restoration of sanity prompt the praise of Yhwh? Or did the praise of Yhwh allow for

⁴⁴⁶ Fewell, *Circle*, p.75.

⁴⁴⁷ *ibid.*

his sanity's restoration? Is the looking toward heaven supposed to be antonymous to his earlier implicit act of looking down upon the accomplishments of his kingdom? Whether we can confidently assert that praising God leads to restoration or whether restoration leads to praising God is debatable. What is far more reasonable for the reader to notice is the creation of a hermeneutical circle in terms of the relationship between Yhwh and Nebuchadnezzar; praising God is an act of sanity and sane existence is demonstrated by praising God. The point of entry into this circle is purposely ambiguous. The evidence points to his activity in the circle regardless of whether Nebuchadnezzar enters into it through an act of praise or is brought into it by a gracious act of restoration.

The ambiguity that exists chronologically between the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar's mental health and Nebuchadnezzar's praise of Yhwh for his divine sovereignty is structured in verses 34-36 in this chiasm:

- A the time of insanity is fulfilled
- B Nebuchadnezzar looks to heaven
- C sanity is restored
- D Nebuchadnezzar's doxology to Yhwh
- C' sanity is restored
- B' Nebuchadnezzar's advisers and nobles look for him
- A' the time of royal restoration is fulfilled

This chiastic structure may not reveal anything to give us chronological clues from points A to C' but it does expose the greater emphasis of the acknowledgment of God (point D) over the knowledge of man (points C and C'). As William Shea has observed, often the central point of the chiasm indicates a turning point of some sort.⁴⁴⁸ The doxology that Nebuchadnezzar offers to Yhwh is the turning point of his newly restored life, more so even than the restoration of his sanity, which is mentioned both before and after the more lengthy doxology. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar's involvement in the hermeneutical circle

⁴⁴⁸ Shea, "Further Literary Structures in Daniel 2-7: an Analysis of Daniel 4." p.202.

is comprised of both the wisdom of God and the knowledge of man; they are inseparable. The lack of acknowledgment of Yhwh led to the loss of his mental facilities while the lack of his mental facilities prohibited his acknowledgment of God. On the flip side of the coin, the wisdom of God leads to a greater knowledge of man, and/or visa versa, with a greater emphasis—though not necessarily of chronological priority—on the wisdom of God. The line is blurred between the states of understanding and pre-understanding in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, thus the entry point into his hermeneutical circle remains enigmatic.

Chronologically, Nebuchadnezzar makes one thing certain: only after his praise of God and restoration of his sanity do the advisers and nobles seek out Nebuchadnezzar to return him to his place on the throne. In Nebuchadnezzar's post-insanity era his kingdom reaches even greater heights than before. Whatever reasons had prompted his boasting prior to his lycanthropy is now superseded in his state of recovery, yet his words are not of boasting but of praise to Yhwh. In this regard Nebuchadnezzar joins the ranks of Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah who all submit their lives to Yhwh, who then in return blesses them with great giftedness, which becomes evident by their political prosperity. Though Nebuchadnezzar reaches the point of sincerely reverent recognition of Yhwh as the ultimate sovereign after his bout with lycanthropy, the reader has to realize the promise of restoration was also kept in addition to the prophecy of insanity.⁴⁴⁹ Nebuchadnezzar is now in a position to step into a role of theological hermeneut and evidence of his hermeneutics lies before the reader in the form of his life-story. Indubitably, Nebuchadnezzar's goal is to use his position of royalty—and with it the

⁴⁴⁹ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.96.

implied role of royal hermeneut—to lead all peoples to draw for themselves similar theological conclusions which he himself has already achieved.

On one last note concerning the hermeneutical lessons available in the literary life of Nebuchadnezzar in the Danielic corpus, the reader can observe both theory and praxis at work in the life of the king. The narrative begins with Nebuchadnezzar simply viewing Yhwh as a defeated god of Jerusalem, then he recognizes the power of Yhwh in the act of revealing a mysterious dream-text through Daniel^c, then he shows respect to Yhwh for his act and ability to rescue the three Jewish exiles from the flames. Yet through these events, Nebuchadnezzar only observes—or as we have previously mentioned, theorizes about—the submission of others to the will of Yhwh, but never does Nebuchadnezzar personally put into practice the devout lifestyles of Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael or Azariah. Only in this last episode is the life of Nebuchadnezzar directly affected by Yhwh as he personally makes the God of Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah his own God, whom he now honors as the one true God who endures forever and as the supreme sovereign. Only by completing the practical side of his engagements with Yhwh does Nebuchadnezzar succeed in finding victory in his struggle with knowing himself, in obtaining political security and prosperity, and in acquiring his rightful place of standing in the gap between supreme deity and lowly mortal. As his long struggle with himself and with knowing Yhwh comes to a victorious end, so does his place in the narrative and he exits as a paradigm of a successful convert to Yhwh and as one who is willing to bridge the gap between the divine and the human.

Daniel 5 – Belshazzar, the Lightweight Interpreter

The episode of Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall shares the central position of the chiastic structure from chapters 2-7 with the previous life-story and conversion of Nebuchadnezzar. While the issue of human pride and resistance to Yhwh dominates both plots, the outcomes of these two stories differ drastically. Not only are the outcomes diverse but the foiling of the two royal characters becomes an essential point in our understanding why the outcomes vary so greatly. As previously stated, Nebuchadnezzar serves his purpose well, he takes his bow and exits the narrative gracefully as a theological hermeneut. Now we are to witness a similar type of character that we see in Nebuchadnezzar, but with some significant differences which lead to radically opposite outcomes.

Party Time – 5.1-4

Narrator introduces Belshazzar in chapter 5 immediately following the doxology of Nebuchadnezzar with no explanation of royal transference of control between the two kings. When the Narrator introduces Nebuchadnezzar in the introductory chapter, he does so by orienting the reader to think of Nebuchadnezzar as a theologically-minded individual with a potential for exercising ‘good’ interpretive skills. Narrator accomplishes this orientation by placing Nebuchadnezzar as a servant of Adonai and implying that Nebuchadnezzar falsely credits his god for the victory over Jehoiakim and the god of Jerusalem, after which he places the Jerusalem temple articles into the temple of his god. Belshazzar is introduced by his actions of throwing a party for his nobles and demanding that the gold and silver articles from Jerusalem be retrieved from the Babylonian temple. The reiteration of Nebuchadnezzar’s name here as the man responsible for obtaining the

articles reminds the reader of the introduction of Nebuchadnezzar in the opening verses of the book, all of which serves to foil the characters of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Unlike Nebuchadnezzar, the Narrator does not state that Yhwh has any use for Belshazzar, and we are reminded of the interpretation of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 in which Nebuchadnezzar, and not his legacy in the Babylonian kingdom, is identified as the head of gold.

Unlike Nebuchadnezzar who puts the articles in the temple for theological—albeit false—reasons, Belshazzar removes the articles from the temple for his drunken feast and connects himself with ridiculous religiosity. The Narrator corrects Belshazzar's theological misconceptions in chapter 5, as he does similarly to Nebuchadnezzar's theological misconceptions in the opening verses of the book. Belshazzar had sent for the Jerusalem temple articles, but the Narrator follows by stating that the articles from the temple of Elohim were brought in for festive use. In other words, Belshazzar sends for the articles he describes according to their locale, that is, from the temple in Jerusalem, and by whose efforts they are acquired, that is, his 'father' Nebuchadnezzar; the Narrator, however, describes the articles by way of the God for whose glory and purpose they are intended to serve. This slight verbal variation in the repetition of Belshazzar's actions becomes a significant variation in theological terms, and once again the worldview of the Narrator is pitted against the worldview of Belshazzar. The temple articles are indeed sacred to the Narrator and implicitly also for the implied reader, Nebuchadnezzar also considers them sacred in his own religious tradition, but Belshazzar seeks to treat as common the things thought sacred by the Narrator, the implied reader and Nebuchadnezzar. By this action, comments Fewell, Belshazzar attempts to belittle the

accomplishments of his 'father' by taking lightly what Nebuchadnezzar believed sacred, thereby exercising leverage over him and appearing more courageous.⁴⁵⁰ Therefore, the Narrator orients the reader to identify Belshazzar as a non-theological being and therefore having little to no potential for being a 'good' interpreter. The Narrator has set him up for certain disaster from the very outset.

As the story unfolds the reader comes to witness an alleged religious side of Belshazzar and his nobles, wives and concubines. The present feast-goers praise the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone as they drink from the temple goblets. Once again, the Narrator pits the beliefs and practices of Belshazzar against those of Nebuchadnezzar. Though Nebuchadnezzar was no Yahwist at the outset, as a henotheist he sought to honor, revere and thank his god by placing the spoils of the Jerusalem conquest into the temple of his god. Belshazzar is not even a henotheist but rather is 'a radical polytheist' whose praise to these gods during their drunken fest smacks of a tone of insincerity and irreverence. The praise of so many gods—gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, stone—is pushed to the point of being ridiculously superfluous, especially in light of the temple vessels being composed only of gold and silver. Ironically, Belshazzar's praise to these many gods not only keeps the reader's initial orientation aligned, but further reinforces the perspective that Belshazzar is an essentially non-theological character.

The Ominous Hand and the Writing – 5.5-9

During the revelry and praise to the gods, Belshazzar receives his one fleeting chance at interpretation, he and only he sees the apparently human-like hand writing a

⁴⁵⁰ Fewell, *Circle*, p.85.

message on the wall, indicating that the message is directed to him.⁴⁵¹ His reaction is understandable and not at all inappropriate: his color changed, his thoughts frightened him, the knots of his loins loosened and his knees knocked together. His loss of bodily control is indicative of the loss of political control he will experience with regard to his kingdom on this very night as well as the loss of mortal control over his very life. Since Belshazzar alone sees the hand and he alone is terrified to this degree, perhaps he understands intuitively that the message directly concerns him.⁴⁵² The reader cannot blame him for his reaction to the sight of this mysterious hand, but neither can the reader help but laugh at the humiliating reaction of this arrogant king.

The contrast between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar continues to pervade in this episode. Although Nebuchadnezzar had experienced disturbing dreams in chapters 2 and 4, Nebuchadnezzar did not allow a public display of his physical distress, whereas Belshazzar physically shows his fright to everyone who matters in his kingdom. Surely an embarrassing moment is to be standing in one's own puddle of urine in royal garb in front of everyone who matters.⁴⁵³ While Nebuchadnezzar would demand the services of the wise men, Belshazzar cries loudly for them out of a sense of panic.⁴⁵⁴ While Nebuchadnezzar would threaten the lives of the wise men for their failure to meet his demands and would promise reward for success, Belshazzar only promises reward. When wise men finally fail—no surprise to the reader by now—Nebuchadnezzar would have made good on his threats, but Belshazzar only becomes more troubled.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵¹ Goldwurm, p.161.

⁴⁵² Alshich in Goldwurm, p.161.

⁴⁵³ Fewell, *Circle*, p.89.

⁴⁵⁴ S.R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press) 1905.

⁴⁵⁵ Fewell, *Circle*, p.87.

As for the failure of the wise men to read, translate or interpret these four words on the wall, the rabbis offer several suggestions. Yossi, Ramban and others hold to the notion that an older, more square script was employed, and though among the wise men some would have known Hebrew, they were unfamiliar with this script.⁴⁵⁶ Rav Yedidiah Shlomo Raphael believes that letters from the opposite end of the alphabet were substituted, so although the wise men could read the script, they could not translate the words or their meaning.⁴⁵⁷ Shmuel Eliezer ben Yehudah HaLevi explains that the letters are written from top to bottom, therefore the traditional reading from right to left becomes incomprehensible.⁴⁵⁸ Maharshah takes Shmuel to mean that the words are arranged by three groups down by five groups across and only by reading every fifth letter will an interpreter render the words intelligible.⁴⁵⁹ Rav Yochanan simply proclaims that the words are written backwards from left to right.⁴⁶⁰ Whatever the reason(s) may be, their failure is anticipated, and yet at the same time, the text with which these supposed sages must grapple is apparently becoming less difficult; from telling the actual dream and its interpretation, to telling only the interpretation of a given dream, to translating and if necessary interpreting four written words on the wall. The gap between Daniel^c and the other company of wise men is becoming increasingly vast.

The Queen-Mother who Knows – 5.10-12

The queen's initial absence from the festivities and the lofty title she alone carries causes the reader to consider carefully her role in the larger political scheme of Babylon. Quite unlikely is the possibility that she is queen with regard to being chief wife of

⁴⁵⁶ Goldwurm, p.162.

⁴⁵⁷ Alef replaces tav, bet replaces shin, etc. *ibid.*, pp.162-163.

⁴⁵⁸ Also known as Maharsha, *ibid.*, p.163.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Belshazzar; surely her social status and political prestige would demand her presence at this affluent drunken revelry.⁴⁶¹ Far more likely to be the case is her status as the queen-mother whose power and prestige authorizes her bold entrance into the king's presence.⁴⁶² Whether she be Nitocris, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar,⁴⁶³ or the wife of Nabonidus and grandmother of Belshazzar,⁴⁶⁴ or Adadguppi, the wife of Nabonidus, and mother of Belshazzar⁴⁶⁵ makes little difference for our purposes here. What we are most interested in here is her function in an interpretive role within the context of the larger picture of Danielic hermeneutics.

The queen-mother's initial words to Belshazzar are, "O King, live forever." These are words, which will have a very short life in their fulfillment, set up dramatic irony for the events which are about to unfold. Keep in mind that everyone at this feast plainly sees the writing on the wall, but only Belshazzar sees the hand that did the writing. The queen-mother continues, "Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale!" Her words and perception are in perfect harmony so far with those of the Narrator,⁴⁶⁶ who has already more fully described the frail condition of Belshazzar as being pale and frightened. Simultaneous to her accurate assessment of Belshazzar's condition, her words also function, for those present and for the reader alike, to reiterate and to emphasize further the state of deep fear in which he uncomfortably sits.

The queen-mother reveals to Belshazzar that there is a man in the kingdom who is capable of interpreting the words on the wall. The knowledge the queen-mother has of

⁴⁶¹ see Goldwurm, p.164.

⁴⁶² This is the general consensus among Danielic scholars: Lacocque, p.97; Porteous, p.79; Goldingay, p.109; Baldwin, p.121; Leon Wood, p.141; Walvoord, p.123; Heaton, p.159; Russell p.89; Towner, p.73; Keil, p.185; Fewell, p.88; Montgomery, p.258.

⁴⁶³ Lacocque, p.97 (fictionally); Keil, p.185; Ibn Ezra in Goldwurm, p.164 (historically).

⁴⁶⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, X, XI, 2.

⁴⁶⁵ Baldwin, p.122.

⁴⁶⁶ Fewell, *Circle*, p.88.

Daniel^C is further evidence that this woman is not merely a consort of the king but rather a woman whose role and interest in the kingdom almost exceed those of Belshazzar himself.⁴⁶⁷ We also have to note the repetition in this chapter of Nebuchadnezzar's name and his role as king and 'father', all of which will serve to justify the link that occurs between Belshazzar, the queen-mother and Daniel^C. Both the Narrator and the queen-mother alike serve to sustain the resonance of the great Nebuchadnezzar who has left the scene at last as a Yahwist, Yhwh's servant, a theological interpreter, and now as a foil to Belshazzar.

The precise qualities that the queen-mother attributes to Daniel^C reveal her own traits as one who is competent to recognize a 'good' interpreter. The first of Daniel^C's qualities which she relates to Belshazzar is a general comment concerning his position as one in whom the spirit of the holy gods dwell. Like the Narrator's introduction of Nebuchadnezzar, we are also inclined to think of this woman in theological terms. The difference between the introduction of Nebuchadnezzar and the introduction of the queen-mother is the temporal presence of Daniel^C and his God. The introduction of Nebuchadnezzar stands prior to his encounter with Daniel^C and Yhwh, while the introduction of the queen-mother follows the encounter with Daniel^C and Yhwh, as well as Nebuchadnezzar's acceptance of Yhwh. Once again, the tight association between Nebuchadnezzar and the queen-mother is critical for our understanding of her perception of Daniel^C and Yhwh. Her phrases have already been uttered by Nebuchadnezzar in 4.8, 9, and 18, thus giving further attestation that she now carries the viewpoint of the great king, Nebuchadnezzar. Leon Wood goes so far as to claim that possibly she also was a

⁴⁶⁷ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.109.

convert to the faith in the Judean God.⁴⁶⁸ Her words “holy gods” (אֱלֹהֵינוּ קְדוֹשִׁים) are perhaps conscientiously ambiguous. While she would know that Belshazzar would surely hear them from his own pagan tradition, she could equally mean them to refer to the holy God of Daniel^C by the Hebraic use of the royal plural. In the least, she should surely be credited for her keen recognition of the divine nature present in Daniel^C.

The queen-mother begins to elaborate in specific terms of Daniel^C's career under Nebuchadnezzar, the ‘father’ of Belshazzar. The greater knowledge of the past king’s career possessed by the queen over that of Belshazzar once again leads us further to believe that her role is queen-mother and not the wife of Belshazzar, as does her tone at this point. The next three qualities of Daniel^C's that she points out are insight (נְהִירוֹ), intelligence (שְׂכָלְהוּ) and wisdom (חֵקְמָה), like that of the gods. Each of these words has been associated with Yhwh already in the narrative. ‘Insight’ suggests illumination from Yhwh as the source of light (2.22), ‘ability’ recounts the possession and execution of intellect and talent given by God (1.17), and ‘wisdom’ denotes the intuition possessed by an interpreter of dreams or omens is supernaturally from Adonai (2.20).⁴⁶⁹ Furthermore, she also claims that Daniel^C interprets dreams, explains riddles, and solves difficult problems, all of which the reader already knows are granted to him by Yhwh. Once again we see through her comments that she has theological perspective and sees Daniel^C according to his theological role as a mediator between the supernatural and the natural. For these are the reasons, the queen-mother claims that Nebuchadnezzar appointed Daniel^C to the position of chief of magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners. By this declaration she not only proves Nebuchadnezzar to be a ‘good’ interpreter for

⁴⁶⁸ Leon Wood, p.141.

⁴⁶⁹ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.109-110.

acknowledging such details in Daniel^C, but she also sets herself up to be a ‘good’ interpreter because she similarly seeks to appoint Daniel^C for this task at hand as a result of her own recognition of Daniel^C. As Fewell points out, she is the voice of the dead Nebuchadnezzar, though perhaps unwelcome by Belshazzar.⁴⁷⁰ Therefore her conversion to Yahwism is a reasonable conjecture since she does indeed speak the words of Nebuchadnezzar, and we might also speculate that she likewise follows his examples of religious devotion.

As a result of her speech, Belshazzar, who is already set up to be a ‘bad’ interpreter, stands condemned for not even knowing Daniel^C, despite Daniel^C’s enormously famous skills. Her emphasis on “Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king” in the middle of her persuasive discourse is a powerful tool of leverage. By this seemingly superfluous reminder of the relationship between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, she firmly declares the inferiority of Belshazzar to Nebuchadnezzar in two distinct ways: 1) the father is over the son; and, 2) the king is over the subject. The continual use of the title of king ascribed to Nebuchadnezzar works to undermine the very royal authority feebly—and temporarily—held by Belshazzar.⁴⁷¹

The last words of the queen-mother before she exits this narrative forever are, “Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.” Her remarks and assessments are now fully aligned with both the Narrator and Nebuchadnezzar, both of whose comments aligned, and even commingled, with each other at last in the middle of chapter 4. Nebuchadnezzar had called for Daniel^C, the Narrator surely calls for Daniel^C, the implied/ideal reader is led to want to call for Daniel^C, and now the queen-mother

⁴⁷⁰ Fewell, *Circle*, p.89.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

demands the call for Daniel^C. She is ranked among those who have skillfully come to the recognition of Daniel^C as the interpreter of mysterious texts. Though we do not explicitly know of any personal interaction she might have with Yhwh, we can see that she recognizes the active role of God in the life of Daniel^C and as a source of his abilities. She leaves the narrative as an enthusiastic admirer of Daniel^C and a layman interpreter herself.

Her confidence in Daniel^C to solve the mystery mirrors that of Nebuchadnezzar, and consequently makes Belshazzar look all the more incompetent for his lack of knowledge of him. Belshazzar's lack of acquaintance with Daniel^C seems a bit odd to the reader, but works to cast further doubt in the reader's mind that Belshazzar will ever amount to any kind of significant interpreter. The parallels between the Joseph narrative and the Danielic narrative are often cited, and here is yet another connection that is made between the two accounts. As great as the reputation and position was that Joseph held, Exodus 1.8 says, "Now there arose over Egypt a new king who did not know Joseph."⁴⁷² As the pharaoh of Exodus 1 came to power with no knowledge or respect for Joseph, Belshazzar comes to power with no knowledge of Daniel^C. In the reading of the Exodus account, the pharaoh's lack of knowledge of Joseph is understandable and almost permissible since Joseph was dead and generations had passed, but no such excuse exists for Belshazzar. Not only does Daniel^C the wise man live, but there are those around Belshazzar in high position (the queen-mother) who possess knowledge and respect for him. Ultimately, we have to come to the conclusion that his lack of knowledge of Daniel^C is not based upon any sense of ignorance but rather his willful avoidance of his acknowledgement of his character that is too tightly associated with the more successful

⁴⁷² Lacocque, p.97.

reign of his apparent competition, Nebuchadnezzar.⁴⁷³ In other words, Belshazzar does not know Daniel^C because he does not *want* to know Daniel^C.⁴⁷⁴

Belshazzar's Request – 5.13-17

What follows the queen-mother's recommendation is the summons to Daniel^C, which is cast in a passive voice that says, "So Daniel was brought before the king..." Though Narrator could have inserted that Belshazzar then called for Daniel^C in an active voice, Narrator gives him no benefit of the doubt by placing Daniel^C's call to the rescue in the passive voice.⁴⁷⁵ By no means will Belshazzar receive any credit for the solving of this mystery by even the simple act of sending for the man who is able to perform the unraveling of this knot. Belshazzar is further degraded in the mind of the reader for his lack of initiative to do the right thing by calling for the right man.

