EXPOSITION OF DANIEL

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by

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Canonical Context

All 66 inspired books of the Protestant canon relate to the progressively revealed Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible, but not in the same way. Each book either *carries* the metanarrative,[1] *contributes* to it but does not carry it,[2] or *contemplates* the metanarrative.[3] A book's placement into one of these three categories does not necessarily depend on genre, even though a correlation frequently exists. Rather, a book's categorization depends on its contents and its relationship to other books.[4]

In the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of Scripture, the following compose the major elements of the story:

Table 1: Elements of the Metanarrative of Scripture

Setting:	Heaven and earth	Gen 1–2
Hero:	God the Father	Gen 1–2
Hero's desire:	Image bearers to rule the earth	Gen 1:26–28
Problem:	Image bearers gave their rule to the serpent	Gen 3
Solution (the plot):	Promise seed will strike the serpent and restore rule to image bearers	Gen 3:15–Rev 19
Turning point:	The Cross	Gospels
Climax:	The Great Tribulation	Rev 6–19
Resolution / denouement:	Image bearers again rule the earth	Rev 20–22

[1] The carrier category refers to biblical books that carry the primary plotline of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Many books of historical narrative and certain parts of prophetic books fall into this category because they carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative. Such books describe the outworking of the promise in Genesis 3:15–16.

[2] The contributor category refers to biblical books that contribute to, but do not carry, the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Most prophetic books and certain parts of the NT epistles fall into this category because while they do not carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative, they contribute important (often prophetic) information about that metanarrative. Additionally, certain historical narratives run in parallel to one another (e.g., Kings and Chronicles, the four Gospels). In these cases, 1–2 Kings function as the carrier and 1–2 Chronicles as the contributor. Among the Gospels, Matthew functions as the carrier and the other three as contributors.

[3] The contemplator category refers to biblical books that neither carry nor contribute to the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Rather, these books reflect upon (contemplate) the realities of that narrative. Books of wisdom, poetry, and most NT epistles fall into this category, because in light of the Genesis 3:15 promised seed having come, they address how the people of God should live until he returns to establish his kingdom.

[4] For this reason, certain biblical books fit into more than one of these three categories.

As shown in Table 1, the Bible as a whole presents God as the hero of the story who desires his image bearers to rule the world on his behalf. This metanarrative begins in the book of Genesis and concludes in the book of Revelation. Genesis presents the setting,[5] the characters,[6] the plot problem,[7] and the beginning of the rising action. The problem identified in Genesis 3 did not change God's desire for his image bearers to rule the world. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15–16 indicates a war between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. This battle is the central conflict in the entire biblical narrative; a conflict not resolved until Revelation 20. In this prophecy, God promised the seed of the woman—a man—would defeat the serpent, restore humanity to the garden, and restore rule of the earth to God's image bearers. The anticipation of this promised seed drives the plot of the biblical narrative. The entire plot of the metanarrative thus revolves around how Genesis 3:15–16 comes to fruition. This prophecy reaches the first phase of its fulfillment in Revelation 20 in the thousand-year kingdom of Christ on earth, and its final phase of fulfillment in Revelation 21–22 in the new heaven and earth.

As the metanarrative progresses through the story's *carriers* (Genesis–Kings in the OT), Yahweh elected the nation Israel to be his inheritance (Deut 32:9) and to function as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:6). The Gentile nations, by contrast, Yahweh gave to the "sons of God" (Deut 32:8), a reference to the fallen angels. The Pentateuch therefore identified the Gentiles as serpent-seed nations—those who rule the earth with the serpent (Gen 4:7). The Mosaic Covenant (i.e., the Law, the Torah) governed the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Accordingly, Israel's obedience would bring covenant blessings, while infidelity would result in covenant curses (see Deut 28; also Lev 26). If the Pentateuch was aimed primarily at why the Israelites should enter the promised land and how to live in covenant fidelity and so enjoy blessing in the land, the rest of Deuteronomic history (Joshua–Kings) describes how the nation's covenant infidelity resulted in banishment from the land and Babylonian exile. Moses had established four offices in Israel: judges, priests, kings, and prophets (Deut 16–18). Deuteronomic history (Joshua–Kings) successively revealed the failure of each office to establish a lasting righteousness in the nation. Due to their covenant unfaithfulness, Yahweh used the Assyrians to destroy and deport the Northern Kingdom of Israel ca. 722 BC. He later used Babylon to punish and ultimately exile the Southern Kingdom of Judah ca. 605–586 BC.

Daniel was likely a teenager when taken in 605 BC to enter Babylonian service, and he continued in service until the early Persian era (539 BC). His interpretations of dreams and his visions significantly contribute to the shape of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative by showing the promised Israelite kingdom / Yahweh's kingdom would only come after the successive reigns of various Gentile kingdoms. Because the nation still had not repented of her sins following Jeremiah's promised seventy years of serving Babylon (Dan 9), Daniel's appeal for national forgiveness was met with Yahweh's sevenfold punishment as per Leviticus 26, thereby commencing the 490 promised years (70 years x 7) to bring about the atonement, righteousness, and the restoration of Israel. Thus, Daniel explained to the believing remnant of

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[5] Heaven and earth, Genesis 1–2.

[6] God, the hero of the story; mankind, the object of God's desire; and the antagonist, the serpent.

[7] Despite God's desire for mankind to rule the earth on his behalf, the man and woman gave their rule over to the serpent (Gen 3).

Judah that their hope of restoration in the Israelite kingdom would only come through resurrection in the eschaton. Based on its extremely important prophetic information, the book of Daniel functions as a *contributor* to the biblical metanarrative. Because it provides instruction for Israelites on how to live while waiting for the kingdom, it is also a *contemplator* of the biblical metanarrative.

Occasion

Who?

While the text never explicitly identifies Daniel as the author, Daniel does speak in the first person at numerous points, particularly in chs. 7–12. His presence as the primary character in the narrative events of chs. 1–6 (excepting ch. 3) would also make him an eyewitness to those events. His writing of ch. 3 is easily explained by the close relationship he had with his three Jewish friends who feature prominently in that scene. An angel also told Daniel to keep the words secret and seal up the scroll until the time of the end (12:4). Jesus mentioned the abomination of desolation spoken of "by Daniel the prophet" (Matt 24:15). Until relatively recent centuries, Jewish and Christian tradition had long held primarily to the authorship of Daniel himself.[8] Given the evidence internal to the book itself, the endorsement of the Messiah, and the external tradition in both Judaism and Christianity, holding to Daniel as the author of the work bearing his name is not at all unreasonable. That said, an anonymous compiler / editor after Daniel's lifetime is not outside the realm of possibility. In any case, the identity of the person who wrote down the words on a scroll does not impact the meaning or message of the book.

When?

Daniel was likely a teenager in 605 BC when he was taken into Babylonian service (1:3–7), and he remained in exile serving the Gentile kings until the early Persian era (6:1–2, 29 MT [5:31–6:1, 28]; 9:1; 10:1; 11:1) which began in 539 BC. While it's possible Daniel wrote portions of the work earlier in his life, the significance of the sevenfold punishment of the seventy year exile explained in Daniel 9, and the conclusion in Daniel 12 that hope for the kingdom lay only in the resurrection, suggests a purpose for the work which would not have been necessary prior to the end of the exile. That is, hypothetically, the conclusion of the seventy years meant Israel could anticipate the soon restoration of their kingdom and the end of Gentile rule. However, because the nation had not yet repented, Yahweh multiplied their exilic punishment sevenfold as per Leviticus 26, thus resulting in the decreed seven seventies (490 years) (9:24). Thus, Daniel would have little reason to compose this work prior to the Persian era, placing the earliest date at 539 BC. As he was already quite aged at this time, and ch. 12 anticipates Daniel's "rest" (i.e., death) and resurrection, extending the date much beyond the 530's BC, while remotely possible, seems unlikely. Therefore, Daniel most likely composed this work some time in the 530's BC during the early Persian era. If an anonymous writer / editor

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[8] Tremper Longman III, and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 373.

aside from Daniel compiled the work, then it becomes quite difficult to date, and could conceivably range from the early Persian era until just prior to the Maccabean era (mid-second century).

To Whom?

Daniel did not explicitly identify his audience. Given the assumed author, date, and purpose of the book, however, Daniel probably intended the work for all Israelites—both those who returned to Jerusalem in 538 BC and those who remained in Babylon under the Persian empire. He had messages for both the believing remnant as well as the unbelieving majority. Furthermore, the text of Daniel contains considerable portions of both Hebrew (1:1–2:4a and 8:1–12:13) and Aramaic (2:4b–7:28). The presence of six chapters of Aramaic text and the apparent purpose of chs. 2–7 regarding the relationship between Israel and her God on the one hand, and the Gentiles on the other, probably hints that Daniel also had a message for a broader Gentile audience in addition to his Israelite audience.

Where?

The geographical indicators in the text place Daniel as follows:

- In Jerusalem as a youth ca. 605 BC (1:1–2)
- In Babylon for his training in the royal court (1:3–6)
- Implicitly in Babylon (chs. 2–4)
- At Belshazzar's feast in Babylon (ch. 5)
- In Babylon during the rule of Darius the Mede (ch. 6)
- In Babylon during Belshazzar's rule (7:1)
- One of Daniel's visions placed him at the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam by the Ulai Canal (8:2), although it's less clear that he was physically there as opposed to seeing himself there in the vision.
- On the banks of the Tigris River (10:4), that is, near Babylon.

Given the indications in the text, Daniel spent his childhood in Jerusalem and his youth and entire adult life in Babylon. He possibly traveled as part of his official duties, but for the most part he apparently stayed in the administrative and political capital, the city of Babylon. Thus, he most likely composed this work from Babylon, and intended it to be read by both the Jews who remained in Babylon as well as the repatriates in Judea.

Why?

In the first year of Darius the Mede ca. 539 BC (9:1), Daniel understood that Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the desolation of Jerusalem for seventy years had reached its completion (9:2; see Jer 25:11). Daniel's prayer of national repentance (9:4–19) was met with a response from the angel Gabriel that Yahweh had decreed a sevenfold punishment on Israel (9:24). This official declaration meant the exile and seventy years of serving Babylon had *not* resulted in the nation's intended repentance. Through Moses, Yahweh had promised that if covenant curses did not result in repentance, he would revisit the punishment upon Israel sevenfold (Lev 26:18, 21, 23, 27). Since the nation failed to repent after the exilic punishment of serving Babylon for seventy years, Yahweh multiplied those seventy years sevenfold, thus

appointing 490 years (70 x 7) until the end of [national] transgression and sin, atonement for [national] guilt, and the establishment of everlasting [national] righteousness (9:24).

By Daniel's time, Yahweh had established four eternal covenants with national Israel: the Abrahamic (Genesis), Land (Deuteronomy), Davidic (2 Samuel), and New (Jeremiah) covenants. Collectively, these covenants promised Israel eternal possession of all the land between the river of Egypt and the Euphrates, an eternal Davidic king ruling over an eternal kingdom, and national forgiveness and righteousness.[9] Given that neither Daniel nor his audience would live long enough to see Israel's restoration into the eternal kingdom as per the covenants, their only hope lay in the resurrection to eternal life. He wanted his audience to recognize that Yahweh deposes and establishes kings and kingdoms (2:21, 37, 44; 4:14, 23, 29, 32 MT [4:17, 26, 32, 35]; 5:18, 21, 26, 30; 7:14, 17–18, 22, 26–27; 8:25; 9:27; 11:3, 14, 45), so the life of Jews under various Gentile dominions was not because those nations' gods were stronger than Yahweh, but because Yahweh sovereignly permitted it. Ironically, Gentile kings like Nebuchadnezzar (4:32 MT [4:35]) and Darius (6:27 MT [6:26]) recognized the power of Israel's God while unrepentant Israel did not. After the 490 years, Yahweh would establish the eternal kingdom (2:44; 3:33 MT [4:3]; 4:31 MT [4:34]; 6:27 MT [6:26]; 7:14, 18, 27) and give it to the saints (7:18, 22, 27). In the meantime, however, Daniel intended his audience to live in covenant fidelity during the time of Gentile dominion even to the point of death, just as he, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had. In contrast to the boastful rulers whom Yahweh humbled (like Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and the little horn), Daniel wanted his audience to humble themselves so that they might rise with the righteous to everlasting life (12:2–3) at the appointed time of the end (8:17–19, 26; 9:24–27; 11:27, 35, 40; 12:1, 4, 6, 9, 13) and be counted among the wise (11:33, 35; 12:3, 10). To the faithful remnant in his audience, he also intended that they would teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority even though they might die for doing so, and even though many of the wicked would remain wicked (12:10). For the Gentiles who read the book, Daniel intended them to recognize that Gentile dominion had an appointed end. Arrogance against the Most High God and his people would ultimately lead to death. So like Nebuchadnezzar, they should humble themselves before the Most High and show mercy to his chosen people Israel, if they hoped to participate in the eternal Israelite kingdom.