Belshazzar's face to face encounter with Daniel^C reveals that Belshazzar's lack of acknowledgement of Daniel^C was far more purposeful than was due to ignorance. Fewell points out that the initial words that Belshazzar speaks to Daniel^C display a prior knowledge of Daniel^C that was not given to him by the queen-mother.⁴⁷⁶ Belshazzar addresses Daniel^C by saying, "Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah?" Nowhere in the queen-mother's speech does she mention that Daniel^C was brought to Babylon from Judah by Nebuchadnezzar; this is knowledge that he already possesses on his own. Out of pride and taking advantage of an opportunity to degrade, Belshazzar confirms the identity of Daniel^C as a Judean exile and not, as the queen-mother has noted, as an appointee to a position of chief among magicians,

⁴⁷³ Fewell, *Circle*, p.91.

⁴⁷⁴ Lacocque even implies the same is the case for the pharaoh who did not want to know Joseph, p.97.

⁴⁷⁵ Fewell, *Circle*, p.90.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.91.

enchanters, astrologers and diviners. What kind of interpreter could consciously ignore important details integral to building an environment of knowledge and wisdom?! Any chance that Belshazzar might have to be any sort of interpreter is quickly fading. Might also the reader recall the words of the father figure in Proverbs who emphatically and repeatedly urges his son to listen to the wise council of his father?⁴⁷⁷ Belshazzar becomes the epitome of a foolish son who despises the wisdom of his father and brings grief to his mother.

As we have already noted the insincerity and sarcasm of Belshazzar's praise to the gods, the tone seems to resonate once again in Belshazzar's challenge to Daniel^C. The affirmation of neither Daniel^C's position attained under Nebuchadnezzar nor the praise of his ability stated by the queen-mother becomes typical of the skepticism held by Belshazzar toward Daniel^C. The sharp contrast between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar continues; while Nebuchadnezzar says in 4.9, "I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you...", Belshazzar is only able to say, "I have heard that the spirit of the holy gods is in you..." After Belshazzar summarizes the reputation of Daniel^C as affirmed by the queen-mother—and as an echo of Nebuchadnezzar—he quickly shows his own sense of doubt in Daniel^C when he asserts that his own wise men were unable to perform the requested task.

Belshazzar is caught between two difficult positions. On the one hand he desperately wants to know the message of the mysterious writing though he and his council are unable to make such information known. On the other hand he is hesitant about having the revelation of the message come through a man whom he has refused to acknowledge throughout his reign, which inevitably undermines his own administrative

⁴⁷⁷ Prov. 1.8, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, 7.1, 24, 10.1, etc.

abilities. In the end, however, he decidedly desires to have the message made known to him and offers him three rewards, specifically a purple robe, a gold chain and the third rank in the kingdom.

Daniel's Interpretation of King and Writing – 5.18-29

The stark contrast between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar is also evident through the response of Daniel^C toward Belshazzar. In the previous episode Daniel^C sorrowfully understands the fate of the dream to be against Nebuchadnezzar and wishes that it would apply to his enemy, but here Daniel^C is all too willing to reveal the fate of the words that directly affect Belshazzar. Daniel^C begins by refusing the gifts of Belshazzar; not that he has a problem with rewards since he has accepted them in the past, but with the gift-giver.⁴⁷⁸ Perhaps he wants to wait until the message is given before the issue of reward is discussed knowing the ominous message of the words.⁴⁷⁹ Or perhaps he does not want to feel compelled to alter in the least the message based upon financial gain, or allow Belshazzar to think falsely that any promise of award will paint a prettier picture.⁴⁸⁰ Or perhaps, knowing the message and the outcome of the message, he does not want the gifts because they would associate him politically with the kingdom that will fall this very night, and would thus threaten his future political career and his very existence. In foresight, these gifts will lose all value within twenty-four hours.

The interpretation of Daniel^C is essentially twofold: firstly, he interprets the heart of Belshazzar, and secondly, he interprets the handwriting on the wall. The harshness of Daniel^C's words is a direct response to the condescending attitude that Belshazzar displays toward Daniel^C, however, Daniel^C is careful to assure Belshazzar that

⁴⁷⁸ Fewell, *Circle*, p.94.

⁴⁷⁹ Plöger in Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.110.

⁴⁸⁰ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.110.

he is fully aware of Belshazzar's highly esteemed role as king,⁴⁸¹ which makes his rebuke of Belshazzar all the more potent. Though according to Jewish categorizations, Daniel^C is not revered as a prophet, clearly in this instance he plays the part of prophet by performing functions often associated with this office.⁴⁸² Daniel^C speaks without reservation, timidity or hesitation because he knows for whom he speaks; he speaks of what he knows and finds unnecessary the addendum, "thus says the Lord."⁴⁸³ Paul Ricoeur affirms, "The prophet claims divine inspiration as guaranteeing what he says. The sage does nothing of the sort. He does not declare that his speech is the speech of another."⁴⁸⁴ This of course is indicative of his role as hermeneut, one who knows where he stands and for whom he stands; the wise (Nebuchadnezzar, the queen-mother) will understand and recognize the role of the hermeneut, while the foolish (the wise men, Belshazzar) will disregard it.

Notice the concerted effort to contrast Nebuchadnezzar with Belshazzar; it initially begins with the Narrator, it is then carried on by the queen-mother, and finally this Judean exile drives the point home. Nebuchadnezzar was the recipient of Yhwh's gifts of sovereignty, honor, greatness, and splendor; this Daniel^C states plainly, but by implication Belshazzar is no such recipient. Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar was given a certain degree of power over life and death, which is essentially similar by description of Yhwh himself.⁴⁸⁵ These are powers that Belshazzar seeks to possess, or at least pretends to possess in front of an elite crowd. As Daniel^C recounts the life of Nebuchadnezzar, his

⁴⁸¹ Goldwurm, pp.167, 168.

⁴⁸² Collins, p.68; Anderson, p.59; Towner, p.74; Lacocque, p.101.

⁴⁸³ Fewell, *Circle*, p.96.

⁴⁸⁴ Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), p.87.

⁴⁸⁵ Fewell, *Circle*, p.96.

trip to and back from insanity, all from the previous chapter, the reader can hardly miss the parallels that are being drawn between the haughtiness of Nebuchadnezzar which is eventually corrected, and the arrogance of Belshazzar that seems hopelessly irreparable.

Nebuchadnezzar the superior king and greater forefather of Belshazzar was finally able to recognize the ultimate sovereignty of Yhwh; this stands in sharp contrast to the heart that refuses to humble itself despite Belshazzar's acute awareness of this story. Despite Belshazzar's supposed ignorance of Daniel^C, which we can no longer believe nor afford the benefit of the doubt for Belshazzar, Daniel^C is by no means ignorant of Belshazzar. In almost an omniscient fashion, Daniel^C reveals his own knowledge of the king who has refused to employ him up to this very point and who denies his awareness of him, his reputation or his abilities. This of course also contrasts with Nebuchadnezzar who learned to depend upon Daniel^C for the final say on critical issues and employed him in crucially important posts.

The shift from Daniel^C's interpretation of king as text to the handwritten words as text is subtle. The conclusion of Daniel^C's assessment of Belshazzar comes in verses 22-23a as he draws the ultimate line of demarcation between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, in that Belshazzar does not humble himself before Yhwh as Nebuchadnezzar had, but instead sets himself up against the Lord of heaven. In this instance, we can understand a little better the agitated attitude that Daniel^C displays toward Belshazzar, more specifically, Daniel^C is offended by the actions and attitude of Belshazzar simply because Yhwh is offended by the actions and attitude of Belshazzar.⁴⁸⁶ Not only does Daniel^C as theological hermeneut speak on behalf of Yhwh, he additionally feels and reacts on behalf of Yhwh. In a sense, we can say of Daniel^C that the degree of how much

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.97.

he loves Yhwh is measured by how much he hates evil. Essentially, Daniel^C advocates a certain placement of emotions and feelings into the hermeneutical equation. John Macquarrie plainly states, “We have to look anew at feelings in religion and its relation to understanding.”⁴⁸⁷ In the same vein Heidegger states that moods are “by no means nothing ontologically... A mood makes manifest ‘how one is, and how one is faring’.”⁴⁸⁸ We become aware of his devout nature *because* of his irritation with Belshazzar, not despite it. True, Daniel^C may not be a paradigm of an ‘objective interpreter’—if there is such a thing—but he stands as a paradigm of a Yahwistic interpreter and invites his emotions to be affected by the text he encounters.

Though verse 23b begins the assessment of the handwriting on the wall, nothing is actually said concerning the words until verse 24. We must notice several components involved in Daniel^C’s final interpretation of the four words before he actually deals directly with them. Daniel^C is shown the words only; no mention is made of anything that Daniel^C comments on, not even the hand that does the writing. Therefore, the vessels from Yhwh’s temple brought in for the drunken revelry and (mis)used by Belshazzar, his nobles, his wives and his concubines, and the ridiculous praise to the inanimate and incognizant gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, and the hand sent to proclaim the words of judgment are all elements that Daniel^C gathers on his own in order to establish context which in turn informs his interpretation. We have already noted the rabbis various solutions for the wise men’s lack of interpretive skill regarding this four word text—and they do indeed remain viable possibilities—but the reason for their ignorance might not be in the enigma of the text itself, but rather in their failure to

⁴⁸⁷ John Macquarrie, *Studies in Christian Existentialism* (London: SCM, 1966) p.33.

⁴⁸⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp.172-73, taken from Thiselton *Two Horizons*, p.162.

establish context. Vanhoozer strongly advocates that context is the prime rule of hermeneutics.⁴⁸⁹ Paul van Buren states, “To examine the word in isolation from its context in the life of religious people is to pursue an abstraction.”⁴⁹⁰ Context is the guiding light that directs Daniel^C in his interpretation of the mysterious handwriting; and without sensitivity to context the plain literal meaning of the four words might fail to be found significant.

This argument naturally leads to the establishment of the literal meaning of *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin*. Basically, here are three market weights determining monetary value, a mina (500 or 600g), a shekel (10g) and a half (half mina or half shekel).⁴⁹¹ Though this might be the translation, still the significance remains to be told. Had the wise men been able to translate these words—and the reader is not led to believe they can—without context, this text is still enigmatic. However, Daniel^C's interpretation does not verbally entail the translation of each word; he only spells out their meaning and application to Belshazzar. “*Mene*: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. *Tekel*: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. *Parsin*: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” Daniel^C applies the significant weight of a mina to the days of Belshazzar's reign, but it has come to an end. However, Daniel^C puts Belshazzar himself into the lightweight category by referring to him as a shekel. And finally the half refers to the division that Babylon will experience when it is given respectively to the Medes and Persians.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁹ Vanhoozer, p.112.

⁴⁹⁰ Paul van Buren, *The Edges of Language* (London: SCM, 1972) p.71, from Thiselton, *Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p.123.

⁴⁹¹ Goldingay, *Daniel*, pp.110-111.

⁴⁹² In this context, I would see *Parsin* as half a mina, rather than dividing what already seems to be a light weight shekel.

In Belshazzar's only moment of shining glory, he fulfills his promise by giving to Daniel^C the reward he had offered upon his arrival. By this act of bestowal of rewards, Belshazzar has made two distinct interpretations. Firstly, we might assume that Belshazzar has incorrectly interpreted Daniel^C's opening harsh words refusing the acceptance of the king's rewards. Offering reward in front of one thousand of his most important nobles necessitated the fulfillment of the promise if for no other reason than to save face.

Secondly, we might assume that Belshazzar interprets the interpretation of Daniel^C as possessing validity and accuracy. How Belshazzar has suddenly come to trust Daniel^C is unexplained. The long, verbose description of contrast between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar must have struck a hard chord of truth within Belshazzar, which, in effect, dropped his guard and made Belshazzar completely vulnerable to the message of the handwriting. The exposition of the history of two kings and their hearts speaks louder than the four words of handwriting on the wall. Had Daniel^C only or initially interpreted the four words without his establishment of context, the likelihood of Belshazzar's acceptance of the message would have decreased dramatically. Daniel^C's piercing address to the heart issue ensured, at least in the mind of Belshazzar, the accuracy and validity of the linguistic issue.

The Handwriting is Fulfilled – 5.30-31

Though the pronouncement of the handwriting on the wall is as assured as the fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, again the results radically differ. After the fulfillment of his dream, Nebuchadnezzar raises his eyes with full cognizance and praises God; Belshazzar simply dies as the fool he lived as. The swiftness of the retribution was

immediate as Belshazzar is slain that very night; one year stands between the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its fulfillment. The reader assumes that Nebuchadnezzar does indeed die, but in peace between Yhwh and himself, and in peace in his kingdom; Belshazzar dies a violent death as an enemy of an offended God and the kingdom 'suffers' a political coup and military overthrow. The reader firstly assumes that Nebuchadnezzar passes his kingdom on to his heirs, an assumption then ascertained by the story of chapter 5; Belshazzar is credited with losing the kingdom to a Mede named Darius who takes over the kingdom at age sixty-two.

What we must conclude is that Belshazzar cannot politically or theologically compete with even a dead king. The two political figureheads are persistently foiled throughout this episode and Nebuchadnezzar, by no other means except by his lasting memory, constantly gains leverage over Belshazzar. We can conjecture that those who dedicate themselves to Yhwh endure because they are servants of Yhwh who endures, as emphatically stated by Nebuchadnezzar. Likewise, the theological hermeneuts, like Daniel^c or Nebuchadnezzar, are long remembered personally and professionally due to the text and Ultratext which they handle with wisdom.

Daniel 6 – The Rise, Fall and Rise of Daniel

Chapter 6 is played out on an entirely different political stage; we no longer have as a backdrop Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar or the Babylonian empire, but rather a Median or Medo-Persian empire whose ruler is Darius. This chapter is the counterpart to chapter 3 in the meta-chiasm that stretches from chapters 2-7, in the respect that the Yahwist is put in harm's way for his refusal to disregard pious devotion in order to obey a royal mandate, much in the same manner that unfolds for Hananiah, Mishael and

Azariah in chapter 3. The overall structure of this episode plays out like a (mis)trial of a court scene and is inclusive of all the necessary elements: law, allegations of breaking the law, indictment, prosecution, witnesses, defendant, judge, sentence and execution. However, this trial neglects the involvement of a higher judge and his verdict in the case at hand.

Darius and his Political Establishment – 6.1-5⁴⁹³

Darius comes on the scene not simply as political successor of Belshazzar, but rather as conqueror and new king of another national kingdom at the age of sixty-two. The personality traits evident in Darius are unique unto himself and quite different from the ones we witness in Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Unlike the two former kings of Babylon, Darius is not of the same egocentricity nor does he feel the need to exert his authority to the extreme extent of causing all subjects to cower in fear. He does not lack the self-assuredness nor does he display an irrational amount of insecurity that we see in Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. The evidence of his political wisdom and personal confidence comes by way of his very first actions taken as the new political leader. Immediately, upon arrival into the narrative, the aged Darius appoints one hundred and twenty satraps, over whom he also appoints three administrators, among whom and superior to the other two is our very own Daniel^c. His ploy of distribution of political responsibility is reminiscent of the words of wisdom Jethro offers to Moses in Exodus 18, which takes an enormous strain off the head of state. However, as we shall see in the coming episode that such great numbers who come together agreeing upon a cause,

⁴⁹³ Again, verse numbering is according to the Christian canon; the Hebrew Bible's numbering for chapter 6 begins with v.2.

especially an evil cause, can swiftly bring great disaster to a seemingly sound distribution of power.

Another notable feature in Darius's political machine is the absence of wise men, astrologers, enchanters, magicians, diviners, and sorcerers. In terms of literary function, these Babylonian positions are neatly replaced by more strictly political ones, administrators, prefects, advisers, governors, and satraps. Despite the similarity by which these two groups function in advisory roles—as well as being contrary to the Yahwist Daniel^c due to their jealousy—we have to take notice of the definite shift in vocabulary. Darius already knows what the reader has also known since the beginning of the narrative: with four significant Jewish exceptions, the wise men, astrologers, enchanters, magicians, diviners, and sorcerers are of no real use to the kingdom. Therefore, Darius does not utilize these offices. This shift in the political establishment has its hermeneutical ramifications as well. By definition the wise men and the lot are hermeneutical, supposedly bridging the gap between natural and supernatural, but when their practice becomes futile, the system requires revamping. The new political positions instituted by Darius are also hermeneutical but on a different plane; these roles bridge the gap between king and commoner. Thus, Darius is set up to be in a place between Nebuchadnezzar, a sincere theologically-minded person and Belshazzar, who is a theological imbecile. Darius is simply a king of practicality and sets up his administration accordingly. This hermeneutical model will necessarily shift again as we will later see in this episode.

No surprise to the reader that Daniel^c is found to be superior than all one-hundred and twenty satraps and the two other administrators. Once again, we see Darius's quick

aptitude to recognize in Daniel^C what the reader has known all along, and thus Daniel^C's rise to political prominence is not stated for the sake of Daniel^C's character development, but rather of Darius's character development. Additionally, the Narrator exposes Darius's intended plan to make Daniel^C head administrator over the whole kingdom, and by doing so Darius is elevated all the more for his recognition of Daniel^C's talents. Daniel^C's capacity for great responsibility is rewarded by the giving of even greater responsibility, and in this way Darius does what Nebuchadnezzar has done and ultimately what Yhwh does in Daniel^C's life. However, what Darius is still short of is the recognition of the source of Daniel^C's abilities.

The plan for Daniel^C's promotion seems to incite the other high ranking politicians to devise a plan for Daniel^C's destruction. After failing to find fault with Daniel^C they come to the conclusion that they have nothing to find in him remotely hinting of any sort of corruption. They do see in Daniel^C, however, his evident devotion to Yhwh, a weak point by their way of thinking. The first quotation uttered by these politicians could have easily come from the mouth of the Narrator himself as they see in Daniel^C what is already obvious to the reader, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God." Daniel^C to them has become their text, putting him under a magnifying glass and they come to the conclusion that he is morally and politically flawless. Therefore, in their quest to find fault with him, they need to change the system into something by which Daniel^C cannot conscientiously abide. The only thing that they can find is his uncompromising piety and his steadfastness in following the law of Yhwh.

In the words of the politicians' assessment of Daniel^C, we reach a crossroads in our discussions of general hermeneutical theory. On one hand we know that Daniel^C is a devout Yahwist, and consequently we have observed his ability to perform well in the field of theological hermeneutics. On the other hand here explicitly for the first time a link is construed between Daniel^C and law, thus necessitating competence in jurisprudential hermeneutics. Even though we know that the law is specifically pertaining to—and essentially inseparable from—his relationship to Yhwh, still we must recognize its legal format. Johann Martin Chladenius states judicial interpretation “must, however, not be grouped with the main type of interpretation, but treated separately with special rules.”⁴⁹⁴ Yet what we witness in Daniel^C is not a separation between theological and judicial interpretation, but an interdisciplinary approach between the two. Themes of justice, authority, respect, order, and morality should be intrinsically reflexive between the characteristics of laws and God, thus creating another hermeneutical circle involving law and Yhwh and making the lawmaker a hermeneut in his own right. In this respect, the ultimate failure of the jealous politicians to construe a law involving king, commoner and deity is strongly anticipated, but the similarities between this chapter and chapter 3 also cause the reader to anticipate some kind of test prior to the eventual outcome.

Legal Enactment, Trickery and Indictment – 6.6-15

Far more intricate than the act of the Chaldeans divulging to Nebuchadnezzar the three Jewish boys' nonconformity to his edict is the well calculated plan of the satraps and administrators. Though equally as evil, these politicians appear to be more contemplative and cunning in their plan against Daniel^C, which works both to confirm and to undermine Darius' choices in his political schema. Though we can fairly

⁴⁹⁴ “Reason and Understanding: Rational Hermeneutics” in *The Hermeneutics Reader*, p.61.

confidently guess that the motive for their plot against Daniel^C is due to professional jealousy or resentment to their inability to use their high position to indulge their own greed,⁴⁹⁵ their actual plan of attack and its alleged political purpose is much more complex.

As we have suggested before, the politicians assume a role of judicial hermeneut without right. They do not know the character of God and thereby do not input his character into the details of the law. On the contrary, they intermix into their suggested law their feelings of jealousy and self-indulgence with a supposed concern for the kingdom. They, much like Darius, seek to put aside theological dimensions in favor of a more practical solution. The resolution that these politicians concoct is to 'petition' the king to sign a decree proclaiming that no one is allowed to 'petition' any other entity besides the king for a period of thirty days. So the question remains, why do they believe the king will sign this and, once again by their way of thinking, effectively snatch Daniel^C. With regard to the latter part of this question, the answer seems blatantly apparent, they have already studied the habits and character of Daniel^C and they know well that he will not alter his devotion to Yhwh or, more specifically, his prayer life. In this much they are absolutely correct, as the story reveals. But what about the former part of this question, why is this proposal likely to be signed by the king?

Various non-exclusive answers to this question avail the reader who must fill in the gaps left by the Narrator at this point. One likely answer that fits the motif that has resurfaced several times (chs. 3, 4, 5) within the Danielic corpus is the plague of vanity.⁴⁹⁶ As another option, the impressive assembly of one hundred and twenty satraps

⁴⁹⁵ Goldingay, *daniel*, p.130.

⁴⁹⁶ Anderson, p.

plus two administrators who uniformly claim the unanimous support of the decree by not only their assemblage but also all the other governors and advisers who are not present is overwhelming and intimidating to any one man. Who else could he consult if every one of his consultants already agrees to the decree?!⁴⁹⁷ To this question, the reader would obviously answer “Daniel^C”, who is obviously not present. We must also notice that what accompanies this petition is absolute deceit on two accounts: 1) although we are aware that the administrators and satraps are in on this plot, the Narrator does not ascertain that the other prefects, governors and advisers are as well;⁴⁹⁸ and, 2) when they say ‘all’ have agreed, we know for sure that Daniel^C has not agreed.⁴⁹⁹ Another alternative comes in the form of political security. If the kingdom is newly established, and therefore susceptible to instability, then the distribution of power may be slightly anxious, and as a corrective measure a temporary edict demanding the sole petitioning to the king seems befitting.⁵⁰⁰ Alshich suggests that the proposal is to make Darius the mediator and intercessor between the people and the gods,⁵⁰¹ which is in effect for our purposes, playing the role of the hermeneut. Perhaps what Darius sees in Daniel^C and his hermeneutical skill is a temptation to possess for himself.

Whatever their reasoning is behind the choice of plot, one thing is certain, at least in their foreseeable plan, it works: the king signs the written decree. As it stands the edict could not be altered in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians. Despite Darius’s political wisdom and personal confidence to which we are introduced in the opening of the episode, we soon find out that Darius is by no means invulnerable. Darius

⁴⁹⁷ Goldwurm, p.178.

⁴⁹⁸ Fewell, *Circle*, p.109.

⁴⁹⁹ Towner, p.81.

⁵⁰⁰ Fewell, *Circle*, p.110.

⁵⁰¹ Moshe Alshich, *Chavatzeles HaSharon*, see in Goldwurm, p.179.

naively fails to see what the reader plainly sees, the manipulation of Darius by these politicians. Firstly, we might ask, has the absence of his most trusted and competent statesman escaped his attention? If the answer is yes, then we might wonder about his perception, or his attention to detail, or his real reliance upon the counsel of Daniel^C. If the answer is no, then we might likewise question his genuine dependence upon Daniel^C's advice or we might come to believe that he is one who folds under the pressure of so many advisers, despite the absence of his highest administrator. In either case, we understand that Darius comes to regret signing this particular law in 6.14 because it has entrapped Daniel^C whom he now remembers as his faithful servant. In addition to the ambiguity of Darius's cognizance of Daniel^C's presence among the satraps and administrators, we must also note that Darius fails to comprehend the magnitude of devotion to Yhwh Daniel^C displays.

The second way in which Darius fails to recognize the manipulation of these politicians is by their use of leverage, emphasizing that this is not just a law, but one that is drafted in accordance with the laws of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be annulled. The odd and seemingly superfluous adage might catch the attention of the reader who is fully aware of the dastardly plan of these politicians, but no such warning signals are received by Darius. While supposing to act in the interest of the king, they are acting in the interest of themselves and ultimately subverting the interests of the king.⁵⁰²

Daniel^C learns of the decree and continues to pray, but the amount of his habitual behavior that changes is ambiguous. Many rabbis believe that Daniel^C retreats to his house as opposed to the synagogue, and he prays in the upper room as opposed to the lower room were Daniel^C's attempts to conceal his behavior, to respect the king, and not

⁵⁰² Fewell, *Circle*, p.110.

to violate the new decree directly.⁵⁰³ If these were his attempts to conceal, then surely he does an uncharacteristically poor job. Yet many other commentators believe that Daniel^C's behavior in prayer is unaltered from the time before the edict to the time after its enactment.⁵⁰⁴ However, we must temporarily suspend answering the question at hand until we actually examine the words of Daniel^C's defense before the king. Furthermore, we must realize that this edict is not a direct violation of Torah; therefore, more is going on than meets the eye.

After the politicians catch Daniel^C in the act of prayer, but prior to the king's knowledge of it, and when asked to confirm the status of the law, Darius clearly replies verbatim, "The decree stands in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be annulled." The politicians then devastatingly divulge to Darius that Daniel^C the Judean exile disregards the decree by praying three times daily. However, the roles played out by the kings of the respective chapters of 3 and 6 are quite disparate. In both cases the wise men or politicians claim that the offenders pay no personal attention to the king; Nebuchadnezzar takes the matter personally and grows furious with rage, while Darius is distressed and considers how he might rescue Daniel^C. While one thinks only of his own honor and interests, the other thinks 'otherly' and disregards personal stake. Nebuchadnezzar demands a face to face confrontation to ascertain the gall of the three defiant Jews, but Darius solemnly remembers the piety of his faithful servant and feels no need to ascertain what he already knows to be the case in his heart.⁵⁰⁵

Nebuchadnezzar is determined to see that the three insolent Jews are punished by fire

⁵⁰³ Goldwurm, pp. 180-81.

⁵⁰⁴ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.131; Baldwin, p.129; Towner, p.83; Porteous, p.90; L. Wood, p.162.

⁵⁰⁵ Fewell, *Circle*, p.112.

seven times hotter, but Darius sets his mind on a rescue mission from the very edict he has signed.

The reader is completely devoid of any other option or plan that Darius may have to get Daniel^C out of the serious trouble he is in; all we know is that he is determined. Ultimately, the reader is only left with a false hope; Darius the king cannot rescue Daniel^C despite his efforts that last until that day's sunset. Squelching any efforts that Darius may have exerted, the conniving politicians conveniently and persistently remind the king that nothing can change the law of the king according to the law of the Medes and Persians, implicitly not even the king himself. At least in this respect, the politicians are clear in their judicial interpretation. Any exception to the rule would endanger his own position as king, and perhaps even endanger the kingdom as a whole. Clearly the law of the Medes and Persians is a higher authority than the king himself. The reader has to come to grips with the fact that Darius is ultimately helpless to save Daniel^C, and from the perspective of Darius, Daniel^C must rely upon the help of his own god. And from the perspective of the politicians, their plan is perfectly 'executed', the only problem is that they are completely unaware that the deity whom Daniel^C serves is real and active, a small matter which not only thwarts their overall plan, but backfires with a 'roaring' vengeance.

Daniel in the Lions' Den – 6.16-20

At last Darius has to come to grips with the reality that his attempts to deliver Daniel^C have utterly failed, and it is he who must give the command to throw Daniel^C into the den of lions. As Darius leaves Daniel^C to face the lions, he helplessly announces that Daniel^C's God must come to his rescue, "Your god, whom you honor so consistently,

he must deliver you.”⁵⁰⁶ This proclamation sharply contrasts with the words of Nebuchadnezzar to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah as they are threatened with the fiery furnace: “What god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”⁵⁰⁷ If prayer to Yhwh gets Daniel^C into this situation, perhaps it will likewise get him out. Firstly we must notice that the responsibility for the rescue lies solely in the hands of Yhwh, which really comes to no surprise to the reader, who knows full well that he is the only source of salvation. Furthermore, the appeal to Yhwh for deliverance lies solely in the hands of Daniel^C, Darius makes no attempts to appeal to the God of Daniel^C. In other words, Darius is not the theological hermeneut that the new law claims he is, not even during this thirty day period. Yhwh is the only all-powerful one who rescues and who is worthy to receive the prayers of the people. Furthermore, Daniel^C remains as the only one who makes intercession to Yhwh.

As Daniel^C is placed in the lions’ pit with a stone securing the entrance, Darius seals it with his signet ring in order that Daniel^C’s condition would remain unchanged. Ironically, though not even Darius can change the situation from outside the pit, it is his authority that prevents any alteration to the circumstances. Yet his authority does not extend into the inside of the pit and cannot possibly control anything that might happen on the inside; thus any rescue is entirely in the hands of Yhwh. So while Darius shuts the mouth of the den, Yhwh sends his angels to shut the mouth of the lions. While Darius spends that night without eating, so do the lions.⁵⁰⁸ Darius’s refusal of entertainment and his sleepless condition may be indicative of his guilty conscience for being tricked into signing a foolish decree, or for his powerlessness to rescue Daniel^C, or perhaps for giving

⁵⁰⁶ Goldingay, ’s own translation, p.120.

⁵⁰⁷ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.132.

⁵⁰⁸ Fewell, *Circle*, p.115.

the orders to place Daniel^C in the pit. In any case his concern for Daniel^C seems to be a genuine sentiment.

Early in the following morning the anxious king rushes to the lions' den to discover Daniel^C's status. His call to Daniel^C is interesting; he is identified as a continually serving servant of the living God, but Darius's critical question hinges upon the saving power of this God.

Justification of Daniel – 6.21-24

Daniel^C's status as living is evidence of his justification. Daniel^C's verbiage is the recital of his justification; both point to Daniel^C's justifier, Yhwh. In this episode like no other does the meaning of Daniel^C's name have serious implications. "God is my judge" is truly indicative of the reason for his justification. Daniel^C begins his response to Darius with words he never uttered to Nebuchadnezzar, and therefore quite uncharacteristic: "O King, live forever!" Daniel^C firstly explains the means by which he is saved by telling Darius that angels were sent by his God to shut the mouths of the lions, but far more importantly, he reveals to Darius the reason he is saved. Daniel^C's deliverance is solely due to the fact that he is innocent in the sight of Yhwh. This naturally leads to Daniel^C's next proclamation: "as also before you, your majesty, I have done nothing injurious."⁵⁰⁹ If Daniel^C is found innocent before the supreme power, then he should be found innocent before a power who receives his power from the superior power. Darius joyfully gives the orders to lift Daniel^C from the lions' den, and thereby participates in the proclamation of Daniel^C's justification.

The question of innocence begs to be explored. Let us firstly notice the difference between the two counterparts in the meta-chiasm. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are

⁵⁰⁹ Goldingay's own translation, p.120.

clearly guilty of defying the law of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 3, and when given a second chance to obey, they refuse and prefer death as ‘guilty’ offenders of Nebuchadnezzar’s law rather than life as ‘innocent’ compliers. Yet in Daniel^C’s apparent act of civil disobedience, he claims innocence though his actions expose his supposed guilt. The act of judicial interpretation implies that only a judge or someone who claims the duties of a judge can be responsible for an interpretation of law.⁵¹⁰ In other words, a judge must decide what the law says, what it is trying to say and how it might be applicable to any given situation. In this case Yhwh is the judge, or at least Daniel^C’s judge, while Daniel^C performs the duties of a judge based upon his understanding of the supreme judge. The other politicians are fully cognizant of the devotion that Daniel^C has to Yhwh and his law, thus they try to enact a law that would cause a conflict between the two, knowing that his stronger allegiance falls on the side of God’s law. The politicians coerce Darius to sign the decree for the sake of security and as a protection against conspiracy.⁵¹¹

The reader is not allowed access to the actual prayer of Daniel^C in his upper chamber, yet s/he is challenged to fill in the gaps according to Daniel^C’s contextual claim of innocence. We must that several integral components are at work. Firstly, we must assume that Daniel^C in his judicial interpretation does not accentuate the letter of the law but rather the spirit of the law. More specifically, his prayer is not a violation of the spirit of the law that seeks to protect the kingdom against conspiracy. Whether or not Daniel^C is cognizant of the evil motives of personal and professional vendetta against him as reason for the law is debatable, though the reader might conclude that Daniel^C could very well

⁵¹⁰ Chladenius, p.61.

⁵¹¹ Fewell, *Circle*, p.110.

know this. Secondly, we might also surmise that his prayer is actually in conjunction with the spirit of the law inasmuch as his prayer might conscientiously concern itself with the security of the kingdom and perhaps against the real conspirators in the system. In Daniel^C's words of defense, he simply states that he does the king no harm;⁵¹² in other words his prayer complies with the spirit of the law and neither works to conspire nor to destabilize security. Therefore, we can justify Daniel^C's claim to innocence according to his judicial interpretation.

At the king's command the conspiring politicians and their families are to receive the same penalty that would have befallen Daniel^C had Yhwh not found him innocent and protected his life. This is practice in ancient law, specifically based upon such a text as Deuteronomy 19.16-21.⁵¹³ False accusations lead to retribution of the accusers with the same punishment determined for the accused innocent. This is similarly seen in the apocryphal episode of Susanna and her accusers, who are likewise put to death for their fabricated allegations that would have resulted in a death sentence for Susanna. In so doing, they "fulfill the law of Moses and put them to death, and innocent blood was saved in that day."⁵¹⁴ The quick consumption of the politicians further confirms the innocence of Daniel^C in the eyes of Yhwh, as well as revealing the effectiveness of his prayer.

This episode does not, as opposed to Towner at this point, pit the law of man against the law of God.⁵¹⁵ If this was the case, Daniel^C's plea would not be one of innocence, but more reflective of the defiance of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah before Nebuchadnezzar. Rather, we witness Daniel^C as judicial hermeneut who deciphers the

⁵¹² Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.120, 134; Fewell, *Circle*, p.115. The same word is used to say that the lions did Daniel^C no harm.

⁵¹³ Goldingay also cites Prov.19.5; 21.28; Esth. 7.10, p.134.

⁵¹⁴ 13.62. Again also in 14.41 in a similar Daniel in the lions' den episode.

⁵¹⁵ Towner, p.78, though he never actually identifies what the law of God really is.

law according to its spirit and in accordance with his devotion to Yhwh, whereby he contextualizes the law in order to put it into the perspective of the grand scheme.

Doxology of Darius – 6.25-27

In the last moments of this episode, Darius initiates a new ‘God-fearing’ law, gives his doxology and gracefully exits the narrative, but the readerly activity is incomplete regarding the future of this royal character Darius. The story of Daniel^C serving under the kingship of Darius is the last of the court-tales, but we might ask if the Narrator does not intend for the reader to draw further conclusions about Darius based upon what we already know about the progressive turn of Nebuchadnezzar’s heart. Before the Narrator offers an epilogue to the episode regarding Daniel^C’s political promotion, Darius has the final words of the chapter. His decree is that people all over his kingdom must fear and revere the god of Daniel^C. Furthermore, he enthusiastically proclaims a doxology, which is reminiscent of the one offered by Nebuchadnezzar two chapters back, in order to justify his new decree, which is also suggestive of the one issued by Nebuchadnezzar at the end of chapter 3. Even though we do not witness the explicit conversion of Darius—after all, he still refers to Yhwh as Daniel^C’s god—do the decree and the doxology suggest to the reader that he too will take a similar path as the one already walked by Nebuchadnezzar?

The progressive road of conversion to Yahwism taken by Nebuchadnezzar was a three step process: 1) personal recognition of Yhwh’s ultimate supremacy and power in revealing the future in chapter 2; 2) the affirmation of the worthiness of Yahwism and the decree that no one can speak against Yhwh who showed his power to save in chapter 3; and, 3) the complete conversion of Nebuchadnezzar to Yahwism and his offering of his

doxology to Yhwh, who can destroy and restore, after he regains his sanity. In the closing remarks of Darius, elements of all three stages of Nebuchadnezzar exist. In chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar proclaims Daniel^C's god to be the God of gods and lord of kings, while Darius proclaims Daniel^C's god to be the living God, implying his own recognition of the lifelessness and hence powerlessness of all other deities. In chapter 3 Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the saving power of Yhwh from the fiery furnace, while Darius readily appreciates the rescuing action of Yhwh from the power of the lions. Also in chapter 3 Nebuchadnezzar decrees that no one is allowed to speak against Yhwh, while Darius makes the law that all must fear and revere Yhwh. Nebuchadnezzar addresses all peoples in his kingdom in both chapters 3 and 4, as does Darius in chapter 6. The doxology of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 reiterates the everlasting quality of Yhwh's kingdom, which will never be subject to destruction; the same claims are likewise echoed by Darius. What the reader must do is grapple with the prompting of the Narrator, who leaves the reader with the suggestion that if logical conclusions were to be drawn from the information already given, that the reader should likely anticipate a similar conversion in Darius as has been witnessed in the Nebuchadnezzar. Such a conversion is not expressed by the Narrator; it is solely left to the reader to fulfill his/her obligations as a 'good' reader. If the reader draws the conclusion that the conversion of Darius is imminent, then that would also lead the reader to come to believe that he too could have the necessary components to become a 'good' interpreter. The conversion of Darius would seem more plausible than the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar since the Narrator presents far fewer hurdles before Darius than had laid before Nebuchadnezzar. If it could happen to Nebuchadnezzar, then it could surely happen for Darius.

Daniel Advances Again – 6.28

The motif of political advancement for faithful Yahwists pervades throughout the earlier half of the narrative. Again and again, this theological dialogue is at work; Yhwh endows some with giftedness, in turn the wise utilize these gifts to bring honor back to Yhwh, who then grants the wise more abilities and talents, which are then further used for the service to Yhwh, and so forth. The evidence of this relationship is demonstrated by the recognition of these abilities by higher figureheads who grant greater responsibility in the political arena.

CHAPTER 6
THE GRADUATE COURSES –
DANIELIC HERMENEUTICS IN PRAXIS

“Hermeneutics is above all a practice, the art of understanding and of making understood to someone else.”

-Hans-Georg Gadamer⁵¹⁶

“The idea of revelation is a twofold idea. The God who reveals himself is a hidden God and hidden things belong to him. The one who reveals himself is also the one who conceals himself.”

-Paul Ricoeur⁵¹⁷

Chapter 7 of Daniel^B is the beginning of a new section within the narrative; this is not only an overwhelmingly accepted consensus among Danielic historical-critical scholars,⁵¹⁸ but it is also a natural division for reading Daniel^B as an exercise in hermeneutics. While there are precious few issues on which Danielic scholars concur,⁵¹⁹ the division of the book between 2-6 and 7-12 is probably the most agreed upon. Scholars like D.S. Russell⁵²⁰ and J.J. Collins⁵²¹ who advocate different sources and dates between the earlier half of the book and the latter half of the book are most pronounced in their advancement of the distinctiveness between the two halves of the book. To their credit the anti-Antiochene attitude so prevalent in the latter half of the narrative is not so blatant

⁵¹⁶ See *Promise of Hermeneutics*, p.134.

⁵¹⁷ “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation” in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, p.93.

⁵¹⁸ Many, if not most, scholars hold to the division between chapters 6 and 7 based upon genre—and might I add narration—yet some insist upon a division that more appropriately corresponds to the linguistic shift between chapters 7 and 8, and others advocate the division between 7 and 8 to keep the integrity of the chiasm between chapters 2-7.

⁵¹⁹ Baldwin, p.17; Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees*, p.14.

⁵²⁰ Russell, p.4.

⁵²¹ Collins, *Apocalyptic Visions*, pp.7-11.

in the earlier half,⁵²² and the relatively peaceful coexistence between pagan and Yahwistic communities in the first half of the narrative is absent in the latter half. Beyond the matters of historical referents, most Danielic scholars point to the literary differences in genre between the court-tales of chapters 2-6 and the apocalyptic visions of 7-12. These notable scholars strongly support the division between the earlier half of the narrative and the latter half; among them are—to name some but certainly not all: Lacocque, Y. Kaufmann, Porteous, Davies, Heaton, Towner, Baldwin, Walvoord, Wood, Goldingay, Montgomery, Wesselius, Fewell, and others.⁵²³

In our particular treatment of Daniel^B, chapter 7 is also viewed as the beginning of a new section within the literary corpus. In brief I concur with the general consensus concerning the division that occurs at chapter 7 but for reasons that are not primarily historical-critically informed. This is not to say that these historical elements are not of interest, but that they are peripheral to our distinctively hermeneutical perspective. The introduction to Danielic hermeneutics is presented to the reader in chapter 1 of Daniel^B; the observation of Daniel^C at work, which gives the reader a theoretical foundation to interpret, is given in chapters 2-6, in what I have called for our purposes ‘undergraduate courses’; now in chapters 7-12 the reader is brought to the point where s/he is challenged to participate actively in the act of interpretation, in what I have deemed ‘graduate courses’. P.R. Davies summarizes proficiently, “It has always been the case that, on the

⁵²² In short, the latter half of Daniel^B is peppered with references to Antiochus IV Epiphanes in a sternly negative connotation, yet the earlier half of the book is relatively absent of these references.

⁵²³ Lacocque, pp.8-10; Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* (Chicago, 1960) p.432; Porteous, p.13; Davies, p.12; Heaton, pp.47-54, though he is far more reluctant to count ch.7 as strictly belonging to the latter half of the book; Towner, p.1; Baldwin, p.18; Walvoord, pp.15-16; Wood, p.18; Goldingay, p.xxv; Montgomery, pp.88-96; Jan-Wim Wesselius, “The Writing of Daniel” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, pp.291-310, this is a recent and thorough investigation of the topic; Fewell, by the very fact that her first edition of *Circle of Sovereignty* only dealt with chs.1-6, and her later edition including chs.7-12 lacked the same tenacity.

whole, the stories of the first half of Daniel have more appeal to laypeople, while the visions of the second half are more intriguing to scholars.”⁵²⁴ This sentiment is mirrored by Michael Knibb who makes the observation that the material in 7-12 is essentially scholarly.⁵²⁵ In applying these insightful notes of observation to our study at hand, we might say that Daniel^B eventually seeks to turn a layman into a scholar. Several components intrinsic to chapters 7-12 demand that we attend to the literary and thematic shift that is occurring; specifically the narrational point of view, character development, cosmology and genre.

Throughout the earlier half of the narrative, the Narrator does not give the reader access to the inner thoughts of Daniel^C; from the Narrator the reader only knows of Daniel^C by what is spoken or performed by him. As the focus of the latter half of the narrative is primarily on the thoughts, visions, and understandings of Daniel^C, the most appropriate voice to employ is that of the first-person. The use of first-person narration has several important implications for the reader. Firstly, as we have previously noted, the Narrator plays a type of pedagogical role when he introduces the reader to Daniel^C and his methods of interpretation; but as any good pedagogue will do, he must ultimately lead the reader to know Daniel^C, not just know about Daniel^C. From the voice of the first-person narrator, the reader now encounters Daniel^C. Secondly, as the exercises in hermeneutics become practical, a more active role is required of the reader. The reader in the process of reading now personally vocalizes the sentiments of Daniel^C as ‘I’; in so doing a personal connection is established with Daniel^C, as the reader will now also struggle for interpretation, and ultimately will arrive at a point of identity as an

⁵²⁴ Davies, p.12.