To summarize Daniel's message, Israel's unrepentance after exile and seventy years of serving Babylon resulted in a sevenfold punishment of 490 decreed years until the end of her rebellion. Yet Yahweh remained sovereign over kings and kingdoms. According to his will, five successive Gentile kingdoms would rule the earth prior to the eternal Israelite kingdom. At the appointed time, both Israelite rebellion and Gentile dominion would end, the Jewish resurrection would occur, and the righteous saints would receive their inheritance in the kingdom. Given these prophetically declared realities, Daniel therefore intended his Jewish audience to live in covenant fidelity in the midst of Israelite rebellion and Gentile rule while placing their hope in the promised resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom. Simultaneously, the book served a warning to unfaithful Israelites. Daniel intended that they humble themselves before Yahweh, lest they also be removed from the earth like the prideful Gentile kings and be resurrected to disgrace and everlasting contempt. For the Gentile audience, Daniel intended that they would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

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[9] These merely summarize the provisions of the covenants. A detailed list would be quite extensive and is beyond the scope of the current work.

Genre

Determining the genre of Daniel presents numerous difficulties. In general, chapters 1–6 are considered historical narrative while chapters 7–12 are considered "apocalyptic." But even this is overly reductionistic. Chapter four, for example, contains a letter Nebuchadnezzar wrote to all the nations with a first-person narrative / biographical account. Chapter nine includes a lengthy prayer offered by Daniel. Neither of these strictly fall within the bounds of narrative or "apocalyptic."

Even so, in coming to chapters 7–12, "Of all the literary genres employed in the Bible, none is more difficult to define than the apocalyptic genre."[10] Given the difficulty, this paper will avoid the terms *apocalypse* or *apocalyptic*. The text itself identifies what Daniel saw as "visions," מַרְאֶה (e.g., 8:26) or חֶזְוָא (e.g., 2:19), and "dreams," חֶלְמָא (e.g., 2:26). Perhaps the overall genre of the book of Daniel may be considered, least controversially, as a prophetic literary work involving elements of various subgenres like narratives, dreams and visions, and prayers.

Proposed Message Statement

In order to address Israel's failure to repent after their exile serving Babylon for seventy years and the associated decree of sevenfold punishment (490 years to atone for Israel's guilt), Daniel wrote a prophetic literary work in the 530's BC from Babylon to Israelites in Judea and in Babylon, and to Gentiles, to explain the sovereignty of Yahweh over kings and kingdoms, and his plan for five successive Gentile kingdoms prior to the eternal Israelite kingdom, so that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

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[10] Richard A. Taylor, *Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature: An Exegetical Handbook*, ed. David M. Howard Jr., Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2016), 27.

Use of Rhetoric in Daniel

Classical rhetoric employs three modes and three species of rhetoric. The three modes of rhetoric include *logos*,[11] *pathos*,[12] and *ethos*.[13] The three species include judicial,[14] epideictic,[15] and deliberative[16] rhetoric.[17] The narrative elements of Daniel (chs. 1–6) primarily function ethically to establish the credibility of Daniel as a reliable prophet, Law keeper, and political leader (*ethos*). These narratives build the foundation for why the audience should heed Daniel's visions in chs. 7–12. The faithfulness of Daniel and his three friends to the Law, even to the point of death, presents a positive paradigm (model / example) for the audience to follow (*ethos*) while living under Gentile dominion. The visionary elements of Daniel (chs. 7–12) constitute primarily emotional and logical arguments (*pathos* and *logos*). The ghastly visions of monstrous beasts, raging wars, and rampant death create an emotional tension (fear), but the appointed end of Gentile dominion, the coming of the Son of Man to inherit the eternal Israelite kingdom, and his giving of that kingdom to the resurrected saints provides immense hope (*pathos*). Logically, the audience could recognize that the more expedient path lay in fidelity now, even if it resulted in death, because they could look to the resurrection for eternal life. On the other hand, unrepentance in the present meant they might have better and longer lives under Gentile rule, but it would only lead to the resurrection of eternal disgrace and condemnation (*logos*). All of these rhetorical elements contribute to Daniel's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

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[11] The rhetoric of *logos* employs logical arguments intended to appeal to rational principles found within the author's discourse.

[12] The rhetoric of *pathos* employs arguments intended to arouse an emotional reaction and play upon the audience's feelings.

[13] The rhetoric of *ethos* makes ethical appeals on the basis of credibility: good character or authority.

[14] With judicial rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to make a judgment about events that occurred in the past. This judgment often deals with questions of truth or justice, and can be positive (a defense or "apology" of correctness / innocence) or negative (a prosecution, emphasizing guilt).

[15] With epideictic rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade his audience to hold or reaffirm a certain point of view in the present time. The author wants to increase (or decrease / undermine) his audience's asset to a certain value or belief. To this end, epideictic rhetoric will frequently use examples of *praise* and *blame*.

[16] With deliberative rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to take (or not take) some action in the (often near) future. Deliberative rhetoric deals with questions of self-interest and future benefits for the audience, and appears in the form of exhortation (positive) or warning (negative).

[17] For a complete discussion of classical rhetoric in biblical studies, see George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

Proposed Outline

I. Narrative elements (1:1–6:29 MT [6:28])
   A. Introduction to Daniel (1:1–21)
   B. Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:1–49)
   C. Nebuchadnezzar's furnace (3:1–30)
   D. Nebuchadnezzar's letter to the nations (3:31–4:34 MT [4:1–37])
   E. Belshazzar's demise (5:1–30)
   F. Daniel and Darius (6:1–29 MT [5:31–6:28])

II. Visionary elements (7:1–12:13)
   A. Daniel's first vision (7:1–28)
   B. Daniel's second vision (8:1–27)
   C. Daniel's prayer and third vision (9:1–27)
   D. Daniel's fourth vision (10:1–12:13)

Proposed Argument Exposition

In the **narrative elements (1:1–6:29 MT [6:28])** of his prophetic literary work, Daniel established his own credibility as one found faithful before Yahweh, faithful before Gentile kings, and competent to understand and explain mysteries, dreams, and visions. The entire narrative section established Daniel as a legitimate prophet and a reliable conduit of the prophetic information he will reveal concerning Israel's future in the visionary elements of the book (7:1–12:13). It also validated Daniel as an acceptable representative of Israel who could offer a prayer of national repentance on behalf of Israel (ch. 9) and then receive prophetic information concerning Yahweh's response. Daniel would go on to use the visionary elements of Israel's future to persuade his audience toward a particular course of action, but first he sought to convince the audience of his own legitimacy as a prophet and interpreter of revelation. Rhetorically, then, the narrative elements are primarily ethical (*ethos*) in that they point to the outstanding and reliable character of Daniel in preparation for the audience's acceptance of his subsequent visions.

In the **introduction to Daniel (1:1–21)**, the narrator established the setting initially in Jerusalem but ultimately in the Babylonian court, and he characterized Daniel (the character) in a way that promotes the reader's trust in Daniel (*ethos*).