⁵²⁵ Michael Knibb, “The Book of Daniel in its Context” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, p. 17.

interpreter. Through the reading of first-person narration, the reader becomes in a sense a practitioner of hermeneutics.

Going hand in hand with the first-person narration of the latter half of the narrative is the observation of character development, though not as we might initially suspect. Though the challenges that Daniel^C meets in the earlier half vary from episode to episode, his actual character is actually quite static: he is a devoted Yahwist, morally impeccable, skillfully wise, and will inevitably solve the mystery at hand. He does not develop as a character from the time of his introduction in chapter 1. However, as we come to know Daniel^C firsthand from his memoirs we gather an altogether different picture of him, though not in terms of his devotion to Yhwh, his morality or even his wisdom, but in how his skills of interpretation are called into question. Yet character development is not really what the reader witnesses in Daniel^C; instead the reader gets the full picture of Daniel^C as s/he gets a glimpse into the psychological stress that accompanies the task of understanding the things of God. This again is something to which the Narrator has never made the reader privy. Essentially character development occurs in *the reader* as a result of understanding the full—and frail—nature of Daniel^C as interpreter. Like Daniel^C who sees how all things are connected, the reader must likewise comprehend the holistic status of the paradigm of the good hermeneut.

The cosmological claims of the latter half of the narrative are explicitly emphasized, whereas they are only latent in the earlier half of the narrative. The distance between the mortal and divine grows to greater lengths in the apocalyptic visions of the latter half. The occasional activities of Yhwh in the life of Daniel^C (causing Ashpenaz to favor Daniel^C, sending angels to shut the lions' mouths) are absent in the latter half. God

is only spoken of with deeper reverence and in more transcendent terms; in short there is less immanence in his character. Due to the increased distance between man and God, we cannot help but notice that another hermeneut comes into play with regard to interpretation. No longer is one hermeneut (Daniel^C) capable of bridging this growing gap, rather two hermeneuts become necessary; one that communicates the message from God embodied in an angelic figure and the other who receives the message from God in the person of Daniel^C. The angelic messengers must interpret the message of God and translate it into a conceivable fashion for Daniel^C who is chosen to complete the bridge to mortal man. Furthermore, the angelic messengers are also commissioned to ensure that Daniel^C truly understands the message. This is a profound commentary on the issue of inspiration, and with it a promotion of a hermeneutics of faith: Daniel^C must admit to his inadequacies in order to get this inspiration. The issue of the text likewise becomes more complex; not only do we have two hermeneuts but we also have two texts, one being the vision itself and the other being the interpretation of the vision, which necessitates yet another interpretation.

The increase of distance between immanence and transcendence,⁵²⁶ and the more overtly presence of angelic beings⁵²⁷ are indicative of the change occurring in genre. Though Daniel^B as a whole is generally regarded as an apocalypse, within this generic classification are two sub-genres: court-tales and apocalyptic visions. The series of apocalyptic visions we find in the latter half of the narrative has much to imply in terms of hermeneutics. The reader is given the text of Daniel^C's vision and even the interpretation of a heavenly hermeneut, but many issues remain unresolved, or rather are

⁵²⁶ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp.126-33.

⁵²⁷ Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, p.234; Collins *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, p.4.

left for the reader to find resolution. Such apocalyptic visions lead naturally to the exercise of the reader's own interpretation. The shift to the literary genre of apocalypse reveals a text in which the reader's interpretive practice must be enacted.

Taking my cue from the shift in narrational voice, character development, cosmology and genre, I too must necessarily make a coincidental shift. Up to this point commenting has revolved around our diligent search for the observations of Daniel^C and the theories intrinsic to his methods of interpretation, but for this latter half demanding the interpretive practice of the reader, much broader strokes must be applied in our approach to the text. Here is the dilemma as stated earlier in our Chapter 1: though I have taken the responsibility to be the ideal/informed reader and thus far have read accordingly, ultimately my reading has been on one hand uniquely individual, and on the other hand conscientiously communal for pistic and academic communities. Yet as we embark upon the text that I uphold as a practice in hermeneutics, I believe that our purposes will be best served if I reveal the methods by which Daniel^B is leading the reader to practice interpretation. In other words, I wish to reserve my comments to the revealing of the demands placed upon the reader to practice interpretation, rather than engaging in a 'readerly' activity of interpretation. As we have already stated, there are—and bound to be—as many interpretations as there are interpreters. To play the reader in this case may be overly confident and extremely naïve.

Once again however, our emphasis is clearly upon the pistic community of today in our search for contemporary interpretations and applications. Therefore, in the latter half of Daniel^B in dealing with the praxis of interpretation, each episode will conclude

with implications for the reader's responsibility in this regard. In short, what is expected of the reader in terms of praxis will be explored.

Hermeneutical Quality of Daniel 7

Before we begin to explore the practical lessons of hermeneutics in chapter 7, we need to examine the intricacies of this pivotal chapter. We have already discussed the hermeneutical nature of chapter 7 bridging the gap between the earlier half and the latter half of the narrative, but it is worth review at this point before we begin to explore the interpretive workings of this chapter. Linguistically chapter 7 is the last episode in Aramaic and therefore shares links with chapters 2-6. Chapter 7 is the closing component in the chiasmic structure of chapters 2-7, which puts chapter 7 also in association with chapters 2-6.⁵²⁸ By genre, however, a definite shift occurs; Daniel^C no longer plays his role in the court of a foreign king, but instead he finds himself by way of a vision observing the activities of a heavenly court, and therefore chapter 7 finds commonalty with the latter chapters of 8-12. As we have just mentioned, the original Narrator of chapters 1-6 introduces Daniel^C as the new narrator, who will continue to narrate for the remainder of the book. Hand in hand with the change in narration, a temporal change is likewise made; chapters 1-6 move chronologically from Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar to Darius, while chapters 7-12 revert back to the first year of Belshazzar then proceeds to the third year of Belshazzar and to the first year of Darius to the third year of King Cyrus. Narrationally and chronologically chapter 7 is connected with chapters 8-12. Apart from language, structure, genre, and chronology, the actual content of this chapter brings together two disparate entities, those of immanence and transcendence in that Yhwh is so

⁵²⁸ The chiasm is as follows: chs. 2&7 speak of four earthly kingdoms followed by an eternal kingdom of God; chs. 3&6 present a miraculous rescue to those who remain faithful in their Yahwism; chs. 4&5 demonstrate the haughtiness of earthly kings and show the judgments of Yhwh upon them. (cite)

high above and most reverently presented, yet he does make his only appearance, and in a man's dream no less. Essentially, chapter 7 finds connections with chapters 2-6 and 8-12 and works to tie the two distinct sections together, and is like, so to speak, a hermeneut that mediates between languages, genres and times.

Daniel 7 – The Court of Heaven Casts Judgment

Daniel 7 has been regarded by modern scholarship as the single most important chapter of the entire book for a multitude of reasons.⁵²⁹ Lacocque states the case all the more emphatically, “With it, Holy Scripture reaches one of its highest summits.”⁵³⁰ In terms of historical criticism, the identifications of the four beasts on the political playing field of the ancient Near East are of great concern.⁵³¹ New Testament scholars are fascinated with the unique usage of the term ‘Son of Man’ and how Jesus and the four evangelists employ the term to refer to Jesus.⁵³² Apocalypse scholars are likewise engrossed with both the antecedents to the composition of this chapter as well as its influence on later apocalypses, especially Revelation.⁵³³ Old Testament scholars conjecture about the biblical and other ancient Near Eastern sources that lie behind this tradition.⁵³⁴ Old Testament theologians are greatly intrigued by the usage of the term ‘Ancient of Days’ and how this term works in its context as well as in Old Testament theology as a whole.

The exploration of Daniel 7 from our narrowed vantage point is no less fascinating. In addition to the aforementioned elements, we also encounter a dream-text,

⁵²⁹ Towner, p.91.

⁵³⁰ Lacocque, p.122.

⁵³¹ Lacocque, p.123.

⁵³² I. Howard Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press: 1990), pp.63ff.

⁵³³ J.J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp.210ff.

⁵³⁴ Goldingay, *Daniel*, pp.148-152.

an angelic interpretation and a less-than confident Daniel^C, all within a context that is itself a bit baffling. The remaining implications for the reader/interpreter are certainly heavy.

Introducing Daniel as Narrator and his Literary Medium – 7.1

Chronologically in this narrative world, this episode takes place sometime between chapters 4 and 5, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar but well before the final blow to Belshazzar. The timeline of the latter half of the narrative forces the reader to reflect upon the previous episodes that could possibly surround these events temporally. In other words, the actions of Daniel^C in previous episodes inform the current visionary revelations, and these visions likewise re-inform the interpretations of Daniel^C in previous episodes in a reflexive relationship. We shall make note of this at a later point.

For the first time Daniel^C himself is the recipient of an implicitly divinely inspired nocturnal vision. According to Lacocque, in conventional oriental thinking, the king was the receptor par excellence of oracles;⁵³⁵ now that Daniel^C is the receptor of prophetic visions, the theological suggestion is that he attains a status that is equal, if not greater, than that of royalty. Indeed, Daniel^C reaches such a high elevation due to his position as the hermeneut that stands as the messenger between God and king. As Daniel^C plays the part that we have seen the kings play as a recipient of a theologically based text, the position of hermeneut that stands between God and man is not eliminated, rather another mediator must fill in this gap, as we will notice.

We need not belabor the point too exhaustively or unnecessarily concerning the position of Daniel^C as narrator who records his memoirs by rote. We have already mentioned this narrational shift several times and have been anticipating this moment for

⁵³⁵ Lacocque, p.37.

some time now when the assumedly dead Daniel^C's written memoirs are presented to the reader by the Narrator. From this position the reader is being challenged to participate more actively in the act of interpretation, to understand that Daniel^C the great hermeneut of the past needs successors. Roland Barthes concurs, "The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author."⁵³⁶ This 'death-of-the-author' theory is not simply a literary convention imposed upon the text; it is indeed inherent in the text with one primary goal in mind: that is, the other component of this theory, the reader, will truly come to life as a practicing hermeneut. The author is inaccessible and it is the reader who is left with the responsibility to sort things out in terms of interpretation, and hence the role of the reader is upgraded.

Though the narration is primarily taken over by Daniel^C through his memoirs as prime sources, the Narrator continues to be an active but subtle force as the one who presents Daniel^C and his memoirs to the reader. The written quality of this latter half of the narrative as opposed to the earlier half having a sense of the Narrator's 'aurally textured' presentation makes a difference in the interpretive endeavor. As Culler puts it, "Writing is divorced from the origin whereas oral speech has a direct context; writing can lead to misunderstanding more so than oral communication."⁵³⁷ Once again, and based upon this statement, we can see that the demands of reading and interpreting this expressly written material is becoming increasingly more rigorous.

The issue of sources too has its hermeneutical implications. The student of Danielic hermeneutics has thus far learned much from the exemplary paradigm of interpretation found in Daniel^C, but s/he has yet to hear directly from Daniel^C. As a

⁵³⁶ Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text* (New York, Hill, 1985), p.148.

⁵³⁷ Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p.100.

pedagogue the Narrator has nurtured the reader to acquaint him/herself with the works of Daniel^C by means of the Narrator's own narration—essentially a secondary source—but now the student must become familiar with the literary works of Daniel^C as primary sources. To state the case in a contemporary context, it is not sufficient enough to learn about Philo, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Schleiermacher, Ricoeur, Gadamer, Derrida, et cetera without eventually engaging in their actual works. However, the Narrator's introduction to Daniel^C, his methods and foundational theories of interpretation are by no means indispensable. Surely even the most skilled of readers would find the latter half of the Danielic narrative difficult to decipher or interpret without proper contextualization or without acquisition of the fundamentals available in the earlier half of the narrative. This is a major reason I have chosen to deem the earlier chapters as undergraduate courses in hermeneutics, prerequisites that naturally lead to the more difficult, more complex and more sophisticated readings, curriculum I identify as graduate courses. In our contemporary analogy often knowledge about such great hermeneuts as Schleiermacher, Ricoeur and others and their fundamental premises is helpful prior to embarking upon the actual readings of their own works.

The Vision of the Four Beasts – 7.2-8

In many ways the retelling of this vision is ambiguous, and in terms of the vision at night ambiguity is present from the very outset. We can either understand this phrase to be that Daniel^C sees in his vision as a night scene, symbolic of the exile,⁵³⁸ or Daniel^C's vision occurs at night,⁵³⁹ which fits the scene contextually since the Narrator tells that Daniel^C was on his bed. In either case, Daniel^C graphically describes the succession of

⁵³⁸ Malbim in Goldwurm, p.194.

⁵³⁹ Ibn Ezra in Goldwurm, p.194.

four grotesque beasts that arise from the great sea that is stirred up by four winds of heaven. Like the description of the four-metal statue of chapter 2, Daniel^C describes these beasts as having chronological order. But unlike the statue of chapter 2, these beasts are distinct from one another and cannot be interpreted as being a single entity. However, the redundancy of the four kingdom scheme must be seen in light of the dream-text of chapter 2; “redundancy increases predictability by decreasing the number of possible alternatives.”⁵⁴⁰ The vivid description of the successive beasts and their activities essentially becomes the text that is laid out for the interpreter.

The outright presentation of the mysterious text is contrary to the literary motif to which the reader has become accustomed thus far. In episodes past the mysterious text is not revealed initially; the reader must wait with great anticipation to discover this mysterious text and its meaning. The reader is given the text but now must wait patiently alongside Daniel^C for its interpretation. What we might conclude from this is still a debate that rages in contemporary scholarship, that is to say the relationship between text and interpreter. In the earlier half of the narrative, we always have the presence of an interpreter firstly and then come the display and interpretation of the text. Now we have the presence of the text and await the arrival of the interpreter. Theories range in this regard. Fish claims that texts and readers are independent and competing entities whose spheres of influence and responsibilities must be defined and controlled, but within a context of an interpretive community. For Fish, both readers and texts fall under the category of interpretation.⁵⁴¹ Derrida partially captures the notion: “A text, in part, makes

⁵⁴⁰ Janice Capel Anderson, “Double and Triple Stories, the Implied Reader, and Redundancy in Matthew” in *Semeia* 31, p.82.

⁵⁴¹ Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* p.12, 17.

a reader—like a letter makes an addressee.”⁵⁴² Susan Handelman asserts that “interpretation is not essentially separate from the text itself—an external act intruded upon it—but rather the extension of the text.”⁵⁴³ What we discover from the whole of the presentation of Daniel^B is a reflexive relationship between text and interpreter, where we find text we also find interpreter, and where we find interpreter we also find text.

The Vision of the Court – 7.9-14

The vision of Daniel^C continues as he views the arrival of the heavenly court. A lengthy and majestic description is given of the presiding judge, namely the Ancient of Days. As the little horn is found to be in contempt of court and is sentenced to a fatal condemnation, the other beasts are stripped of their authority, though allowed to survive for a period of time. Suddenly one like the son of man is led into the presence of the Ancient of Days, who gives to the son of man authority and an everlasting kingdom. The imagery of this figure and the rock cut without human hands work to interpret each other, just as the beasts and the metallic elements function to interpret each other.

We must also note at this point the use of metaphor and symbolism in this vision of chapter 7, and the further visions of later chapters. Symbols and metaphors are an important aspect of the message in the earlier half of the narrative but not nearly as critical in the latter half. Imagery is an integral part of the apocalyptic motif; in fact it is a factor that helps define the very genre.⁵⁴⁴ Metaphors, according to Peter Macky, appeal to the whole person, not simply the intellect;⁵⁴⁵ in so doing they appeal to a reader’s search

⁵⁴² Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, p.17.

⁵⁴³ In Jacob Neusner, *Canon and Connection* (Lanham, MD: U. Press of America, 1987), p.xi.

⁵⁴⁴ Paul Hanson cites several examples: Deutero/Trito-Isaiah, pp.70, 121, 147, 150, 183, 198-99, 200-201; Ezekiel, p. 234; Zech. 9-14, pp.332, 336, 343, 346, 360.

⁵⁴⁵ Peter Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought* (Livingston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990) p.1.

for gestalt, the total sum of character. In effect, the use of metaphor can be viewed as a further attempt to mold the reader into the ideal interdisciplinary interpreter whose qualities are laid out in chapter 1 as exemplified by Daniel^c, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Reading of figurative language becomes slippery and is essentially dependent upon some other literal use.⁵⁴⁶ However, what 'literal' referent is envisioned by the reader from these images is not consistent from era to era, culture to culture, individual to individual. Therefore the act of interpretation of symbolic language is an ongoing process, never reaching an interpretation to end all interpretations. As we have seen in poststructural criticism, every referent itself refers to another referent.⁵⁴⁷ In terms of interpreting imagery, we will do well to keep Derrida's words in mind; "so it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow."⁵⁴⁸

We cannot possibly overlook the awesome presence of the Ancient of Days in this vision. This vivid appearance far exceeds the subtle vision of the stone uncut by human hands in chapter 2. Though it is obvious we must note that Yhwh does not only implicitly give the vision but he himself is also explicitly given in it.⁵⁴⁹ Sigmund Freud recognizes dreams as holy writ,⁵⁵⁰ and in this case it is holy writ within holy writ. Thus we need to recognize the hermeneutical circle at work in this case; God gives the dream, the dream refers to God, God sends an interpreting angel, the angel refers back to the everlasting God and his kingdom.

⁵⁴⁶ Macky, p.37.

⁵⁴⁷ Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible*, p.130.

⁵⁴⁸ Derrida quoted in Eco, *Role of the Reader*, p.34.

⁵⁴⁹ Kenneth Dauber, "The Bible as Literature: Reading Like the Rabbis" in *Semeia* 31, p.29.

⁵⁵⁰ Handelman, p.xv.

The Angelic Interpretation – 7.15-27

As a major point of ambiguity, we have to come to the conclusion that we cannot be certain if this section occurs inside his dream or outside. If outside the presence of an angel is of no surprise since chapters 3, 4 and 6 allude to their interactivity with mortals. If we assume that Daniel^C is still in dream-mode then what we must find intriguing is that Daniel^C himself has become a part of this dream-text in a very vivid manner. No longer is he simply an observer of the happenings as a dreamer, but he has entered into this text in a participatory role. Daniel^C is having a vision of having a vision, and in a partial sense, Daniel^C becomes his own text.

Before asking or receiving the interpretation of the vision from this angelic being, Daniel^C is troubled in his spirit by what passes through his mind. This confirms what we have noted earlier with regard to the powerful use of the metaphor; it does not solely appeal to the intellect, but to the whole person. We can assume that Daniel^C does indeed fail to understand this vision intellectually at this time, but we can assert no such prospect in terms of his intuition. Gadamer quotes F.C. Oetinger on the issue of intuition: “the whole of life has its center in the heart, which by means of common sense grasps countless things all at the same time.”⁵⁵¹ Daniel^C grasps something that troubles him, what we are unsure of, but his intuition is at work; the reader too is unsure of not only the vision but also of Daniel^C and must put into similar practice the work of the his/her own intuition. The intuitive natures of Daniel^C and the implied reader become parallel functions.

⁵⁵¹ Gadamer, p.29.

The angel gives Daniel^C the short version of the interpretation, which Daniel^C finds to be unsatisfactory.⁵⁵² He pushes the issue further by inquiring into the ‘true’ meaning of the fourth beast. Daniel^C by no means doubts the truthfulness of the angel’s previous interpretation of the last of four beasts, but until he receives the whole truth, the abbreviated truth is found insufficient. Daniel^C’s inquiries into the nature and fate of this fourth beast are quite thorough, desiring to know details previously unavailable to him. We again get a glimpse into the reasons why Daniel^C is such a profound hermeneut; he is one willing to probe deeper, ask the difficult questions, and is dissatisfied with the status quo. Anthony Thiselton explores the delicacy of dealing with truth in relation to temporal circumstance, to which this vision seems to be subject. While some truths are timeless, others are dependent upon a certain dispensational reality.⁵⁵³ Friedrich Waismann asks, “Is a statement about the future true now?”⁵⁵⁴ To this question the answer becomes ‘no’ until the time of its fulfillment, only then does truth becomes timeless. However, in Daniel^B—as well as other apocalyptic writings—time is of an eternal essence; its future reality is projected upon the same plane as history on an eschatological continuum.⁵⁵⁵

Daniel’s Reaction – 7.28

The episode concludes by Daniel^C’s own admission that he is deeply troubled by his thoughts, his face turns pale, and he keeps the matter to himself. Implicitly Daniel^C is out of dream-mode at this time. This closing verse is strongly reminiscent of the verse 15 prior to the angel’s interpretation when Daniel^C expresses similar sentiments of mental distress. There seems to be no apparent difference between Daniel^C’s state before the

⁵⁵² Fewell, *Circle*, p.120.

⁵⁵³ Anthony Thiselton, p.96.

⁵⁵⁴ Friedrich Waismann, *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*, pp.27-34; in Thiselton, p.96.

⁵⁵⁵ cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding I* (London: SCM, 1969) p.241.

interpretation and his condition after the angel's interpretation of the vision. In this regard, there is likewise a parallelism between the reader's reaction here as in verse 15; the reader is left to assess the condition of Daniel^C by his/her own intuition. The reader might wonder if Daniel^C is distressed because he comprehends the vision or is he distressed—much like Belshazzar—because he does not understand the vision.