In Ancient Near Eastern thought, that Nebuchadnezzar brought the vessels of Yahweh's temple into the temple of his gods (1:2) meant the Babylonian gods had defeated Yahweh. However, the note about Yahweh giving Jehoiakim into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (1:2) had already established the author's perspective on Yahweh's sovereignty over kings and kingdoms. The remainder of the book will continue to contribute to the idea of Yahweh's complete sovereignty over the kings and kingdoms of the earth. The Israelite audience—and the Gentile audience, for that matter—could therefore know that Judah was not defeated because of the weakness of Israel's God, but because their sovereign God had permitted it.

The author's characterization of Daniel contributes to his reliability as a prophet and interpreter of dreams and visions in the following ways:

- Daniel was selected from among the royal family and the nobles of Judah (1:3).
- Daniel was selected from among the youths who had no physical defect and were of good appearance, wise in all wisdom, knowing knowledge, and understanding insight (1:4). The mention of being wise (or prudent), שׂכל, is important because this word will be used in key places later in the book of those who attain to the resurrection to eternal life and shine like stars because they lead many to righteousness (12:2–3). That Daniel possessed wisdom, understanding, and insight contributes to his characterization as one able to reliably interpret dreams and visions, and sets up his credibility as a prophet.
- Daniel's refusal to defile himself with the king's food (1:8) characterizes him as a righteous Law keeper.
- That Yahweh gave Daniel loyal love (חֶסֶד) and compassion (רחם) before the commander of the court officials (1:9) characterizes him very positively as the recipient of Yahweh's חֶסֶד, a key covenantal term going back to the revelation of Yahweh's character at Sinai (Exod 34:6). Having Yahweh's favor sets up Daniel for his upcoming role in avoiding execution by interpreting dreams.

- The test of eating only the grains / vegetables (1:10–16) demonstrates the favor of Yahweh over Daniel and his friends for their covenant fidelity. That the commander feared for his life (1:10) but was spared any harm anticipates the saving of Daniel and his three friends later in the narrative.
- The mention that God gave the four men knowledge and insight and wisdom (1:17) further characterizes all four positively and anticipates their later actions in the narrative. That Daniel had insight into all visions and dreams (1:17) sets him up for the interpretation of dreams (e.g., ch. 2, ch. 4), and for his own visions in chs. 7–12.
- The excellence of the four Jewish men before the king (1:19) and his finding them ten times better in matters of wisdom and understanding than the magicians and conjurers among the Chaldeans (1:20) further characterizes Daniel and his friends as wise and insightful. That even a pagan Gentile king recognized this contains some situational irony because the majority of Daniel's own people would refuse his insight and wisdom.
- Daniel's longevity of service until the first year of Cyrus the Persian king (1:21) anticipates Cyrus' decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1–4; 2 Chron 36:22–23) and the beginning of the 490 years for Israel. It also reveals Daniel's lifespan through the entirety of exile and how he outlived kingdoms, something that will be contrasted later with his (and the audience's) inability to live until the restoration of the Israelite kingdom. To serve the entire duration points to his reliable service and enduring faithfulness sustained across many decades of Gentile rule.

In all these ways, the narrator characterized Daniel positively as faithful to the Mosaic Law, without defect, endowed with wisdom, understanding, and insight, and granted the loyal love (חֶסֶד) of Yahweh. He found favor with God, with commanders, and with kings—so why not the audience as well (*ethos*)? The introduction to Daniel (1:1–21) therefore presents a grand picture of the prophet and establishes his initial credibility (*ethos*), which will be bolstered even more in the upcoming narratives. Such legitimacy prepares the audience to receive his authoritative visions about the future in chs. 7–12 and therefore contributes to the author's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

In his account of **Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:1–49)**, the author's demonstration that Daniel could interpret dreams, resulting in life rather than death, foreshadows Daniel's correct interpretation of his eschatological visions (chs. 7–12) and the hope in resurrection to eternal life rather than to shame and condemnation (12:2). The entire account further bolsters Daniel's credibility (*ethos*) for his audience by portraying his legitimacy in areas of wisdom, insight, understanding, dreams, and visions. This section also explicitly identifies some of the book's key messages. First, it points to the sovereignty of Yahweh over kings and kingdoms (2:21). Second, it points to the end of all Gentile kingdoms and the establishment of the eternal Israelite kingdom (2:44). Lastly, this section makes an ironic point in that while a Gentile king

acknowledged the supremacy of Daniel's God, Daniel's own people largely did not extend that same honor to their God. This is the first of several examples in the book of Daniel where Gentile kings make such declarations.

The plea of the Chaldeans that the king might live forever (2:4) is ironic in light of (1) Daniel's statement that Yahweh deposes kings and raises others up (2:21), (2) the dream's interpretation that "after you [Nebuchadnezzar] another kingdom will arise" (2:39), so implying Nebuchadnezzar's demise, and (3) the eternal Son of Man who will reign forever (7:13–14).

Beginning in 2:4 with the quoted speech of the Chaldeans, the text switches to Aramaic from Hebrew, and continues in Aramaic until the end of ch. 7. This Aramaic section as a whole emphasizes (1) the sovereignty of Israel's God over kings and kingdoms, (2) the end of all Gentile kingdoms and the establishment of the eternal Israelite kingdom, (3) the wisdom which the God of heaven gave to Daniel the Judean, and (4) the demise of those who mock Israel's people and God. Given these major emphases and their being written in Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the Ancient Near East in the sixth century, it seems likely that Daniel intended a Gentile audience to read and understand at least this portion of the work, if not the entire book.

The absurdity and foolishness of Nebuchadnezzar's demand to the wise men to tell the dream (2:2, 5) and his threat of death (2:5, 9) characterizes him negatively. His foolish and impulsive actions here and in chapter 3, as well as his pride in chapters 3 and 4 all set a contrast against which his humility before Yahweh is displayed at the end of chapter 4. The situational irony is that an impetuous, tyrannical Gentile king would humble himself before Israel's God, yet Israel would not.

The Chaldeans' protests that, "There is not a man on earth that is able to reveal the word of the king" (2:10) and, "The thing that the king is asking is too difficult and there is no one who can reveal it" (2:11) contribute to the literary tension because of the imminent edict of death which would likewise apply to Daniel and his friends. Furthermore, it establishes the baseline against which Daniel's wisdom may be compared: no one on earth could reveal the king's dream—but Daniel could.

Daniel's seeking of mercy from the "God of heaven" (probably identified as such for the benefit of the Gentiles among the book's audience) and the mystery being revealed to Daniel (2:18–19) point to Daniel's credibility (*ethos*) as a legitimate conduit between Yahweh and men (i.e., a prophet) and a revealer of mysteries. Nebuchadnezzar's later response to Daniel's retelling and interpretation of the dream (1) validates that the God of heaven (Yahweh) reveals mysteries to men, and (2) validates Daniel as a recipient of knowledge concerning mysteries.

Daniel's doxology (2:20–23) fulfills several functions. First, in line with one of the book's overall messages, it explicitly identifies that Yahweh "changes the times and the seasons, and he deposes kings and he sets up kings" (2:21). The author alluded to this concept with his note that Yahweh delivered Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand (1:2), but now the point is made explicit. This theme will pervade the entire book of Daniel as it reveals, several times over, the time of Gentile dominion through five kingdoms followed by the eternal Israelite kingdom. Second, it identifies the God of Daniel's ancestors (Yahweh) as the one who reveals deep and hidden things (2:22). Yahweh, then, is omniscient *and* he reveals wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to men (2:21–22). Third, the doxology identifies Daniel himself as the recipient of wisdom, power, and knowledge (2:23), thus reinforcing the validity of Daniel as knowing the mysteries and revelation of God.

Daniel's telling of the dream (2:29–35) and its interpretation (2:36–45), and Nebuchadnezzar's response (2:46–47) have several important literary and rhetorical functions.

First, they resolve the literary tension regarding the threat of death to all the wise men of Babylon. Second, Nebuchadnezzar's response indicated that Daniel had accurately reflected the dream, thus validating that the God of heaven had revealed it to Daniel. This augments Daniel's credibility and legitimacy as a revealer of mysteries and interpreter of visions and dreams (*ethos*). Furthermore, Daniel's revelation led to life and salvation because it staved off the execution of the wise men. This event therefore provides evidence that Daniel's upcoming visions (chs. 7–12) were valid interpretations of eschatological history, and that listening to Daniel would lead to resurrection to eternal life, while ignoring him would lead to eternal condemnation (12:2). Therefore, the audience should recognize Daniel as a source of revelation and adhere to his message. Third, the interpretation of the dream revealed Yahweh's plan for Gentile dominion through five successive kingdoms prior to the eternal Israelite kingdom. This points to one of the book's major themes regarding Yahweh's sovereignty over kings and kingdoms (first explicitly stated in 2:21). Fourth, Nebuchadnezzar's confession that "Truly your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings" (2:47) is situationally ironic in that a Gentile king would issue such a statement, while Israel, the chosen people of that God, lived in denial of that truth by their covenant infidelity.

Thus, Daniel's narrative portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:1–49) functions primarily to identify Daniel's legitimacy as a conduit of wisdom from the God of heaven, thus lending credence to his upcoming visions (chs. 7–12). His saving the lives of the wise men of Babylon foreshadows the hope of resurrection to eternal life presented in his visions. His interpretation of the dream as the history (in advance) of five Gentile kingdoms prior to the eternal Israelite kingdom points to Yahweh's sovereignty over kings and kingdoms. The irony of a Gentile king proclaiming Yahweh as the God of gods serves as a rebuke of unbelieving Israel. In these ways, this section contributes to Daniel's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

Daniel's account of **Nebuchadnezzar's furnace (3:1–30)** serves several purposes. First, it further characterized Nebuchadnezzar as an impetuous and violent king in preparation for the extreme contrast of his humility in ch. 4. Second, Nebuchadnezzar's ironic declaration that Yahweh was the Most High God serves as a rebuke to unbelieving Israel. Third, the salvation of the three Jewish men in the furnace and Nebuchadnezzar's assertion that no other god can save in this way both proclaim Yahweh's ability to save his people during the times of the five Gentile kingdoms. Fourth, the refusal of the three Jewish men to worship an idol contrasts against, and rebukes, the unbelieving and idolatrous majority of Israelites. The three men serve as a positive model for the Israelites to follow during the times of the five Gentile kingdoms.

Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold (3:1) no doubt related to the statue in his dream. By crafting an idol void of the other types of metal, he declared his intent to rule forever, as it were. This functions to identify his shameless pride and build his characterization in preparation for the contrasting humility he will demonstrate in ch. 4. His summoning of the various levels of government from the whole empire (3:2–3) prepares "the whole world," as it were, to witness the

saving power of Israel's God. Any Gentile readers would be able to know that a representative from their region had been present during this event.

The proclamation of the herald (3:4–6) introduces literary tension into the scene. The Chaldean denouncement of the Jews who refused to worship (3:8–12) escalates the tension further, as does Nebuchadnezzar's confrontation with the three Jewish men (3:13–15). Despite Daniel's absence from this scene, it was probably included because throughout the time of the five Gentile kingdoms, Jews would continually face the pressure and temptation to worship foreign idols (or at least, to forsake the Law) in order to live. Each Jew reading the book of Daniel would need to ask of themselves what they would rather do: worship an idol, or die? Because the three Jewish men had placed their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the eternal kingdom, their refusal to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image (3:16–18) presented a positive paradigm (model / example) for all Israelites to follow during the times of the Gentiles. Their deliverance also foreshadows Daniel's deliverance from the lions' den (ch. 6) for the same reason—his adherence to the Law by refusing to worship an idol (in that case, the king of Persia).

The death of the guards placing the three friends in the furnace (3:22) validates the legitimacy of the danger—the flames were deadly. In contrast to the "strongest men" (3:20) who died, the three Jewish men lived through the fire (3:24–26). Nebuchadnezzar's derogatory question, "Who is the god who will rescue you from my hands?" (3:15) was answered by his own lips: "The Most High God" (3:26) of whom Nebuchadnezzar also said, "There is no other God able to rescue like this God" (3:29). His decree of death for anyone who utters a criticism against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and their house be made into ruins (3:29) is ironic because of its Mosaic parallels: Moses had decreed, "He who blasphemes Yahweh's name certainly shall be put to death" (Lev 24:16), and, if a town had veered into the worship of any other god, the town was to be destroyed and left as a pile of rubble forever (Deut 13:12–16). Nebuchadnezzar's decree therefore serves as an ironic indictment of idolatrous, unfaithful Israel.

Thus, in his portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace (3:1–30), Daniel presented the realistic scenario that Jews would need to face throughout the time of the five Gentile kingdoms: worship idols or die. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah served as a positive paradigm (example) for the Israelites to follow in their adherence to the Law even at the risk of death. Their salvation showed that Yahweh could save his people even through the most tyrannical of kings. The scene further characterizes Nebuchadnezzar negatively in advance of his great humility before Yahweh in ch. 4, which will serve as an ironic contrast to proud and unbelieving Jews. Nevertheless, his response to the three men's deliverance represents the second case in the book of Daniel where a Gentile king proclaimed the glories of Israel's God, in contrast to the unbelieving Israelites. All these elements contribute to Daniel's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

With his inclusion of **Nebuchadnezzar's letter to the nations (3:31–4:34 MT [4:1–37])**, the prophet let Nebuchadnezzar's own voice speak to how his bestial transformation led to his praise of Yahweh and his recognition of the Most High's justice and sovereignty over kings and kingdoms. That a Gentile king would repent and turn to Yahweh after seven years of

punishment serves as a rebuke against Israel's stubborn unrepentance following a tenfold chastisement of seventy years in exile.