The subtle difference between the opening description, "he then wrote the dream, relating the major parts" and the closing phrase, "but I guarded the matter in my heart" is noteworthy for our understanding.⁵⁵⁶ Daniel^C writes down the majority of the dream but not the entire dream; some of the dream Daniel^C keeps in his heart. Daniel^C, like the angelic interpreter, gives the reader the truth but not the whole truth. Therefore, are we to surmise that the reader, like Daniel^C, ought to push to discover the missing pieces of the puzzle to know the 'true' meaning of the vision? The suggestion seems plausible that the reader work to fill in the gaps.

Reader's Responsibility of Praxis

Daniel^C writes with a purpose, as Culler states, "The hope of solving the problem is what inspires critics to write."⁵⁵⁷ We could tweak this statement slightly to indicate that the hope that the reader will solve the problem is what inspires the Narrator to present Daniel^C's writings. Daniel^C's vision has to be interpreted, which it is by the angelic interpreter, but what remains is the task of interpreting the interpretation. As the gap grows between divine and mortal so also does the need for two hermeneuts, as we have previously mentioned, but with the presence of two hermeneuts we almost inevitably have the presence of two interpretations. Daniel^C's interpretation is not offered and

⁵⁵⁶ Translation by Goldwurm, pp.193, 215.

⁵⁵⁷ Culler, p.90.

essentially the reader is left with the responsibility to interpret the interpretation.

According to Rabbi Hisda, “A dream which is not interpreted is like a letter which is not read;”⁵⁵⁸ but Daniel^C’s letter is read and his dream is interpreted, but still there remains work to complete since there is a missing element of interpretation. The reader by now has full confidence in Daniel^C and is given little room to doubt him even in this moment of apparent distress, but at the same time the reader must process the frailties of this exemplary hermeneut. A distressed Daniel^C leads to a distressed reader, but as Wayne Booth observes, “Many stories require confusion in the reader and the most effective way to achieve it is to use an observer who is himself confused.”⁵⁵⁹ This confused observer fits Daniel^C perfectly and causes the reader to sort things out for him/herself; after all, Daniel^C cannot be consulted.

Daniel 8 – Vision, Interpretation, Understanding

In many respects this vision has much in common with the previous vision of chapter 7. Both are written accounts—though not expressly stated in this latter case—both deal with earthly kingdoms symbolized by beasts, both refer to a blasphemous little horn, both offer hope of divine intervention, both provide angelic aid in understanding, and both leave Daniel^C in a state of devastation. However, points of contrast include the linguistic change from Aramaic to Hebrew, which indicates a shift from the more vernacular dialect to one considered more academic, and the specifying of the two major symbols in the vision.

⁵⁵⁸ in Susan Handelman, *Slayers of Moses*, p.129.

⁵⁵⁹ Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, p.284.

Vision of the Ram and Goat – 8.1-12

Daniel^C is the one primarily responsible for making the connection between the visions of chapters 7 and 8 as he introduces his 'latest' vision; he writes, "I, Daniel, had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me." Like the previous vision Daniel^C sees himself in the dream-text, but this time his presence is immediately recognized and is unambiguously within the dream-text. He furthermore locates himself in new surroundings, the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam beside the Ulai Canal, all of which are Persian geographical sites. As the description of the vision continues, the reader learns that the ram is the Medo-Persian empire and the goat is the Grecian empire. Thinking back on chapter 5 Daniel^C is in Babylon when it is defeated and taken over by the Medes and Persians; now Daniel^C is 'in' Persia when in his vision it is defeated and taken over by Greeks. We cannot help but to think that these are dangerous positions to be in, that is to say, in the land of the defeated.

Daniel^C begins to describe his vision with the portrayal of the ram with two unequal but powerful horns, relentless in his charging, and with the might to defeat anything that stands in his way. While Daniel^C contemplates the ram a goat with one prominent horn between his eyes charges him from the west yet without touching the ground. Just as nothing could stand in the way of the ram or be rescued from his power, so also could this ram not stand against the goat or be rescued from his power. In the height of his power the goat loses its prominent horn, which is then replaced by four other horns that grow up in the directions of the four winds of heaven. Like the shifting of winds, so also will the boundaries between these four smaller horns shift and remain unstable. From one of these horns grows another in power, especially in the near vicinity

of the “Beautiful Land.” This metaphorically and politically encoded language is a further demand placed upon the reader to remain in practice mode of interpretation.

In a far more specific way than what we find in the previous vision, the present vision of the players on the political playing field comes around to explain how these events affect God’s holy people, or at least this is how Daniel^C relates the material. Ultimately, any interpretation of the text inevitably involves the self in some sense or another. David Bleich points out that textual meaning is a process of symbolization that takes place in the mind of the reader; while symbolization is response, resymbolization is interpretation.⁵⁶⁰ In this case Daniel^C offers the symbols in the form of his vision, which are then resymbolized by a heavenly interpreter. The vicious acts of this now mighty horn are devastating; suppressing Jewish cultic observances, leading some Jews astray, substituting pagan culture and religion for true Yahwism, subjecting many pious ones to martyrdom, claiming himself deity, forbidding daily sacrifice, transforming the holy temple into pagan usage,⁵⁶¹ and to sum it all up, truth was thrown to the ground.

So we must ask the age-old question: what is truth, and what is truth in this context? Truth in this historical context according to Goldingay, Rashi, Mayenei HaYeshuah, Goldwurm, Lacocque, Russell, Walvoord, has a direct connotation with Torah.⁵⁶² Though Wood makes allusion to the Mosaic legislation, he claims truth always rests in what God says and does;⁵⁶³ and in like manner Porteous claims that truth is the will of God as disclosed in his Law.⁵⁶⁴ Baldwin simply says truth is “God’s truth.”⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁰ Tompkins, p.xx.

⁵⁶¹ Goldwurm’s interpretive remarks reflected here in this list, pp.223-24.

⁵⁶² Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.211; Goldwurm, p.225; Lacocque who also quotes Malachi 2.6, p.163; Russell, though more broadly ‘scriptures’, p.147; Walvoord, p.188

⁵⁶³ Leon Wood, p.216.

⁵⁶⁴ Porteous, p.126.

⁵⁶⁵ Baldwin, p.158.

Truth is unquestionably a relevant topic in hermeneutical inquiry and of universal concern; it has been in discussions throughout its history and will inevitably continue to be so in times to come. This temporal span encompassing the issue of truth is evident in this very chapter. In context the same things that the little horn seeks to abolish are the pious traditions of the past, and in verse 26 the angel proclaims that though this vision concerns events of the distant future, it is nevertheless true. The 'timelessness' of truth in Daniel^B is directly correlated to its origins in Yhwh, who is repeatedly 'doxologized' as eternal, everlasting and never ending. Though Baldwin's simple statement concerning truth lacks the explication of many other commentators on this point, she sums up the fundamentals of the Danielic idea of truth quite succinctly.

Angelic Explanatory Comments – 8.13-26

Clearly still within the context of the vision, while Daniel^C is attempting to understand the vision he sees one who looks like a man, an angelic figure by the name of Gabriel, whose name means 'man of God'. Another presumably angelic figure commands Gabriel to reveal the understanding of the vision to Daniel^C, who is terrified and falls prostrate before the being when he approaches. Gabriel addresses Daniel^C as a 'son of man' and by this term the reader is reminded of the necessity of the dual roles of the hermeneut; one being an angelic 'man' of God, while the other being a devout son of man. The angelic man of God is charged with doing the work of aiding comprehension, while the son of man is charged with the task of understanding, and through this son of man, other 'sons of man' might likewise come to a point of comprehension. Both roles are necessary and indispensable to each other.

The essential factor upon which understanding hinges according to Gabriel is the issue of eschatology; that the vision concerns the end times. That a mere son of man who, in consideration of his lowly cosmic station, should understand such things is extremely problematical.⁵⁶⁶ We are reminded of his fragile humanity as he falls prostrate again before Gabriel in a deep sleep until Gabriel touches him to raise Daniel^C to his feet. Rabbinic traditions hold that Gabriel's words that the vision reveals the future are the very words used to strengthen Daniel^C from his feeble condition. The mention of the future heightens his attentiveness to the message and causes him to regain strength.⁵⁶⁷ The reason for this heightened awareness and recovery of strength is the source of the revelation of the future is undoubtedly understood by Daniel^C to be Yhwh. In this case Daniel^C refuses to divorce message from source, for the vision informs details of God and God validates the truthfulness of the vision. The authorial role of Yhwh in Daniel^B is consistently portrayed as the author of authorities, or in other words, the ultimate source of all power. Vanhoozer puts the pithy phrase in this manner, "Authorship implies ownership."⁵⁶⁸ Again, a theology of inspiration weaves through the text.

Gabriel gives details of this vision in a more specific fashion than what is revealed in the previous vision. The ram with two horns is specified as the kings of Media and Persia, and the goat is identified as the king of Greece whose large predominant horn is its first king. The remainder of the attention is given to the career of the little horn and his atrocious and blasphemous deeds until he meets his end by supernatural intervention. Gabriel leaves Daniel^C with some closing notes, specifically, that this vision is true and that it should be sealed up since it concerns the end times. Again, truthfulness is not

⁵⁶⁶ Mayenei HaYeshuah in Goldwurm, pp.230-31.

⁵⁶⁷ Abarbanel, the sages (Bereishis Rabbah) in Goldwurm, p.232.

⁵⁶⁸ Vanhoozer, p.46.

dependent upon historical dispensationalism; just because the events have not occurred does not negate their claims of truthfulness. Daniel^C's memoirs of his visions of the future, however, are to be sealed up according to Gabriel's command until an unknown time. The enigma of the future and the vision itself forces the reader to contemplate the very message presented here. In summing up the biblical message—and extremely appropriate for Daniel^B at this point—Susan Handelman claims that its meaning is not oriented toward realism but truth.⁵⁶⁹ The reader is not encouraged at this point to exploit the truth in order to find exact relevance to his/her reality or to forget temporarily about reality, but to see reality through the lenses of theological truth.

Daniel's Reaction – 8.27

Before we observe the reactions of Daniel^C to this particular vision, let us look at the way in which the reader might use this information as well as the similar material of the previous vision to re-inform his/her understanding of Daniel^C's attitude toward Belshazzar in chapter 5. Though the literature does not explicitly make the connection between Daniel^C's reactions to these visions and his attitude before Belshazzar, readerly activity is bound to reflect upon the tense atmosphere at Belshazzar's festive party, which takes place in narrative chronology after Daniel^C sees these two visions. Gabriel clearly tells Daniel^C that this vision concerns the end, but yet we cannot pretend that this text does not affect him in his current circumstances. Daniel Patte states the case similarly when he asserts that reading is a two-way process: reading a text in terms of our experience and reading our experience in terms of the text.⁵⁷⁰ This is true in an intertextual sense, that each text informs and re-informs all other texts in a reader's ever-

⁵⁶⁹ Handelman, p.30.

⁵⁷⁰ Daniel Patte, "When Ethical Questions Transform Critical Biblical Studies" in *Semeia* 77, p.275.

changing tapestry of innumerable texts.⁵⁷¹ It is likewise true in reader-oriented studies that promote the notion that each reader—here Daniel^C—shapes the material that the text offers him.⁵⁷² Daniel^C is indeed informed by his vision-text and likewise participates in the shaping of its meaning in his situation as evident by his reaction to Belshazzar in the banquet hall the night the king is killed. This practice of Daniel^C becomes a paradigmatic praxis for the reader.⁵⁷³

The abominable behavior of the little horn is defined by his haughtiness and blasphemous behavior; these same qualities Daniel^C sees in Belshazzar, not only when he arrives on the scene but as he witnesses them throughout the time of Belshazzar's reign (5.22-23). The closing comment of Gabriel concerning the little horn is that he will be broken but without human hand; and now as Daniel^C hears the account and interprets the script, he naturally connects the two hands.⁵⁷⁴ In a very apocalyptic sense Daniel^C interprets and applies the vision to his present circumstances, and without the two visions and their interpretations, Daniel^C's solution to the mysterious handwriting on the wall might have been an impossibility.⁵⁷⁵ In the same vein the historical reader did the same in applying the words to the figure of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and by implication the readerly community is expected and encouraged to find interpretation and application afresh in its reading. The literary text—or in Daniel^C's case, the vision-text—is what enables the reader to recreate the world the text is presenting in terms of values, morality

⁵⁷¹ In describing Julia Kristeva's program, *The Postmodern Bible*, p.130.

⁵⁷² Norman Holland, "Unity, Identity, Text, Self" in Tompkins, p.125.

⁵⁷³ . An example of a much later hermeneut who participates in this applied theory is found in John Calvin who used his 'commentaries on Daniel' to defend harassed French Protestants against royal powers. P.R. Davies, p.17.

⁵⁷⁴ Fewell, *Circle*, pp.121, 122; Goldwurm, pp.237-38.

⁵⁷⁵ Goldwurm, p.238.

and theological proclamations. One text is potentially capable of several different realizations and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential.⁵⁷⁶

Another intersection between this vision and the narrative of chapter 5 is the apparent contradiction that exists between Belshazzar who pretends to be unaware of a supposedly unemployed Daniel^C and Daniel^C who must recover from his state of illness in order to go about the king's business. Once again the attention of the reader is demanded in order to sort through the possible resolutions to the apparent contradiction. As we have noted earlier, perhaps Daniel^C does indeed still have responsibilities within the kingdom and Belshazzar's ignorance of Daniel^C is deliberate. Pesikta Rabbasi understands the reference to the king to be figurative of the King of kings, and Daniel^C's devotion to the work of the king is synonymous with the work of God.⁵⁷⁷ However, much can be said of Daniel^C—and implied for the reader—if we assume the reference of his statement is to Babylon, which stands over against the manipulative and willfully negligent account of Belshazzar who puts on a façade that he is unaware of Daniel^C. If Daniel^C diligently goes back to work, it is a credit to his character and a display of his work ethic, that he should strive to perform his tasks with a good conscience even though he knows he is working for a kingdom whose days are numbered.

Now we must turn our attention to the response of Daniel^C to his vision as it stands before us. With the advent of reader-response criticism, the question, “what does a text mean?” is replaced by a different question, “what does it do?”⁵⁷⁸ The end conclusion is that what a text does is what a text means. To answer this question in the case of Daniel^C we have to come to grips with an enigmatic conundrum, the text makes him sick.

⁵⁷⁶ Walter Gibson, “Authors, Speakers, Readers and Mock Readers” in Tompkins, pp.54-55.

⁵⁷⁷ In Goldwurm, pp.237-38.

⁵⁷⁸ Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p.2

Though we must ultimately question what this statement leads the implied reader to do, still we must at least observe that the response we find in Daniel^C is in terms primarily of what the text does, not what it means. What the text means to the reader and the effects thereof are still left open, but the reader at least understands that the vision-text principally affects Daniel^C in a significant way by the evidence of what it does to him. In fact, much more is said regarding the effects of the text than how the text is understood, which, in this case, is nothing. What the reader might come to understand from the effects upon Daniel^C, more so perhaps than the informative material of the vision, is that there is a price that must be paid for insight into spiritual revelation.⁵⁷⁹

Furthermore, even with the aid of an angel, Daniel^C still fails to comprehend fully the interpretation of his vision. Are we left to believe that even with the presence of two hermeneuts, one angelic and the other human, a gap in understanding still exists? Are we to place the blame on Gabriel for failing to complete what he is commissioned to do, that is to make Daniel^C understand? Or are we likely to put the blame on Daniel^C for his failure to grasp the interpretation that is given to him by the angel? Perhaps more likely, we are to come to grips with the reality that text-interpretation is slippery and a difficult business. Perhaps the best that we can do is to admit, like Daniel^C, that at least we understand that we do not understand, and in our lack of understanding, we continue to seek for relevance and meaning.

Reader's Responsibility of Praxis

We are not solely interested in the story's effects upon the reader; we are also interested in the reader's responsibility to the story.⁵⁸⁰ The reader is shown through the

⁵⁷⁹ Baldwin, p.161.

⁵⁸⁰ Booth, *Company We Keep*, p.9.

memoirs of Daniel^C that Daniel^C is instructed to seal the vision since it relates to the end times. Yet the inescapable fact is that the text sets before us in an 'unsealed' format. At some point in its 'literary history' this seal has been broken and the literature lies open before the reader, leaving him/her with a great responsibility. The responsibility is to acquire its sense of truth, to interpret the text accordingly and to find its appropriations. A vast majority of commentators pay close attention to the historical reader of these visions, which is an appropriate and important task in historical criticism, but rather than repeating the steps already laid out, our task at hand is to be sensitive to the fact that the text still lies open for the contemporary reader. It stands to reason, with the many theories concerning text we have already discussed, that the text before us is by no means exhausted and still demands interpretation. Regardless of historical references, the literature still speaks in future tenses. The telling of story as past events, as we see in the earlier half of the narrative, excludes the speaker's intervention into the story,⁵⁸¹ but relating the story in present or future tenses allows and calls for the interpretive interaction of the reader with his/her placement in the historical continuum. The tense of the narrative is indicative of the reader's expected interpretive activity; present and future tenses in the literature correlate to the present and future expectations of interpretive activity.

Though these visions clearly have historical contexts and concerns, today's reader is not solely bound by these constraints. Communication happens even without context;⁵⁸² in our world far removed in time and space from the historical setting provided in the literature and by historical criticism, the text and reader still interact to

⁵⁸¹ Ricoeur, *Essays*, p.77.

⁵⁸² Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p.321.

formulate meaning. Additionally, the form in which these visions are written also promotes its timelessness. The form of a parable ensures the survival of meaning after the disappearance of the original historical setting and arises from a conversation between text and interpreter.⁵⁸³ The parabolic formula and its enigmatic message continue to demand attention in new contexts. The message of the Bible, more specifically Daniel^C, is intentionally mysterious and it demands interpretation.⁵⁸⁴

Daniel 9 – Daniel’s Seventy and Gabriel’s Seventy-Sevens

The Narrator has introduced the reader to the prayers and prayer habits of Daniel^C in the earlier half of the narrative; now the reader reads an intercessory prayer of Daniel^C from the first-person narrator. This chapter introduces several new implications for the reader in terms of hermeneutical theory and praxis; among these are: midrashic practice, narrative theology, an upwardly direction of the hermeneutical spiral, and a clearly defined intercessory role of the one who must stand in the gap.

Daniel Interprets Jeremiah – 9.1-2

In a midrashic and apocalyptic manner Daniel^C interacts with a prophetic foretelling of Jeremiah. As before we must notice that Daniel^C points to the source behind his source, more specifically he refers to Yhwh behind the writings of Jeremiah. In the traditions of the prophets, validation of prophetic utterances is claimed by a reference to divine inspiration. Though Daniel^C himself is not a prophet, he accepts the prophets’ claims to truth by their association with “thus says the Lord” and thus attests to its dual authorship.⁵⁸⁵ We must notice here the first actual usage of the tetragrammaton uttered by Daniel^C and it is reserved for connotation with holy writ and later in this chapter with

⁵⁸³ Frank Kermode, *Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard U. Press, 1979), p.44.

⁵⁸⁴ Handelman, p.30.

⁵⁸⁵ Ricoeur, *Essays*, p.77, 87.

prayer directed toward Yhwh. Based upon what he feels are reliable sources, Daniel^C interprets the text. This type of *peshar* of scripture is almost invariably applied to the sense of eschatological prophecy;⁵⁸⁶ Daniel^C's interpretation certainly fits the mold, yet Gabriel will push the issue to further extremes.

The claims of Daniel^C with regard to the Jeremiah text stands in contrast to what he admits in the previous two visions; that is, that here he understands the words of Jeremiah although he fails to understand completely the meaning of the angelic interpretations of the visions. According to his calculations and based upon the numbers given in Jeremiah, the city of Jerusalem would lie in ruins for seventy years after which time the city would be restored and re-inhabited by God's people. Daniel^C's methods of midrash are most evident in this pericope.⁵⁸⁷ As opposed to those who claim that Daniel^C takes Jeremiah's prophecy out of context,⁵⁸⁸ the better solution is to see how he transplants the prophecy into a new context. The same implication left for the reader to perform in the previous two chapters is the very practice that Daniel^C carries out in his *peshar* of Jeremiah. Jacob Neusner in identifying various types of midrash states that midrash of prophecy is the practice of reading scripture as an account of things now happening or things about to happen in the near future, and furthermore the *peshar* remains distinct from the original text.⁵⁸⁹

Daniel's Intercessory Prayer – 9.3-19

Based upon its etymology, we must recognize that hermeneutics is a theological endeavor in that Hermes was considered a messenger of the gods, translating and

⁵⁸⁶ Collins, *Apoc. Visions*, p.78.

⁵⁸⁷ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.231.

⁵⁸⁸ Lacocque, p.177; Russell, p.167; Porteous, p.133; Goldingay, p.231.

⁵⁸⁹ Jacob Neusner, *What is Midrash?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) p.1,7

interpreting messages between the gods as well as between gods and mortals. What we observe in Daniel^C in this chapter strongly works affirm this theological quality. The hermeneut is not simply the messenger between the gods, or messenger from the gods to mortals, but as we see in Daniel^C he is also the messenger from mortals to God. We have already observed several messages from Yhwh through the interpretive work of Daniel^C, but this prayer stands to remind the reader of the humble position the theological hermeneut must assume if s/he is going to understand Yhwh properly as the ultimate text they seek to comprehend. After all, the humbleness of the hermeneut would prevent any form of egocentrism. By nature the hermeneut is not the 'ends', s/he is simply the 'means' to the 'ends'; in this humble frame of mind and with a healthy self-understanding, the hermeneut can best function. In postmodern lingo, the hermeneut cannot be egocentric, but rather s/he must emphatically leave room for the 'other' and its 'otherness'. As Derrida says, "You cannot address the other, speak to the other, without an act of faith, without testimony."⁵⁹⁰ In this sense Derrida has unwittingly described Daniel^C who operates within a realm of a hermeneutics of faith.