In Israel's exilic history, the prophets regularly addressed audiences who believed their punishment in exile was unjust. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel quoted the proverb, "The fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek 18:2; Jer 31:29).[18] Ezekiel also quoted his audience as saying, "The way of Yahweh is not just" (Ezek 28:25). The book of Kings was likewise written to persuade the exilic audience that the curse of exile was indeed justified. Daniel continued in this vein of thought. Through the voice of Nebuchadnezzar, the prophet added to the rhetorically persuasive power of his work because of the irony of a pagan king who was both punished and restored by Yahweh. He would declare that Yahweh's ways are just (4:34 MT [4:37]), that no one can ask him, "What are you doing?" (4:32 MT [4:35]), and extoll Yahweh's sovereignty over kings and kingdoms (3:33 MT [4:3]; 4:31 MT [4:34]).

Nebuchadnezzar's opening, "It is pleasing to me to recount the signs and wonders that the Most High God worked for me" (3:32 MT [4:2]) and his conclusion that, "He is able to humble those who walk in pride" (4:34 MT [4:37]) bookend his humiliating bestial experience and restoration. Nebuchadnezzar's bestial transformation occurred on account of his pride (4:27 MT [4:30]) and would continue until he "acknowledged that the Most High *is* sovereign over the kingdom of men" (4:22 MT [4:25]). The entire account serves as a rebuke against the prideful and idolatrous Israelite nation. Ironically, a Gentile king experienced a seven year punishment that resulted in him turning to Yahweh, while Israel's seventy year punishment (ten times that inflicted on Nebuchadnezzar) did not led to their repentance. Daniel's advice to the king that he renounce his sins by doing what is right (4:24 MT [4:27]) functions rhetorically to admonish unbelieving Israel of the same. That Nebuchadnezzar's concluding note about Yahweh's ability to humble those who walk in pride (4:34 MT [4:37]) appears immediately before the introduction to Belshazzar (5:1) is no mistake. Belshazzar will be a living example of Yahweh humbling those who walk in pride.

That Daniel's interpretation of the dream contrasted with the failure of the Chaldean wise men, just as in ch. 2, and then came true in Nebuchadnezzar's life adds one more proof of Daniel's legitimacy as an interpreter of dreams, thus contributing to his credibility (*ethos*) and continues building the case for why the audience should accept the interpretation of his upcoming visions (chs. 7–12). In these ways, Nebuchadnezzar's letter to the nations (3:31–4:34 MT [4:1–37]) contributes to Daniel's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

In his account of **Belshazzar's demise (5:1–30)**, Daniel employed Belshazzar as a living example of Nebuchadnezzar's conclusion that Yahweh can humble those who walk in pride (4:34 MT [4:37]). Perhaps because Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself before Israel's God, Daniel made no mention of his death or the end of his kingdom. Instead, it would fall to

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[18] The proverb is essentially a complaint meaning, "Our fathers sinned, but we received the punishment."

Nebuchadnezzar's grandson Belshazzar to serve as the example of (1) Yahweh humbling those who walk in pride, and (2) the sovereignty of Yahweh over kings and kingdoms during the transition from Babylon to Medo-Persia. As occurred twice previously (in ch. 2 and ch. 4), this scene also points to the contrast between Daniel's competence and the inability of the Chaldean wise men (5:8). The testimony of the queen pointed to there being in Daniel, "The spirit of the holy gods … enlightenment and insight and wisdom … an excellent spirit and understanding and insight for interpreting dreams and explaining riddles and solving riddles" (5:11–12). His ability to interpret the writing again confirmed him as a revealer of mysteries and so contributes further to his credibility (*ethos*), advancing the case that the audience should trust his interpretation of the visions in chs. 7–12.

Belshazzar's actions mocked Yahweh in two ways. First, he used the drinking vessels from Yahweh's temple at his party (5:2–3). Second, he praised gods of wood and metal (5:4; see also 5:23). These two actions probably epitomized a lifetime of Belshazzar's idolatry and mockery of the Most High God of whom he was aware because of Nebuchadnezzar (5:22). Yet, idolatrous and unbelieving Israel had even less warrant—their awareness of Yahweh went back centuries to at least the time of Moses. Belshazzar's being weighed and found wanting (5:27) and having the kingdom removed from him (5:28) foreshadows the multiplication of Israel's seventy year exile in that it places the kingdom even further away from them. That is, Belshazzar and unbelieving Israel both refused to humble themselves before Yahweh despite knowing better. Consequently, both had their kingdoms removed from them: Belshazzar that very night to the Medes and Persians (5:28), and Israel would need to wait 490 years for their kingdom to come. The transfer from Babylonian to Persian rule signified the end of Israel's seventy years of serving Babylon (Jer 25:11–12; 29:10). However, like Belshazzar, Israel had not learned her lesson. Therefore the kingdom restoration that would have been within their grasp following the exile no longer was, because the seventy years multiplied out sevenfold to 490 (ch. 9).

Thus, chs. 4–5 function together to present contrasting pictures of humility and pride, and Yahweh's response to them. Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself before Yahweh and had his kingdom restored and an even greater glory than before (4:33 MT [4:36]). On the other hand, Belshazzar's unmitigated pride and refusal to humble his heart (5:22) and his exalting himself against the God of heaven (5:23) resulted in his own death and the end of the Babylonian kingdom (5:30). His death serves as a picture of the end of Gentile dominion which is so emphasized in the book. Nebuchadnezzar had his seven years to repent, while Israel had her seventy. Nebuchadnezzar repented and his kingdom was restored—a picture of what could have been for Israel under the Most High God who was sovereign over kings and kingdoms. Instead, Israel's refusal to humble herself before Yahweh meant that, like Belshazzar, their kingdom which was within their grasp would be taken away and only accessible via the resurrection (12:2). Like the previous scenes in the narrative portion of Daniel, Belshazzar's demise (5:1–30) emphasized the sovereignty of Yahweh over kings and kingdoms. It also highlighted Daniel's enduring ability, over seven decades at this point, to consistently out-perform the Chaldean "wise" men. His place as the chief of the wise men (5:11) and his proven ability to interpret riddles, visions, and dreams built his legitimacy (*ethos*) and established the case for why the audience should listen to his interpretation of the visions in chs. 7–12. It also points to an idea presented in chs. 11–12 that wisdom is a function of knowing God and living righteously according to the Law. In these ways, this scene contributes to Daniel's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing

their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

In his account of **Daniel and Darius (6:1–29 MT [5:31–6:28])**, the prophet presented the case for why Daniel could validly represent Israel in his national prayer of repentance (ch. 9) and subsequently correctly interpret the visions of Israel's future. Chapters 1–5 (except ch. 3) pointed primarily to the religious validity of Daniel as an interpreter of mysteries, dreams, and visions. With the account of Daniel and Darius, the author focused on Daniel's political validity as the highest-ranking Israelite in the world.[19] The drama of the jealous administrators and the tension of the lion's den account simply function to highlight Daniel's impeccable character and innocence.