In a similar fashion as medieval interpreters and Martin Luther, the business of the interpretation of scripture necessitates a sanctified life. Only after devoting time to prayer and pledging allegiance to the church can an interpreter properly understand the true spiritual meaning of the sacred text.⁵⁹¹ The case we find in Daniel^C is indeed aligned with these beliefs in that Daniel^C's devotion to Yhwh and Yhwh's revelation to Daniel^C are in a dialogical and reflexive relationship. However, the point of departure from this medieval and Lutheran practice is found in the fact that Daniel^C comes to a point of

⁵⁹⁰ In John Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, p.22; for a full discussion of the 'other' see Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*.

⁵⁹¹ David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville: Westminster /John Knox, 2004), p.58.

understanding the Jeremiah text prior to his lengthy prayer of confession and supplication. Though according to the medieval and Reformation interpreters the point of entry into this prescribed hermeneutical circle is the practice of piety, repeatedly in Daniel^C the point of entry is purposefully ambiguous. We have observed this ambiguity in the case of Daniel^C and his natural and God-given gifts in chapter 1 and in the case of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion and restoration of his sanity in chapter 4. What we must come to conclude from our study of Daniel^C is that priority is neither given to text nor interpretation; both are quintessential and ultimately indistinguishable. Whether texts are cultures, politics, dreams, laws, personalities, visions, holy writ, or God himself, interpretations accompany texts.

Further evidence of the aforementioned point regarding the personal piety of the hermeneut is the striking employment of the tetragrammaton that appears seven times in this particular chapter alone. Firstly, we need to point out that the Narrator never chooses to speak of God as Yhwh, which leads the reader to conjecture what the Narrator has displayed throughout the narrative, that Daniel^C is supremely a paradigm of a theological hermeneut above all others, including the Narrator himself. Secondly, the impact of the employment of this most holy term is reserved for a context of a sincere address to Yhwh himself in intercessory prayer. Thirdly, association with another great mediator between God and man is unavoidably suggestive; Moses, a man to whom Yhwh firstly reveals his name, to whom God speaks, and a man who speaks to the people on behalf of Yhwh. Fourthly, addressing Yhwh by his personal name is indicative of a more personal relationship that is enjoyed between these two. Fifthly, the reverent employment of

HaShem, the Name, works to balance and foster the growing transcendence of God in this latter half of the narrative.

The prayer of Daniel^C is not a personal prayer to Yhwh as much as it is an embodiment of a corporate prayer of Israel. Never once does Daniel^C speak from a first-person singular point; always he confesses sins to Yhwh from a first-person plural point of view. By definition a hermeneut is not one who speaks for himself or in his own interests, but rather as one who interprets and communicates messages from someone to others. While most of Daniel^C's interpretations have thus far been texts that he has interpreted from Yhwh and for the benefit of a mortal recipient, here he addresses Yhwh on behalf of the community of God's people. The sins, shames and faithlessness he confesses are the sins of Yhwh's populace, the praise he offers Yhwh is a communal offering of praise, and a recognition of the retribution from God, which is placed upon the entire nation, and the plea for Yhwh to act is for the sake of the people who bear God's name.

The communal quality of Daniel^C's prayer leads us straight into the heart of narrative theology. Like the philosophical-hermeneutical proposals of C.S. Peirce and Josiah Royce,⁵⁹² and the later literary theories of Stanley Fish,⁵⁹³ narrative theology lays heavy stress upon the idea of the community as the home of interpretive activity. The very springboard to Daniel^C's sense of community in his prayer is unquestionably the text of Jeremiah commonly held sacred by the community of which he is a part. In the vein of narrative theology, Daniel^C points to a specific scripture and seeks to understand how this text functions in the life of the community that holds it to be authoritative for interpreting

⁵⁹² See Robert S. Corrington, *The Community of Interpreters* (Macon: Mercer, 1987).

⁵⁹³ See *Is There a Text in This Class?*

reality.⁵⁹⁴ More specifically, his understanding of Jeremiah functions to bring hope to a devastated people. Offering a communal hope in place of their shared grief works to rewrite their personal narrative and consequently build their sense of community, not solely dictated by common fear but also of mutual optimism for the future. The community for whom Daniel^C speaks is not restricted to the one constituted by his own contemporaries. The socio-political and religious community to which Daniel^C belongs has a history that begins long before Daniel^C's time and is projected as having a future that Daniel^C undoubtedly expects will extend beyond his years. Daniel^C simply sees himself at a critical point in the life-span continuum of his community and is compelled to confess the sins of his community in its past and pray for the fulfillment of hope in its future. In Stroup's words, "In Christian communities this identity narrative consists of a 'text' which begins with the canonical history Christians call 'Scripture' and extends through the community's history into the present."⁵⁹⁵

The thematic emphasis on confession in Daniel^C's prayer is plainly obvious and carries significant nuances of theories in narrative theology. Narrative in the form of confession, like we find in Daniel^C's prayer, is likewise a form of communal identity in the past and the present.⁵⁹⁶ The confessions of an apostate Israel through the mouth of Daniel^C function to bring about an undeniable identity as a community of faith in Yhwh. The prayer is dialectical in that the failure of Israel to do the right thing is indicative of their duty to do the right thing; their failure to serve Yhwh properly bespeaks of their commission to serve Yhwh. Their failures function to define the community by their explicit expectations and responsibilities. For example, the people's failure to listen to

⁵⁹⁴ Stroup, p.79.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.91.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Yhwh's prophets indicates on one hand that Yhwh did send them prophets, and on the other hand, that they were expected to listen; the confession of disobeying God reveals that they were supposed to obey God's laws, which furthermore defines them as God's people. The confession of failure as God's community paradoxically solidifies their cultic identity as God's community. If Judah as a political entity had no expectations placed upon them to fulfill God's commission then their captivity could only be a political misfortune, but since they were indeed given commands of obedience toward Yhwh, their exile can be interpreted as a disciplinary action, as indeed the Narrator and Daniel^C have led the reader to believe. The commission to be the people of Yhwh defines them as community, not their failure or success at fulfilling this commission.

Gabriel's Recalculations – 9.20-27

The interruption of Daniel^C's prayer by Gabriel continues the midrashic mode of interpretation. Notice that Gabriel does not inform Daniel^C that he is incorrect in his calculations of the Jeremiah text, rather he gives him another set of calculations based upon an unspecified, though perhaps the same text. What Daniel^C interprets is a literal seventy year span which concludes within a few years, Gabriel reinterprets as a seventy-weeks (sevens) of year span, which finds a second application to the text. In midrash all interpretations are viable but the core concerns in midrash are the interpreter's responsiveness to the claims of the text; not only knowing the workings of the words but the various ways they apply to a number of given situations.⁵⁹⁷ Both hermeneuts offer *peshet* and we may presume that both contain a certain degree of validity though numerically they are vastly different, and both hermeneuts find applications to certain circumstances according to their respective cosmological outlooks. Neusner identifies

⁵⁹⁷ Gerald Bruns, *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1992), pp.116, 118.

three important aspects of midrash: 1) it starts with scripture; 2) it is interpretive; and, 3) it ends in community.⁵⁹⁸ These three elements are all present and accounted for in both the *peshet* of Daniel^C earlier in the episode and of Gabriel in the latter half. However, in Daniel^C's *peshet* the sense of community is understandably and rightfully far more passionate and personal. In terms of frame of mind, midrashists firmly believe that scripture holds within it the secrets of the universe,⁵⁹⁹ including those that pertain to the near and distant futures, as we see here in Daniel^C's and Gabriel's cases. Neither Daniel^C's interpretation nor Gabriel's interpretation are discounted; as Rabbi Bana'ah sums up, a dream follows its interpretations.⁶⁰⁰

For the first time in Daniel^C's narration he interprets a written/literary text, which is followed by an angelic interpretation; that is opposed to priority being given to the angelic interpretation seen earlier. Direction in the hermeneutical spiral at this point becomes an issue. In the previous two episodes Daniel^C encounters vision-texts that presumably come from Yhwh, which are then interpreted by the heavenly hermeneut, which are then related by the human hermeneut to the reader who is implicitly left with the responsibility to interpret. In this episode we start with a God-inspired, yet human text from Jeremiah, which is then interpreted by Daniel^C the human hermeneut, who then behaves according to his understanding by approaching in prayer Yhwh, who then sends his heavenly hermeneut to give Daniel^C further understanding. In other words, the two previous episodes promote text rendering and interpretation from a top down approach, but in this episode text interpretation is an upward movement firstly, then downward again by Gabriel, leaving the reader to do much of the interpretive work again. To state it

⁵⁹⁸ Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, p.10.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.11

⁶⁰⁰ Handelman, p.129.

differently, in our attempts to interpret a text and practice theological existence accordingly, we must likewise be ready to accept other possible interpretations and readjust ourselves in light of fresh inspiration.

Reader's Responsibility of Praxis

What is perhaps most striking about the conclusion of the story is the missing reaction of Daniel^C. The two previous visions explicitly state Daniel^C's reaction, leaving the reader with certain implications about which s/he must draw conclusions. This episode divulges no such data, which subtly cues the reader that the exercises are becoming more demanding. As David Stern points out, the process of leaving gaps in narrative is a conscious decision and invites the reader to participate actively in the fictional world.⁶⁰¹ The more gaps that reside 'in' the text, the greater the expectation and invitation is to the reader to participate in the interpretive process of the text and its gaps. The reader is not privileged with Daniel^C's interpretations of the angels' interpretations of the visions or of the visions themselves, all s/he has been left with up to this point is the reaction of Daniel^C. Now the reader is not even given this piece of information. The gap of missing information continues to grow and with it the demands of responsibility on the one who aspires to stand in this gap.

In rabbinic midrashic thought two reciprocal events occur constantly: on one hand scripture is a midrash on everyday life, and on the other hand the reading of everyday life is a midrash on scripture. As Neusner says, "What we see reminds us of what scripture says and what scripture says informs our understanding of the things we see and do in everyday life."⁶⁰² As these apocalyptic prophecies become more prevalent in the latter

⁶⁰¹ David Stern, *Rabbinic Fantasies*, p.10.

⁶⁰² Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, pp.51, 103.

half of the narrative, the charge to the reader to acquire the skills of seeing life through scriptural lenses and reading scripture through socio-politico-cultural lenses becomes an important practice for the hermeneut-in-training. As a reminder we are viewing these latter episodes as practical hermeneutical exercises, not as an end product of what the reader should know, but rather how the reader should observe, interpret and live in an ever-changing world. The more the world around is changing the greater the need for the presence of a hermeneut whose task is to interpret these events in the light of scripture and devotion to Yhwh. Stroup seems to encapsulate the present point quite lucidly,

“The real test of Christian understanding is not simply whether someone knows the content of the Christian traditions and can repeat it on demand but whether he or she is able to use Christian faith as it is embodied in the church’s narratives to reinterpret personal and social existence.”⁶⁰³

Daniel 10 – Another Angelic Encounter

This vision of an angelic figure is essentially a bridge to the lengthy description of the political happenings surrounding the people of Yhwh and more pertinently, pertaining to their persecution for their devotion to Yhwh. In this episode very little is mentioned concerning earthly political affairs; instead, the emphasis is laid upon the happenings of the supernatural world as Daniel^C gets a glimpse into the parallelism that exists between the natural and supernatural worlds.

Narrator Sets the Context – 10.1

For the last time the Narrator steps into the narrative to make a contextual comment. We have already suggested that due to the nature of Daniel^C’s expressly written memoirs, that the presence of the Narrator underscores Daniel^C’s narration. This is the case even when the two other narrators’ (Daniel^C and Nebuchadnezzar) works are

⁶⁰³ Stroup, pp.96-97.

primary. Since the other two narrators' works are expressly literary and are essentially 'shown' to the reader, and while the Narrator's work has an 'aural' texture, in that they are 'read' to the reader via the method of telling,⁶⁰⁴ the Narrator remains responsible for 'presenting' these memoirs to the reader.

Within this short introduction to this episode, the Narrator manages to imply several notions concerning the issue of truth. Firstly, we can hardly miss the apparent contradiction between his chronological claim here that this vision occurs during the third year of Cyrus and the closing comment of his introduction of chapter 1 that claims that Daniel^C remains until the first year of Cyrus. Our natural tendency is to want to justify the discrepancy by claiming that Daniel^C is now retired from political service or that he has taken advantage of Cyrus's offer to allow Jews to return to Jerusalem, or we can let the contradiction stand as is in hopes of understanding—like the reading of midrash—something other than what is said.⁶⁰⁵

Secondly, we must also notice the claims to truth here made by the Narrator concerning Daniel^C's received message. We have already noted the several claims to truth already made in the latter half of the narrative, specifically from Daniel^C in 7.19 and from Gabriel in 8.26 and now from the Narrator in 10.1. By allowing the discrepancy to stand as it is we can surmise that perhaps this conscious effort to display a 'factual' or 'chronological' contradiction is an attempt to redefine the terms of truth. The meaning of truth in this Danielic corpus is not restricted to or even defined by its adherence to factual data, but rather it transcends facts by communicating meaning and significance in the form of a message from Yhwh. This is certainly evident by the visions we see through the

⁶⁰⁴ Again employing Booth's distinctions between showing and telling; see this present Chapter 1 and Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction* p.12, 211-40.

⁶⁰⁵ Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, p.53.

eyes of Daniel^C; none of his visions have the necessary factual evidence which can be used tangibly to back up the claims of his vision. Nevertheless, there is truth in his visions because there is truth in its source, Yhwh. As Gadamer points out, we must distinguish between the factualness of language and the objectivity of science.⁶⁰⁶ And Joseph Royce makes this distinction: “scientific truth deals with things and is therefore relatively certain, yet relatively lacking significance and highly partial in nature. Religious truth is relatively uncertain but has greatest significance to man.”⁶⁰⁷ In essence, this supposed factual error may seek to educate the reader with regard to his/her perception of truth that must not be restricted to demonstrable and tangible evidence.

Another possible reason for the discrepancy may be for the ultimate clarity of the narrative voice to follow. In this last intrusive comment by the Narrator at which time he makes such a simple error, the reader legitimately calls into question the reliability of the Narrator and clings all the more to Daniel^C as narrator. By the end of the narrative, after having left the side of the Narrator and when we unmistakably know that Daniel^C is dead, the reader is then commissioned to begin his/her own life as a hermeneut.

The Plight of the Messenger – 10.2-11.1

If the reader has not yet come to the realization that fulfilling the role of the hermeneut incurs heavy costs, this episode will clarify the point emphatically. Yet for the first time we see that such costs not only incur against the human hermeneut Daniel^C but also against the heavenly hermeneut, who goes unnamed in this episode. The humble and penitent position of Daniel^C in a three week period of mourning, fasting, and neglecting personal pampering stands in sharp relief to the awesome appearance of this angelic

⁶⁰⁶ Gadamer, p.453.

⁶⁰⁷ Joseph Royce, *The Encapsulated Man* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1964), p.27.

messenger who is finely dressed, with a physique of chrysolite, a face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, arms and legs like bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

Daniel^C's vision occurs while he is in a small crowd, but they do not see the vision, only the face of Daniel^C who sees the vision; yet even this is enough to scare them off as they flee. The reason for the private viewing of this vision and implicitly for the previous visions is explicitly revealed to Daniel^C in verse 11, which informs him that he is precious,⁶⁰⁸ beloved,⁶⁰⁹ highly esteemed.⁶¹⁰ For the third time Daniel^C is given a word of praise from an angel who reveals that Daniel^C is special in the eyes of Yhwh. The same word used here to complement Daniel^C (תְּמִדוֹת) is also used in 9.23 and 10.19. Though Daniel^C never gives the impression of someone who truly believes that Yhwh thinks of him as special, still this term is thrice applied to Daniel^C. The angelic messenger is causing Daniel^C to know himself the way he is known by Yhwh and the angelic messengers. Perhaps we can surmise that this is a reciprocal response to Daniel^C's efforts of knowing the knowable of Yhwh as much as it can be known. Augustine says in his *Confessions*, "Let me know you, for you are the God who knows me: let me recognize you as you have recognized me."⁶¹¹ In Augustine's case his plea is to know God on the one hand and to know himself through God's eyes on the other hand. In Daniel^C's case he is granted knowledge of himself through God's eyes implicitly as a result of Daniel^C's diligence in seeking to know God.

⁶⁰⁸ The Tanakh Translation,

⁶⁰⁹ Metzudos, Radak and Goldwurm, p.274; Baldwin, p.180.

⁶¹⁰ NIV, as usual.

⁶¹¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1960), X, p.207.

Though Daniel^C's final reaction is not given to the reader, the reader observes his interaction with the angelic messenger regarding the vision-text. As we have already observed, Daniel^C's company, who do not see the vision but only the reaction on Daniel^C's face, are still frightened enough to flee. The impact this vision has upon Daniel^C the seer is likewise devastating; he loses strength, he turns pale and becomes utterly helpless. When the angel speaks, Daniel^C is able to listen though he becomes semi-comatose. With a touch Daniel^C is raised to his hands and knees and is given the complementary words concerning his highly esteemed character, which is followed by a command to stand, for this messenger is sent specifically to Daniel^C. Several more times Daniel^C finds himself weak and on the ground; this is a striking and sobering picture of the paradigmatic hermeneut. We must also notice the role of the other hermeneut who performs his duty with encouraging words.

Not only does the human hermeneut pay a price for his role, the heavenly hermeneut also must consider the risks. This angelic messenger is sent on his way to perform his role, that is, to deliver the message from Yhwh to Daniel^C. However, what stands in his way from performing his duty is another supernatural being, the prince of Persia who resists this messenger for twenty-one days. In fact, according to this angel, had Michael not come to his aid to battle this prince, this messenger could not have delivered this present message. If this vision takes place during the reign of Cyrus king of Persia and reveals matters that extend beyond the time period of Persia, what does this entity believe he will accomplish by delaying the message, or hoping to defeat the one who brings it? We must conclude that the two worlds are tightly intersected and the role

of the hermeneut is a highly important one; the full realization of the supernatural may be inhibited if the natural one does not coincide.

Does humanity's lack of knowledge or anticipation of political revolution actually delay its inevitability? We might say that belief and hopeful expectation in what is not seen in the heavens contributes to its realizations. We have seen such hopes in the two rescue stories of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah in the furnace and Daniel^c in the lions' den. However, as we will see in the next chapter, it is a common feature in apocalyptic literature, things will get far worse before they get better. Their hopeful expectations for political revolution and ultimate independence will lead them to exchange a relatively 'bad' overlord in the Persians for a much worse tyrant in the Greeks. But in order to get to the promised kingdom established forever by Yhwh, the people of God must walk through the fires of political tyranny and revolutions. We might expect that if given the choice between domination under Cyrus and the Persians, and that under Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Greeks, one might choose to remain under Cyrus, but until the political and natural world runs its cycles, the ultimate kingdom of Yhwh will not arrive. This is a price that must be paid by the people and the burden they must carry for the sake of generations to come; and if they bear this burden willingly with hopeful anticipation, they demonstrate their prudence to exercise wisdom, understanding and a sense of interpretive sagacity.

As we look carefully at the text we also realize that this prince of Persia causes a delay in time of three weeks (of years?⁶¹²) from the point of sending a message to the point of its reception. This delay in time is indicative of one of the major obstacles in

⁶¹² See Goldwurm, p.276; it fits general context, especially vv.2-3, though '21 days' are used rather than '3 weeks' in v.13.

hermeneutics. In essence, what this temporal delay creates is a gap between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the interpreter. The hermeneutical program for such great theorists as Gadamer and Ricoeur (and followed by the likes of Thiselton and Carson), is about the acquisition of understanding when the horizon of the text fuses with the horizon of the interpreter.⁶¹³ In order to communicate this theory and to imply its praxis, such a gap has to be initially and intentionally created in Daniel^B; the creation of this gap comes in this introductory bridge to the lengthy material of chapter 11 to come. In this upcoming chapter the reader is challenged, perhaps like no other chapter in Daniel^B, to come to grips with the horizon of the text and put it into the perspective of the horizon of the interpreter and finally to fuse them in such an intelligible way that a sense of understanding will be accomplished. However, we must reserve examining further implications until our treatment of chapter 11.

Our last note on chapter 10 deals with the written material originating from the 'Book of Truth' that the angel is about to reveal to Daniel^C. The precise identity of this 'book' is not well established. Some commentators like Goldingay and Russell understand it in its apocalyptic tradition to mean something akin to the heavenly tablets of *1 Enoch* 81.93.⁶¹⁴ Goldwurm and other rabbis understand this 'truthful writing' to remain irrevocably sealed.⁶¹⁵ Similarly, Porteous and Towner take this 'book of truth' to refer to events that are about to happen, though according to them, *vaticinium post eventum*.⁶¹⁶ Walvoord understands this truth to belong to God's record of truth in general,

⁶¹³ Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), pp.124-25.

⁶¹⁴ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.293; Russell, *Apocalyptic*, p.107-8.

⁶¹⁵ Goldwurm, p.280; also cites Mayenei HaYeshuah, R' Shmuel Masnuth, R' Shmuel bar Ami.

⁶¹⁶ Porteous, pp.155-56; Towner, pp.153-54.

of which this is only a piece and is now available in the form of human writing.⁶¹⁷ We must notice the connection between the introductory words to this vision and this prefatory comment to the coming revelation, in that both speak of truth. As Daniel^B has presented parallel cosmic realities between the natural and supernatural, so also do we now find parallel literary accounts; and just as supernatural politics supercede natural politics, supernatural texts likewise supercede natural ones. The Danielic perception of this 'Book of Truth' is a version of reality written from a supernatural perspective. Again this is very much in line with rabbinic—and later, postmodern—thought concerning the emphatic priority assigned to writing over speech.⁶¹⁸ As rabbinic tradition says, "God looked into Torah to see how to create the world,"⁶¹⁹ so also Yhwh looks into this 'Book of Truth' to see how to shape human history.