Elements that contribute to Daniel's outstanding character and his rank as the highest ruler of all the Israelites include:

- Daniel's distinguishing himself above all the other administrators of the kingdom (6:4 MT [6:3]).
- The king's plan to appoint Daniel over the whole kingdom (6:4 MT [6:3]).
- The jealous administrators' inability to find any pretext of corruption or negligence (6:5 MT [6:4]).
- The jealous administrators' note that the only basis for accusation against Daniel would be in connection to the Law of his God (6:6 MT [6:5]). Daniel's refusal to eat the king's choice food (1:8) had pointed to Daniel's faithful adherence to the Mosaic Law, and the speech of these men show that even some seven decades later, Daniel still maintained his covenant fidelity. He thus had a lifetime of faithfulness to his credit.
- Like that of his three friends (ch. 3), Daniel's willingness to die rather than commit idolatry (6:11 MT [6:10]).
- Darius' frantic (but futile) efforts to save Daniel (6:15 MT [6:14]) further show the king's trust in Daniel.
- Darius' plea that Daniel's God *whom he served faithfully* would save him (6:17 MT [6:16]) points to the king's recognition of Daniel's religious fidelity.
- Daniel's declaration of being unhurt from the lions because he was found blameless before his God and before the king (6:23 MT [6:22]).

All these elements of the scene point to Daniel as utterly faithful in both his religious and political duties. Because of his blameless character and because he served for nearly seven decades as the highest-ranking Israelite in both the Babylonian and Persian empires, he could validly function as the representative of Israel in a prayer of national repentance (ch. 9).

Darius echoed Nebuchadnezzar's previous declarations regarding Yahweh's eternal kingdom (6:27 MT [6:26]), and his decree that everyone in the Persian empire tremble and fear the God of Daniel (6:27 MT [6:26]) is situational irony because this decree came from a Gentile king, and it contrasted Israel's national disobedience. It is furthermore situationally ironic because numerous elements in the Mosaic Law presented a similar exhortation (e.g., the first of

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[19] Not that the previous scenes ignored Daniel's political clout, such as his elevation to ruler of the province of Babylon (2:48). They focused, however, on his ability to correctly interpret revelation.

the ten commandments). Thus, the author painted an ironic contrast between the Gentile king lauding and commanding the fear of Yahweh, against the backdrop of unbelieving Israelites exalting themselves against Yahweh.

Thus, the account of Daniel and Darius (6:1–29 MT [5:31–6:28]) completes the picture of Daniel's credibility (*ethos*) which began in ch. 1. His proven wisdom and insight into revelation and mysteries over and above all the Chaldean wise men (chs. 1–2; 4–5) affirmed his spiritual competency for interpreting visions. His adherence to the Mosaic Law for around seven decades through two Gentile empires, even at the risk of death, showed his unwavering fidelity to the Law and to Yahweh. Lastly, his political leadership as the highest ranking Israelite in the world proved unassailable to any charge of corruption or negligence. In other words, Daniel was ideally qualified to represent Israel in a national prayer of repentance (ch. 9), to receive revelation of the sevenfold punishment (9:24–27), and to validly interpret and explain the revelations he would receive concerning Israel's future (chs. 7–12). The account of Daniel and Darius (ch. 6) serves as the capstone of the **narrative elements (1:1–6:29 MT [6:28])** in the author's argument for Daniel's credibility (*ethos*). Whether Jew or Gentile, faithful or unfaithful, the audience of Daniel would have no excuse not to heed his words. In these ways, the narrative section of Daniel (chs. 1–6) contributes to the author's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

Having established his credibility as one to interpret various kinds of revelation in the narrative elements (chs. 1–6), in the **visionary elements (7:1–12:13)** of his prophetic literary work, Daniel's revelation and the interpretation of his own visions anticipate "the appointed time of the end" when Yahweh would restore the eternal Israelite kingdom. Only "the wise" would be resurrected to everlasting life and enter this kingdom, while others would face a resurrection to eternal disgrace and condemnation. The visions don't emphasize the sovereignty of Yahweh over kings and kingdoms to the same extent as the narrative elements, but they assume it. Between Daniel's day and the arrival of the kingdom lay a lengthy path of Gentile kingdoms filled with tribulation and struggle for the faithful and wise ones, similar to the trials of Daniel's three friends (ch. 3) and Daniel himself (ch. 6). For the believing Jewish remnant in his audience, Daniel intended that they would live in covenant fidelity even to death while they anticipated resurrection to eternal life and inheritance of the kingdom. For the unbelieving Jewish majority, he intended them to humble themselves before Yahweh, knowing that like the little horn and like Belshazzar, for all the prideful / boastful ones who exalt themselves against the Most High, death was the only future. For the Gentiles in his audience, Daniel wanted them to recognize that the God of Israel would one day establish an eternal Israelite kingdom that entirely replaced all Gentile dominion. Despite some measure of success, Gentile efforts to eradicate the Jews and their Law was ultimately doomed to fail. As such, they should honor and respect the Most High God and his people, the Israelites.

In **Daniel's first vision (7:1–28)**, the prophet's interpretation of his night vision augments a previously developed theme regarding the sovereignty of Yahweh over kings and kingdoms. In contrast to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in which the Gentile kingdoms were pictured

as precious metals, here, the successive Gentile kingdoms adopt the form of monstrous beasts. But just as the stone cut without hands destroyed the statue (ch. 2), the Ancient of Days would sit in judgment over the boastful Gentile leaders like the little horn and bring them to an end before giving the eternal kingdom to the Son of Man and to the holy ones.