Reader's Responsibility of Praxis

The responsibility of the reader must be appropriate to the function this episode serves. Essentially, this episode functions as a bridge and preface to the coming material of chapter 11; likewise the reader needs to realize that certain preparations are necessary for the coming material as a fitting response. Firstly, as we have observed in the case of Daniel^C's physical distress and as we will notice in the suffering of the people of Yhwh, being a devotee of Yhwh has its consequences, both positive and negative. Being a hermeneut that stands in the gap between Yhwh and his people presents a heightened sense of these consequences, both positive and negative. On the positive side, the theological hermeneut is one who is singled out as one to whom revelation is entrusted.

⁶¹⁷ Walvoord, p.250; similar sentiments are described by Baldwin, p.182.

⁶¹⁸ Handelman, p.21; Though in rabbinic thought, the oral Torah is an indispensable counterpart to the written Torah, also Handelman, p.30.

⁶¹⁹ Handelman, p.37; Neusner, *What is Midrash?* p.11.

On the negative side, the burden of this revelation is a heavy one that can potentially damage the psyche and the body as the hermeneut must seek to understand the message primarily for him/herself, and then devise how this message is to be communicated to its recipients.

Secondly, the reader must become acutely aware of the cosmic picture being painted throughout the narrative that is so vividly portrayed at this point. The existence of the supernatural world is strong and even dictates the natural world that is so palpable and tangible to every human, and though the two relate to one another, there is an obvious gap that separates the two. If the two realms relate with this inherent gulf, the necessity of a bridge—or two—becomes crucially important. The realization of the gap, and upon seeing the need for a bridge, can potentially compel the reader to become that bridge, that ‘Daniel^C’ in a real flesh and blood sense.

Thirdly, the reader must come to realize that an appropriation of dispensational lapse is inherent in the task of interpretation. The lapse in time between the initial sending of the message to Daniel^C till the time of its being received is indicative of the temporally sensitive task that lies before the reader in all interpretations, but more specifically in the remaining narrative. The reader will be presented with material that is entrenched in a certain historical context, therefore presenting the reader with an even greater challenge to make the necessary appropriations between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader.

Daniel 11 – Revelation of Details

This chapter presents the most difficult challenge of the entire narrative. A multitude of reasons contribute to this assessment. Above all other chapters in Daniel^B,

chapter 11 is probably most historically and politically bound to its given circumstances, which of course presents the greatest test for the modern reader, which subsequently is par for this ever increasingly difficult course. This increase in difficulty only lends support to the thesis that Daniel^B is an exercise in hermeneutics through which the text seeks to take the reader and bring him/her to a point of hermeneutic awareness and skill. Again, if the task of interpreting a text is not difficult, then the text is probably not about interpretation.

Our prior discussion revolving around the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader is put to the test like no other episode. A quick survey of Danielic commentaries will expose the commentators' astute capacity to appropriate the revelations given to Daniel^C by the angelic figure in chapter 11 to the historical events of the fourth to second centuries BCE. Names and dates are provided at every turn. Faces are painted upon the faceless ones of the episode. The person and career of Antiochus IV Epiphanes becomes an extremely familiar character as he is projected back into the text. The happenings of political movements, the advancements and defeats of national militaries and cross-references of other 'secular' histories saturate the pages of these commentaries far more prevalently than other chapters in the narrative. The details provided in this chapter are so clear that making the application to historical events becomes an easier task. In other words, these commentators do a tenacious job of illuminating the horizon of the text according to its original setting and to its references, but in so doing they neglect the attempt to fuse the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader for contemporary significance. To be fair, they successfully do what they attempt to do on two accounts. Firstly, they openly present their agenda as historical

criticism, thereby exposing explicitly through names and dates what the text says implicitly without such detail. Secondly, in their own sense they do fuse the two horizons by revealing what the text meant in its time by looking through a lens that has been crystallized through thousands of years of historical research, and stating the case standing on this side of the historical continuum. The horizon of the reader is simply clear elucidation of the meaning of the text in its political world; yet what we seek to fuse with the horizon of the text is a horizon that is entirely contemporary. Such a fusion proves challenging and problematical.

One of the major contributions to the facility of the historical critics' task of identification is the employment of signs rather than symbols. This same feature also presents a greater hurdle for our particular purposes in this present endeavor. The visual imagery of Daniel^C is fundamentally replaced by a lengthy verbose description of the angel. Symbols in this chapter are no longer the norm; the angel speaks in terms of signs applied to kings, betrayals, lands, broken treaties, ravages, wars and persecutions. While the angel offers the signifier, the reader is responsible for the identity of the signified, which together constitute the sign.⁶²⁰ The shift from symbols to signs is subtle but must not go unnoticed. The difference is that signs represent a one-to-one relationship, whereas symbols represent a one-to-many relationship.⁶²¹ Although Gabriel interprets the visions of Daniel^C in previous episodes within the context of his vision, a further interpretation is invited by the text to reader. In this episode the description of the angel is the vision with no subsequent interpretation and its final determination is left in the hands of the reader.

⁶²⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, p.6.

⁶²¹ Peter Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought*, p.54

Reader's Responsibility of Praxis

With such a difficult chapter we rightly ask, "What is the contemporary reader supposed to do with this vision if not to read it entirely in the light of its historical significance?" In response to this legitimate question, D.S. Russell states, "there was a powerful message for the reader of the second century B.C. which is not altogether without meaning for the reader of the twentieth century A.D."⁶²² Moreover, it is neither altogether without meaning for the reader of Daniel^B as a hermeneutical exercise. However, the hermeneutical task that lies before us is an arduous one that demands our sharpest skill of appropriation to the horizon of the reader as hermeneut-in-training, though not necessarily to the horizon of the text in history, which has repeatedly been performed proficiently by dozens of competent scholars.

This chapter is exclusively dictated by the angel through the pen of Daniel^C the narrator describing the events of a purported future for Israel in relation to the surrounding pagan nations. We see or hear absolutely nothing from Daniel^C as character or narrator speaking for himself during this entire episode; the reader is left with the sole responsibility to interpret the words of the angel. Like Yhwh as character in this latter half of the narrative, Daniel^C too becomes more aloof and less 'visible' to the reader. Slowly but surely, the reader must take the helm and ultimately steer this mighty ship of interpretation for him/herself. From the episodes of chapters 7 and 8, the reader is informed of Daniel^C's reaction to his visions and his state of understanding; in the episodes of chapters 9 and 10 the reader is left with no substantial clue to Daniel^C's reaction to the visions. Presently in chapter 11 the reader has no encounter with Daniel^C directly except for the dictation he takes from the angel. As we will notice later in our

⁶²² Russell, *Daniel*, p.201.

treatment of chapter 12, there also Daniel^C plays a very minor role in the conclusion of the entire narrative.

With such a liberal use of metaphor in the previous visions, the sudden restriction of its employment seems strange. Metaphors have the capacity to “shatter the conventions of prediction in the interests of a new vision...a fresh experience of reality.”⁶²³ However, what we do indeed seek is a fresh experience of reality yet without the benefit of the metaphor, which according to Thiselton, “provides a means of extending language beyond its accustomed tracks.”⁶²⁴ Being cognizant of these metaphoric restrictions is the first step toward a new understanding of the text. The ‘freedom’ offered by the metaphor in the act of interpretation is now limited, thus calling for a new reading and challenging the reader in his/her attempt to appropriate the text. Our hope can be found in Culler’s statement: “If a difficult work later becomes intelligible it is because new ways of reading have been developed in order to meet what is the fundamental demand of the system: the demand for sense.”⁶²⁵

The sudden restricted use of metaphor immediately pushes the reader to search for a new viable system that can accommodate the reader’s desire to appropriate the text in a new and meaningful environment. The system of signs, or semiotics, becomes a primary tool in understanding chapter 11, but once again primarily for the historical reader. However, the very employment of semiotics is itself a lesson to the reader. Interpretation of text is not a unilateral endeavor; the hermeneut must be competent and ready to interpret a text from a multitude of angles. The implicit understanding of hermeneutics is that it is interdisciplinary by nature, in that it is science and art, theory and practice; so

⁶²³ Robert Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic and Word of God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p.139.

⁶²⁴ Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, p.350.

⁶²⁵ Culler, “Literary Competence”, *Structural Poetics* in Tompkins, p.111.

also must the practitioner be interdisciplinary by demonstrating the aptitude to sustain in the balance both science and art, theory and practice. In more specific terms, in seeking an interpretation of this episode, we look to some proposals of deconstruction for some clues.

The authors of *The Postmodern Bible* assert that the signified is always another signifier.⁶²⁶ The summary of deconstruction offered by Eco concludes that language is “caught in a play of multiple signifying games; that there is no transcendental signified; that the signifier is never co-present with the signified which is continually deferred and delayed and that every signifier is related to another signifier so that there is nothing outside the significant chain, which goes on *ad infinitum*.”⁶²⁷ Though this is not a position held by Eco, his summary does quite nicely for our present purposes; that is to say, that the system just described works well to bring meaning to the horizon of the reader, though not necessarily of the text. In other words, the horizon of this present text has been well established by numerous competent Danielic scholars, but the system of signs in this mode of deconstruction works well to offer meaning to the contemporary reader. The signifier of the text becomes a signified to the historical reader but it also serves as a signifier of yet another signified in the world of the reader, thus making both horizons capable of communicating meaning. In some cases the implicit signified of the text becomes the signifier for a contemporary reader. Though such a position is advocated by deconstructionists, even Stephen Moore points out that historical meaning must play a controlling role in the act of interpretation.⁶²⁸ Furthermore, when fusing the two horizons of the text and of the reader, various models of interpretation may necessarily need to be

⁶²⁶ Culture Collective, p.130.

⁶²⁷ Eco, *Limits of Interpretation*, p.33.

⁶²⁸ Stephen Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospel* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1989), p.68.

employed, whether it is semiotics, or historical criticism, or semiotic theory of deconstruction, just to name a few. Again, the interdisciplinary quality of the reader is being challenged to live up to the standards set out in the introductory chapter and observed in Daniel^C throughout the narrative.

Take as an example the ongoing interpretations performed by the rabbis of finding multiple signifieds from the string of signifiers in this particular chapter. Though they too investigate the applications the text has to Antiochus IV Epiphanes and surrounding history, it does not stop there alone. R' Saadiah Gaon finds further application to Roman and Arab kingdoms, R' Avraham bar Chiya applies certain parts of the text to a wide variety of historical nations such as Rome and Greece, to events such as the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem by Vespasian and Titus, and the adoption of Christianity as the official religion by Constantine in the Roman Empire, and the division of the Roman Empire by Constantine's sons. Other verses, and sometimes the same verses, refer to later events such as the ascendancy of Mohammed or the conquest of the Arabian peninsula and the subsequent massacre of Jews living there. Still later applications are found in the conquest of Jerusalem by the 'Christian' crusaders, who forbid Jews from praying at the temple site or from living in Jerusalem.⁶²⁹ Rambam advocates an approach that leaves the interpretation of the chapter as unfulfilled until the day when prophecies are fulfilled without doubt.⁶³⁰ Quite contrary is the position of Abarbanel, who encourages interpretation of this angelic prophecy as referring to historical and political phenomena of each interpreter's own period. This approach allows for a wide variety of interpretations, all being equally plausible. Yet, at the point of the 'End of Days' the

⁶²⁹ Summarized by Goldwurm, pp.314-15.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.315.

'ultimate' interpretation will avail itself; until then as we await that time other interpretations are possible.⁶³¹ Similarly, Gadamer does not view the temporal gap between text and interpreter as a negative deterrent to understanding, but rather as a helpful tool used to filter out some understandings and explications that might not have had genuine meaning.

What these rabbis advocate in terms of textual interpretation of political and religious circumstances, other readers can apply to other arenas of life. Though the horizon of the text is clearly political and religious, we should not have to assume that the horizon of the reader is restricted to the historico-religious applications. We may find the themes of kings, betrayals, lands, broken treaties, ravages, wars and persecutions that dominate this chapter in several avenues in life; our constancy is our hope in the final triumph of the wise and the righteous who stand on the side of Yhwh, the ultimate victor.

Daniel 12 – Danielism: Survival of the Wisest

Not only does this chapter close off the preceding vision, but it additionally works to wrap up the narrative in general. While chapter 11 concludes with a brief note referring to the end of the king who brings so much pain and suffering to the people of Yhwh, chapter 12 begins with an optimistic comment regarding Michael's defense of God's people. Like the opening chapter that reveals the qualities required to be a good hermeneut, and may indeed point to the ideals held by authorial community, this closing chapter too reveals much about the ideals, views and goals held by the authorial community, all of which leaves the reader with implicit commissions.

Though Michael is not perceived as a hermeneut per se in this narrative, his role is indeed one who stands in the gap, yet not to communicate a message but to protect the

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, p.316.

people of Yhwh against supernatural and implied natural forces that will inevitably oppose them. The reference to ‘people’, whom Michael defends, is made in connection with a community who are linked together by a common bond of the book in which are written the names of these people. This is indeed a community whose identity is constructed by text. The strong theoretical and practical ties that this literary notion of community has with narrative theology are unavoidably clear. The book contains names—though we are unsure if they are names of individuals or groups—and while generations continue to pass, the book moves with the times as a constant recorder of names and essentially stands as the binding factor connecting the readerly community from the various generations. This book is text not for one group in one time alone, but is a common text for generations to come, for all readers whose names are written therein side by side.

The reference to a resurrection in verse 2 precludes the admonitions given in verse 3 in that the position one finds him/herself in the resurrection is dependent upon one’s own actions and exercise of wisdom while alive as well as the urgency to lead others to a righteous standing. We must be sensitive to the Hebraic poetic structure and hence the function the poetry serves, particularly of verse 3.

Those who are wise shall shine	like the brightness of the firmament
And those who turn many to righteousness	like the stars forever and ever.

According to the Hebraic poetic device of semantic parallelism,⁶³² the brightness of the firmament is equated with the stars that shine forever. In like manner of this construct, the wise are parallel and therefore also equated with those who turn many to righteousness. In turn this structure not only reveals the character of those who are wise,

⁶³² See Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*; Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*; O’Conner, *Hebrew Verse Structure*; Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*.

but further works to define the ideals of those who consider themselves to be wise. In other words, the wise will turn many to righteousness. This brings us to a point where we can define this concept called 'wisdom' according to the Danielic tradition. Wisdom is obtaining and maintaining a proper relationship with Yhwh while also leading others to do the same; these qualities are the ultimate prerequisites to the more pointed task of interpreting. The wise will seek to interpret Yhwh as text, the Ultratext through whom all other texts must be interpreted, if they are to be interpreted properly.

This single word 'wise' or *maskilim* is a very important concept in Danielic studies since many scholars believe that it not only defines but also identifies the historical authorial community of Daniel^B.⁶³³ Yet, we must also consider other possible references that are not as historically bound to a given community but rather reveal the ultimate roles to be performed by wise hermeneuts. 'Stars' in this apocalyptic context can indicate such celestial beings as angels,⁶³⁴ or as we have pointed out several times previously, heavenly hermeneuts. The glorification of the *maskilim* is not a pursuit of vanity or even of immortality but rather a desire to graduate to the status of hermeneut. Daniel^C who is a supreme example of a good earthly theological hermeneut is overshadowed—even overwhelmed—by the knowledge and understanding of the heavenly hermeneuts. The resurrection provides the context and opportunity for the wise to graduate from mortal hermeneut to immortal hermeneut.

The content of the vision and the angelic messenger's words to Daniel^C conclude at verse 4 with the instruction to close up and seal the scroll until the end of time. Because these words are sealed, many will frantically hurry about in order to find sense

⁶³³ For further discussion, see Chapter 1 in this work.

⁶³⁴ Goldingay, *Daniel*, p.308.

and understanding. In Goldwurm's translation: "Obscure the matters and seal the book" reveals that Daniel^C did indeed understand the vision, but Daniel^C's presentation of it, as well as his supposed lack of understanding of the vision, is cryptic.⁶³⁵ In other rabbinic traditions Daniel^C writes down what he knows of the end in veiled and obscure language—in the form we now have it.⁶³⁶ In a more esoteric fashion Daniel^C should seal the book so that none but the worthy should see it.⁶³⁷ The reading process especially in the apocalyptic genre is a constant process of revealing and revealing,⁶³⁸ which is certainly the case in Daniel^C; information is given in a veiled format, which is then revealed only to be cryptically revealed by the use of different signifiers. As for the effectiveness of this esoteric secrecy, Kelber offers three reasons: 1) it serves to defend and strengthen the identity of a small group, the *maskilim* in this case; 2) it is closely allied with possession of special knowledge, which is definitely exhibited in Daniel^C and implied for the 'wise' reader; and, 3) it is a guarantor of authority, which is established in an esoteric community of the wise.⁶³⁹

Daniel^C suddenly encounters yet another vision on the tail end of his previous vision. He sees two angels on either bank of the river, one of whom asks the central angel dressed in linen above the water to reveal the temporal duration until the end. To this question the angel replies "Time, times and half a time." We must firstly notice that the physical position of the angel is indicative of the hermeneut, one who metaphorically stands between heaven and earth. Secondly, the time of the end is tightly associated with

⁶³⁵ Goldwurm, p.323.

⁶³⁶ Ralbag, Ibn Yachya, Metzudos; in Goldwurm, p.323.

⁶³⁷ Ibn Ezra; in Goldwurm, p.323.

⁶³⁸ Werner Kelber, "Narrative and Disclosure: Mechanisms of Concealing, Revealing and Reveiling" in *Semeia* 43, p.3ff.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.5.

the timelessness of Yhwh on one hand and the dispensational confines of the community on the other hand. Once again, we must consider the dialogical relationship relating to time-restricted material and timelessness of truth. The presence of one informs the other in a reflexive relationship. As we have seen throughout the narrative, especially the latter half, truth is not bound by fulfillment, rather it guarantees fulfillment. Nevertheless, as Yhwh's communicators of his eternal truth, we must still acknowledge our temporality and adequately assess our circumstances accordingly. Our pursuit of God's timeless truth does not offset the restrictions we experience by our own temporal bonds. We are while on this earth both eternal in our pursuits of Yhwh who is eternal and temporal in our mortality and in our mundane circumstances. Stroup makes a comment very apropos to Daniel^C in his situation; "in the midst of these life-stories a person discovers something else—'God's time, the greater and encompassing time which is that of the stories of God, and he experiences companionship with God in time.'"⁶⁴⁰ Daniel^C, a character confined by time and whose days are numbered enjoys a relationship for an allotted time with Yhwh a timeless deity.

Upon hearing the conversation between these two angels, Daniel^C admits that he fails to understand. According to Rashash Daniel^C knows the end, otherwise the angel's admonition to obscure the matters would be superfluous.⁶⁴¹ However, the nuances of Daniel^C's lack of understanding have much to do with the sealing of the scroll and the information that Daniel^C requests. Daniel^C pressures the angel for more information, wanting to know the details of the outcome. We can make two observations regarding Daniel^C's request as paradigmatic of a good hermeneut. On one hand, the hermeneut is

⁶⁴⁰ Stroup, p.77f.

⁶⁴¹ Goldwurm, p.323.

one who continues to probe deeper into issues to discover the more meaningful significance. The job of the hermeneut, we might say, is never completed. We have witnessed this in multiple ways from our discussions in our present Chapter 1, in which we explored the various models of reading and interpreting, all of which attempt to find a deeper significance in the text or reader. On the other hand, we have to come to the realization that there are indeed texts that we may never grasp, or texts that we are forbidden (supernaturally?) from comprehending. This realization of a forbidden text and his/her own interpretive limitations are as true of signs of a good hermeneut as the hermeneut who continues to probe deeper into the issues. A good hermeneut can more easily accept the mystery of the mysterious and understand that its mystery must be a part of the message itself. What the reader is supposed to conclude is ambiguous; as one option, to probe deeper as Daniel^C does, or as the other option, to let the text remain enigmatic as the angel commands. At the end of this vision, as well as previous ones, we must conclude that Daniel^C operates on the basis of a hermeneutics of faith; though he does not fully comprehend, still he believes.

Yet a third non-mutually exclusive possibility seems to emerge. Daniel^C is urged to drop his inquiry into the issue for a specific reason: the words are closed up and sealed till the end of time. The timelessness of truth remains intact but the temporal opportunity for Daniel^C to inquiry into this matter is closed. In other words, there is a time for further inquiry and deeper probing, and there is also a time for realizing that the understanding of a given text is to remain mysterious. Yet the angel gives Daniel^C some generalities concerning the end; the reader does not know if such information will suffice Daniel^C because we have just heard the last of Daniel^C's own words in his narration. Once again,

the Hebraic poetic convention of contrasting parallelism is employed in a chiasmic structure to bring the point across effectively.

A	Many will be	purified, made spotless and refined	
B	But	the wicked	will continue to be wicked.
B'	None of	the wicked	will understand
A'	But	those who are wise	will understand.

Wisdom and understanding are inseparable, yet wickedness and failure to understand are likewise close companions. Clearly this is not commentary on general issues of knowledge, but it more specifically pertains to the issue of eternal truth found in the source of the eternal God Yhwh. In Danielic terms, hermeneutics and proper spiritual condition become interwoven with each other. In Daniel^B—as well as in midrashic works—reason, understanding and knowledge without the word of Yhwh is dubious and unreliable.⁶⁴² Again the hermeneutical circle moving from knowledge of God to knowing God's word to obtaining and exercising wisdom, from wisdom to knowing God's word back to a better knowledge of Yhwh himself, and the infinite number of points in between.

The calculations given for the time of the end is not only problematical for the historical-critical scholars but reveals an indication of the problems that a hermeneut is bound to encounter. Many historical-critical scholars assert that the calculations of 8.14 of 1150 days (2300 evenings and mornings)⁶⁴³ are refigured in verse 11 and again in verse 12 due to the lack of fulfillment of these prophecies.⁶⁴⁴ However, our concern is more with the problem that these numbers represent in our present reading than in any

⁶⁴² Neusner, *What is Midrash?* p.11.

⁶⁴³ See Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, p.250.

⁶⁴⁴ Scholars who advocate this correction scheme and follow H. Gunkel are Montgomery, Bentzen, Delcor, Lacocque; from Baldwin, p.209.

historical fulfillment. The two numbers given here by the angel are entirely misleading. One number cited 1290 as the amount of days from a point in time at which the daily sacrifices are abolished to the end of the abomination of desolation; the other number states that 1335 is the length of time required to endure. In the end we have to conclude that any calculations of the future with an attempt at precision are endeavors fraught with frustration and are bound to be a slippery venture. Yet at the same time we must also realize the promise of rest and reward given to Daniel^C that accompanies these numbers is good till the end, whenever that may be, and would seem to be a secondary concern in light of this promise.

Yet for the reader, and clearly at this point distinct from Daniel^C, urgency is expressed with regard to the issue of perseverance. The fact that 1335 days are required to endure even though 1290 days see an end to the abomination of desolation speaks of the importance of endurance. Calculations of the end cannot precisely figure what is necessary for completion of time's end and the establishment of the eternal kingdom. However, these numbers do work to prompt the reader constantly to look into the temporal horizon for ways in which s/he might understand what lies ahead. Ironically, the given numbers work to reinforce the slippery nature of temporal calculations, but at the same time highlight the commission to endure as wise and righteous followers of Yhwh.

What we are essentially left with in this chapter is a final culmination of a type of hermeneutics that is foreshadowed throughout the narrative. Clearly Daniel^C must be an apocalyptic hermeneut, as must the reader. Once again, however, our concern is not primarily for the historical setting, and therefore our proposal is not to be confused with

apocalyptic hermeneutics in a historical setting.⁶⁴⁵ God entrusts a text with Daniel^C that is beyond his understanding; this is indicative of the responsibility held by the hermeneut. Even when understanding is lacking, the hermeneut must handle the given text with responsibility and must comprehend that such responsibility is given to him/her by the Text-giver. What I propose is a neo-apocalyptic hermeneutic in a contemporary setting; a hermeneutic that presses on to the end, that works through the difficulties, that understands the constantly changing political and social climates, and that offers hope for the future to those who are wise and righteous followers of Yhwh. These are the elements of which apocalypses are composed, and these very same ones are the critical ingredients of neo-apocalyptic hermeneutics.

Reader's Responsibility of Praxis

As a closing remark the angel sends Daniel^C away to realize his own mortality and the short length of life remaining. This last commandment is a summation of J. Hillis Miller's program of ethics of reading: "Ethics of reading is about living and dying and justice, discovering in the text that face which is mortal, and learning to snatch it back at every moment from nothingness."⁶⁴⁶ Indeed the angel instructs Daniel^C about living, dying, facing mortality and doing life at every possible moment, and thus the instruction is to be an ethical reader which has far more sincere implications for the living reader than for Daniel^C as a character at the tail end of his life.

The angel's commandment also causes the reader to understand that Daniel^C has gone as far as he can go as a hermeneut, at least in this earthly existence, and his work is as complete as it can be. Yet the reader is left with his/her own realization, that while this

⁶⁴⁵ Such methods are described by D.S. Russell in *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, chapter IV, pp.178ff.

⁶⁴⁶ J. Hillis Miller, from Phillips and Fewell, "Ethics, Bible, Reading as if", *Semeia* 77, p.17.

paradigmatic interpreter is left within the pages of this narrative, the reader must not only exit the narrative beyond the confines of the text but must also implicitly take the torch of interpretation from Daniel^C and carry on the work performed by him. In this respect the reader too must come to realize that s/he is potentially a part of a special and elite community dating back to the *maskilim*, or whoever the authorial community might have been. The commission and the burden to know Yhwh and his word, to exercise wisdom, to endure and to lead many to righteousness is heavy and sobering, but the reader also fully comprehends that the role of the hermeneut is certainly not an easy one and not without its costs. If the reader is willing to accept this commission and prove him/herself worthy of this difficult task of living as a hermeneut, then s/he is by all intents and purposes, a graduate of the Danielic courses of hermeneutics. At some point each reader will also have to anticipate his/her own death and await his/her reward, and in the meantime, the exemplary mentorship of Daniel^C also serves as a paradigm for the reader to secure new disciples of theological hermeneutics, thus guaranteeing the survival of this pistic interpretive community.

CHAPTER 7

THE READER AS HERMENEUT

“Bible stories do not flatter or fascinate like Homer’s; they do not give us something artfully rendered; they force readers to become interpreters and to find the presence of what is absent in the fraught background, the densely layered narrative.”

-Geoffrey Hartman⁶⁴⁷

“What is required in order to look at oneself with true blessing in the mirror of the Word? The first requirement is that you must not look at the mirror, observe the mirror, but must see yourself in the mirror.”

-Søren Kirkegaard⁶⁴⁸

We have in this project attempted to maintain an interdisciplinary approach to Daniel^B, in that we have attended to the issues of the historical reader and for the historical authorial community as well as of the text itself; yet our final point of interest lies with the contemporary reader and the readerly pistic community engaged in the reading of Daniel^B. Our search has not been purely for the aesthetic beauty of the literature, and while we did find such aesthetic quality, our quest has been for significance for the reader of Daniel^B. Therefore we have taken the time and effort to display how the contemporary ideal/competent reader might interact with Daniel^B along the way as text. We reach a point now when our reading of the text is completed and we must make some necessary comments regarding the general implications left for the reader. Rather than a reiteration of the reader’s interaction with smaller episodes, we need to make some broader and more sweeping generalizations about the reader’s reaction to the reading of the text, all of which will serve as a summary of the reader’s total reading

⁶⁴⁷ Hartman, “Struggle for the Text” in *Midrash and Literature*, p.15.

⁶⁴⁸ Søren Kirkegaard, *For Self-Examination* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1990), pp.23-26.

experience. We shall attempt this in three distinct sections: the reader as character, the reader as text, and finally the reader as hermeneut.

Reader as Character

In Fewell's conclusive remarks she claims that, "only two characters survive the whole of the book: Daniel and God."⁶⁴⁹ Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and to a lesser extent the Narrator all fade from the storyline except Daniel^C and Yhwh. Although this statement is true to a certain extent, in that Daniel^C lives through the entirety of the narrative, still in the closing chapter he is commanded to go his way, face the inevitability of death and to await his inheritance. What we may see as more accurate is that only the reader and Yhwh are the survivors *after* the narrative. Daniel^C survives the narrative but not beyond it; the reader survives beyond the narrative, not simply as actual reader but as character in the ongoing drama of life.

Reader as Disciple

Regarding the reader as character is a progressive development. The notion that the reader comes on the scene as character is fundamentally unsupported by the text. The reader enters the narrative quite like many other narratives by way of observing the workings and nuances of the literature and engaging in the storyline. As we have mentioned previously, Daniel^B as a hermeneutics textbook is essentially broken up into three main sections: the introduction, the theoretical/observational methodology and the practical/implicational mode. Before we are officially introduced to Daniel^C, the condition of the exile is primarily described in theological terms, and only subsequently in political terms. The reader is firstly challenged to identify with the exile in a metaphoric sense. Can the catastrophes that surround us likewise be viewed as an act of

⁶⁴⁹ Fewell, *Circle*, p.125.

the sovereign God who does as he pleases according to his good will? If we are willing to reevaluate these circumstances through a theological lens then we are also capable of proceeding further in the narrative as character, and not simply as outsider.

Also before the reader is officially introduced to Daniel^C, we are told the prerequisites that must be in place in order to be considered a good hermeneut. Later, after our introduction to Daniel^C, we are shown a display of Yahwistic devotion that is absolutely necessary to be a good theological hermeneut. As a consequence of these 'natural' skills and devotion to Yhwh, God rewards his four servants with 'supernatural' skills for knowledge and understanding, and to Daniel^C an additional ability to understand dreams and visions. Thus, the reader is invited into the hermeneutical circle at some point, whether to devote to Yhwh what 'natural' skills may exist with an expected reward, or to devote oneself to Yhwh in hopes of a blessing from him in terms of an endowment of skill. In either case the reader must comprehend that a good theological hermeneut needs both devotion to Yhwh as well as innate abilities. In short hermeneutics demands both spiritual and intellectual astuteness.

In the introductory and early observational episodes of chapters 1-2, the main protagonist is introduced as Daniel^C who is followed closely behind by his understudies Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. In chapter 3 we find that Daniel^C is mysteriously absent and that Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah must prove themselves apart from the presence of their mentor Daniel^C. By the end of the episode, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah do indeed prove themselves as wise and devout interpreters, after which time these three disappear from the scene for good as graduates. In the process of this episode, Daniel^C is verified as an excellent teacher/mentor whose students substantiate this claim by their

performance in the absence of Daniel^C. We might say with reference to Daniel^C the teacher and his students Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, that someone is a teacher when s/he has students; and someone is an excellent teacher when his/her students excel. The absence of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah as graduates of Daniel^C's schooling of theological hermeneutics leaves room for the 'other', an 'other' who is none other than the reader.

At this point the reader is challenged to make an ethical decision: to read passively or actively. To read passively is not to invest one's self into the process and displays an unwillingness to take anything away from the story that might challenge the status quo of the reader's personal life. Such a reading is considered to be unethical by critics of the 'ethics of reading' school.⁶⁵⁰ If the reader has read as such thus far, a decisive moment arrives with the absence of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. To read actively—and ethically—the reader posits his own experiences and vulnerabilities into the text and is willing to allow the text to shape his/her experiences and even exploit his/her vulnerabilities. The active reader becomes the new disciple of Daniel^C, while the passive reader simply remains an observer of literary aesthetics and a recipient of this ancient form of entertainment. The reader who so chooses to undertake the challenges set before him by his mentor Daniel^C will receive the opportunity to observe the theoretical motifs by which Daniel^C operates as a theological hermeneut. In these observations, what we have called the 'undergraduate courses', the reader is equipped with the foundational groundwork prerequisite to the challenges of praxis that await in the latter half of the narrative.

⁶⁵⁰ See such works as J. Hillis Miller, *The Ethics of Reading*; Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation*; *Semeia* 77; and in a slightly different mode deemed 'ethical criticism' by Booth, *The Company We Keep*.

Reader as Daniel

The notion that life imitates art is a familiar one, but in Daniel^B this fanciful concept functions far more like a mandate; what we read in this narrative art demands its own emulation in the life of the reader. The entire summary of Daniel^B can be wrapped up in this simple phrase: the goal of the narrative is to transform the reader into a 'Daniel^C'. The reader comes to know firsthand about Daniel^C in the latter half of the narrative since it is narrated in first-person by Daniel^C via his written memoirs. The first and most obvious feature of this first-person narration in relation to the reader as character is the reader's 'pronunciation' of the 'I'. No longer does the reader simply read about Daniel^C from a third-person perspective, s/he reads 'I' and essentially becomes the 'I', an identity the reader must eventually assume. Ricoeur's comment is especially insightful,

“‘I’ is not a concept. It is impossible to substitute a universal expression for it such as ‘the one who is now speaking.’ Its only function is to refer the whole sentence to the subject of the speech event. It has a new meaning each time it is used and each time it refers to a singular subject.”⁶⁵¹

The 'I' of Daniel^C is repeated and reiterated from generation to generation in the Danielic community and finds new meaning and application in every circumstance, and ours is no different.

The other feature that presses the reader to view Daniel^C as a reader and the reader as Daniel^C is the degree of his vulnerabilities and inadequacies. As previously mentioned, the text calls for an active and ethical reading, investing one's self, interest, experiences and vulnerabilities into the text; such is seen in Daniel^C. Suddenly the picture thus far painted of Daniel^C as an impeccable and flawless interpreter is cast under a

⁶⁵¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian U. Press, 1976), p.13.

shadow of doubt. Though we have no hint of any moral imperfection or loss of integrity, Daniel^C admits that his skills seem to be outgunned by the texts he faces. In this respect some Danielic commentators ironically fail to be 'Daniel^Cs', for they are convinced they are 'too good' and are unwilling to admit their insufficiencies. For the first time the reader more clearly understands the cost that accompanies the role of hermeneut, specifically psychologically, physically and implicitly mortally. In the process of attempting to interpret these more difficult texts, we find that Daniel^C as one hermeneut bridging the gap between mortal and divine is no longer sufficient; two hermeneuts are required to fulfill this task, one heavenly and one earthly. The text that Daniel^C has before him is interpreted by the heavenly hermeneut, which is by no means clearly identifiable. Daniel^C is left to interpret the interpretation but no such interpretation is recorded for the reader. Ultimately the reader is the one responsible to complete the bridge between mortal and divine, and in so doing performs the work that Daniel^C is chosen to do. The reader essentially becomes Daniel^C as s/he interprets the angel's interpretation of the text. In one sense the reader is in the book in the form of Daniel^C; in another sense Daniel^C is outside the book in the form of the reader.

Reader as Text

Throughout this project Daniel^C is noted as a supreme paradigm of a theological interpreter, but not only does Daniel^C interpret, he is also interpreted. In a similar scenario the reader is an interpreter and is likewise interpreted. In a sense the reader becomes a text readable by the text of Daniel^B, in that interpretation reveals our hidden agendas. Take for instance, our initial—perhaps 'pre-textual'—search to interpret Daniel^B with our given hermeneutical skill, which leads us to discover within the

Danielic corpus a theme of hermeneutics, which causes us to study the discipline of hermeneutics, which then compels us to reread Daniel^B to study hermeneutics even more extensively. At last we read Daniel^B again to practice the hermeneutical principles that we have learned along the way.

As another example, our approach to Daniel^B is openly interdisciplinary, by which we attempt to maintain simultaneously several different viewpoints. We began by taking an interdisciplinary approach to Daniel^B, only to discover that Daniel^C is the true interdisciplinarian already at practice. We then learn from Daniel^C how to be interdisciplinarians so that we might better approach text with the necessary skills of interdisciplinarity. Would such a discovery have been possible if the reader did not have agendas of hermeneutics or of interdisciplinarity; agendas which essentially function as texts interrelating with Daniel^B as text? In other words, our interpretations betray our agendas. Paul Ricoeur states, “we can believe only through interpreting;”⁶⁵² we might likewise say that we are believed only by being interpreted. Indeed, the relationship between text, interpreter and interpretation is itself dialogical and reflexive.

In our present case our reading is text both literally and literarily. Our reading of Daniel^B becomes a writing, which in turn reveals our agenda in reading the text and searching for interpretive theories and practices, which are then in turn employed in the very same act of reading and writing. In the words of Susan Handelman, “Interpretation is not essentially separate from text itself—an external act intruded upon it—but rather the extension of the text, the uncovering of the connective network of relations.”⁶⁵³ In other words, the precise point at which text ends and interpretation begins is an artificial

⁶⁵² Paul Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, p.352.

⁶⁵³ Susan Handelman in Neusner, *Canon and Connection*, p.xi.

and arbitrary attempt at delineation. Interpretation is reticent in the text and the text is liberated in the interpretation, which is but an extension of the interpreter. Daniel Patte recognizes that “reading is a two-way process—reading a text in terms of our experience and reading our experience in terms of the text.”⁶⁵⁴ Similarly, Norman Holland states that each reader re-creates the work in terms of his own identity theme, and that each reader also re-creates his identity from the literary work.⁶⁵⁵ In appropriation, we are shaped by Daniel^B into our identities as interdisciplinarians and hermeneuts, but likewise as interdisciplinarians and hermeneuts we shape the meaning of the text according to our identity-agenda. This leads to the critical work that presently sets before us. Our reading experience becomes a writing—that which sets before us now—which itself serves as a text. The connection between reading and writing can be summarized as such: I read that I might understand, and I write that I might be understood.⁶⁵⁶ Yet in this fragile attempt to be understood, we might have aspirations that we have said what needs to be said so well that our writing will put an end to the necessity of writing on this topic. Indeed what inspires a critic to write is the hope of solving the problem, but this will inevitably and paradoxically lead to all the more writing, and more writing still.⁶⁵⁷ In short, Daniel^B as text anticipates our reading and the discovery of our identities as theological hermeneuts; the fact that before us now is a text that reflects the fulfillment of this very anticipation of theological hermeneutical identity is a text essentially read by Daniel^B the text. And so the reader truly does become a text literally—by the fact that we write—and literarily—by the idea that in so doing we fulfill a literary anticipation resident in the narrative.

⁶⁵⁴ Daniel Patte, “When Ethical Questions Transform Critical Biblical Studies” in *Semeia* 77, p.275.

⁶⁵⁵ Holland, “Unity Identity Text Self” in Tompkins, p.126.

⁶⁵⁶ David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*, p.84.

⁶⁵⁷ Derrida summarized by Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p.90.

In summary Tompkins reveals that, “we ourselves are interpretations as well as interpreters.”⁶⁵⁸ In our case, since we interpret in Daniel^B an ‘interpretation’ motif, we become interpretations of ‘interpretation’, which is precisely the very thing that Daniel^C needs to perform in the latter half of the narrative following the initial interpretations of the angelic messengers. Therefore, the reader is not simply a text according to an abstract literary theory, the reader is a text or an interpretation embedded in the very text of Daniel^B.

Reader as Hermeneut

As readers we confront good interpreters and bad interpreters; we are shown their divergent characteristics, but at last we are forced to find our own hermeneutical identities. Walter Gibson says that a bad book is a book in whose mock reader we discover a person we refuse to become.⁶⁵⁹ We can conversely say that a good book is one in whose mock reader we discover a person whom we long to become. The case we find in Daniel^B is that the reader is not only drawn to this identity but is additionally commissioned to become a ‘Daniel^C’ or a theological hermeneut. However, the reader does not come to desire this position out of a skewed and misleading romantic notion; rather he does so with a sobering realization of the importance of the position and the costs that may accompany the task. The implications for the reader are indeed heavy and the commission to become a wise and devout hermeneut is urgently vital. The ideal reader does not simply exit the narrative, s/he is catapulted out of it and into a world in desperate need of a good theological hermeneut.

⁶⁵⁸ Tompkins, p.xxiiiiff.

⁶⁵⁹ In Jane Tompkins’s *Reader Response Criticism*, p.5.

The means by which we come to these conclusions are a partial credit to Stanley Fish's critical differentiation between rhetorical and dialectical literature, which we must apply presently to our agenda. Rhetorical literature is closed-ended, where the end corresponds to the beginning. Dialectical literature is open-ended and points away from itself to something its forms cannot capture, and therefore, becomes a vehicle for its own abandonment or a 'self-consuming artifact'.⁶⁶⁰ In a standard rhetorical narrative the plot is construed from the viewpoint that its ending is known from the outset. A dialectical narrative is constructed so as to involve the dialectical discourse of the characters with a dynamism stemming from the effects of the spoken language upon themselves and others. In our study of Daniel^B we find no substantial evidence of rhetorical classification; the early half leaves the reader with certain impressions unsupported by the latter half, leading the reader to expect one thing about the end of the narrative only to have the ending completely shifted away from previous perceptions. Daniel^B does indeed leave the reader with an unexpected—even unsure—ending in terms of character and chronology, though theologically there is an expected consistency. Daniel^B is dialectical in that it is open-ended, pointing away from itself essentially to the reader whom the literature has no wish to capture but on the contrary to liberate in order to live an interpretive life outside the text; thus it becomes a vehicle for its own abandonment,⁶⁶¹ or perhaps better stated, a springboard for hermeneutical life beyond the text.

This life of the theological hermeneut that is reflective of the ideals of the community engrossed with the literary work of Daniel^B leaves the reader to contemplate a multitude of implications, or perhaps stronger, commissions. Develop ourselves into

⁶⁶⁰ Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1974), p.4.

⁶⁶¹ Hugh C. White. "The Joseph Story: A Narrative Which Consumes its Context" in *Semeia* 31, p.56.

more qualified servants through intellectual, physical and personal exercises. Devote these qualities to the service and representation of Yhwh, the eternal God of heaven and earth. Expect enhancements in these areas as a result of God's respect for our dedication. Use these enhancements all the more for the glory of Yhwh with the wisdom that can only come from above. Know that a great chasm exists between the natural and the supernatural, and that this gap must be bridged. Accept the idea that Yhwh may wish to use us as hermeneuts to bridge this gap. Stand up for what is right in the sight of Yhwh and develop a strong distaste for the things that displease him. Count the cost for these convictions, but nevertheless stay true to them. Understand that the task of interpreting texts is best performed when deliberation is filtered through our understanding of the Ultratext. Realize that strong links exist between the natural and supernatural world, and that several hermeneuts are often required to bridge the gap. Rest assured that Yhwh has the temporal history and future of this world under his control and he will bring it to an end to establish his kingdom forever with his saints to inhabit it. Acknowledge that there are texts that will defeat us as interpreters, but still we must persevere as much as we can. Take seriously our connection with and identity as a wise community which is entrusted with the duty to turn many to the ways of righteousness. Consider carefully the implication to mentor a new generation of hermeneuts to join the ideals of the community, to prolong the communal traditions and guarantee a Yahwistic representative voice in times to come. Recognize the finality of our own mortality, yet anticipate the reward of our immortality. "Now go your way, Daniel^{You}."

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