Daniel's first vision primarily functions to articulate the differing destinies of the Gentile kings and kingdoms (and by extension, those who align with them), and the holy ones (קַדִּישִׁין). On the one hand, the Ancient of Days would render judgment in favor of the holy ones, and at the appointed time they would possess the kingdom forever (7:18, 22, 27). On the other, the little horn which spoke arrogantly against the Most High (7:8, 11, 20, 25) would ultimately have his dominion removed and completely destroyed (7:26). The author intended his audience to align with Daniel and the "holy ones" who humbled themselves before the Most High God, rather than with the little horn by their arrogant words and their refusal to submit to Yahweh—like unbelieving Israel. By portraying the two contrasting outcomes (inheriting the kingdom versus destruction), the audience could easily see the path which led to the more expedient outcome (*logos*). However, Daniel intended to warn the holy ones that the path to the kingdom would not be without trouble. The little horn would wage war against the holy ones and prevail over them (7:21), wear them out (7:25), and overpower them for 3.5 years near the appointed time of the end (7:25). The little horn would attempt to change times and laws (7:25), probably a reference pertaining to the practice of the Mosaic Law. Like Daniel (ch. 6) and his three friends (ch. 3), a Gentile ruler would compel Jews to commit blasphemous acts contrary to the Law on pain of death. The holy ones, then, would need to prepare themselves for such trials and ultimately place their hope in the resurrection to eternal life in order to enter the kingdom.

The Son of Man who inherited the eternal kingdom from the Ancient of Days (7:13–14) corresponds to the Promised Seed of the Woman (Gen 3:15) and the Davidic heir who would fulfill the Davidic covenant with an eternal rule from Jerusalem (2 Sam 7; 1 Chron 17). This Son of Man contrasts sharply with the little horn, who embodies the seed of the serpent (Gen 3:15).

Thus, Daniel's first vision (7:1–28) warned the faithful remnant of Israel that while waiting to inherit the kingdom under the Son of Man, tribulation would come from Gentile rulers. They would need to follow Daniel and his friends' examples of righteous behavior even to the point of death. By implication, many holy ones would die, and so the path to the kingdom lay through their hope in the resurrection. It also served as a warning to the unbelieving majority of Israel that aligning themselves with the Gentile rulers in their arrogance against the Most High would only lead to death, while life was accessible only through humility. In these ways, this vision contributes to Daniel's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

Daniel's second vision (8:1–27) functions to re-iterate the devastating power of Gentile leaders over the Jews until the end of Gentile dominion so that the believing remnant would place their hope of inheriting the kingdom in the resurrection to eternal life. The language shift from Aramaic (2:4b–7:28) to Hebrew (8:1–12:13) signals a focus on the Jewish people,

identified in this vision as the "host of heaven."[20] Because this vision relates to the appointed time of the end (8:17, 19), even if the audience should hypothetically live so long as to see the kingdom's arrival, the unequalled distress of that time leading up to the end meant many would die, and so their hope of the kingdom must come through the resurrection to eternal life anyway.

The immense strength of Gentile leaders is demonstrated by:

- The inability of other beasts to withstand the ram's power (8:4).
- The ram's ability to do whatever it desired (8:4).
- The escalating strength of the goat over the ram (8:5–7).
- The exceedingly great power of the goat (8:8).
- The ability of the little horn to throw some from the "host of heaven" to the ground and to trample them (8:10).
- The little horn's ability to remove the regular burnt offering and overthrow the sanctuary (8:11).
- The little horn's success in taking over the host and casting down truth (8:12).
- The fierce king skilled in riddles whose power will grow (8:23–24) and who will have success in his efforts to destroy the Jews ("the people of the holy ones") (8:24).

Rhetorically, the second vision serves the same purpose as the first. It identifies the great strength of Gentile leaders to devastate Jewish people, Jewish land, and the Jewish temple. It implicitly exhorts fidelity to the Law despite the danger. On account of the unbelieving majority of Israelites who commit "the transgression" (8:12, 13), the whole nation—including the faithful remnant—must endure the great wrath due to it. Because of this, the believing remnant must place their hope for entrance to the eternal Israelite kingdom via the resurrection to eternal life. The unbelievers, however, would be warned of the judgment and wrath coming upon them in two ways: first, through powerful Gentile leaders, and second, through the resurrection to eternal condemnation and shame. For any Gentiles reading this vision, they would be warned of arrogance against the Most High and his people. The power of their own kings did not come from men (8:24), and ultimately the Most High would break that power anyway (8:25). In these ways, Daniel's second vision contributes to his overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

The narrative elements of Daniel's prophetic literary work (chs. 1–6) had proven Daniel's wisdom and insight into revelation and mysteries, his faithfulness to the Law

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[20] The "host of heaven" in ch. 8 must refer to the Jewish people for several reasons. First, the host has a regular burnt offering and a sanctuary (8:11). Second, the host was given over to the little horn on account of transgression (8:12). Third, it must refer to the Jews based on the internal consistency of the message of Daniel. If the host of heaven referred to another people group, or to literal angels, then no explanation for its purpose in the book or its rhetorical function exists. Rather, understanding the host as the Jewish people aligns perfectly with the rest of the book of Daniel. And fourth, Daniel's final vision would later connect the wise (i.e., the faithful) to "shining like stars" (12:3). This suggests two groups within the host of heaven; the faithful remnant identified as "stars" (8:10; 12:3), and the unfaithful majority.

throughout his lifetime, even at the risk of death, and his enduring worth as a political leader through two world empires over seven decades. All of these had prepared the audience to accept Daniel as qualified to represent Israel in a national prayer of repentance. Thus, in **Daniel's prayer and third vision (9:1–27)**, Daniel (the character) assumed the mantle of Israel upon his shoulders. He recognized the end of the seventy years of service to Babylon as per the prophecy of Jeremiah (9:2; see Jer 25:11).[21] He no doubt prayed toward Jerusalem as was his habit (6:11 MT [6:10]), and according to the dedicatory prayer of Solomon.[22] In fact, the language of Daniel's national confession virtually parallels that of Solomon's prayer regarding penitent Israelites taken captive by foreign nations:

- Daniel's prayer: "We have sinned and we have done wrong and we acted wickedly and we rebelled and have been turning aside from your commandments and from your ordinances" (9:3).
- Solomon's prayer: "… and then they return their heart in the land where they have been taken captive and they return and plead to you in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned and we did wrong. We acted wickedly,' if they return to you with all of their heart and with all of their soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive and they pray to you toward their land which you gave to their ancestors, the city that you have chosen and the house that you built for your name, then you shall hear in heaven, the place of your dwelling, their prayer and their plea, and you shall vindicate them. You shall forgive your people who sinned against you, even for all their transgressions which they committed against you. You shall give them compassion before their captors so that they may have compassion on them" (1 Kgs 8:47–50).

Daniel further acknowledged that Yahweh had been faithful to administer the covenant curses for Israel's disobedience, up to and including exile (9:11–14; see Deut 28:36, 63–64). Thus, as Israel's representative, he did exactly what the covenantal and religious history of Israel expected: he confessed the sins of the nation and admitted their violation of covenant obligations. According to the same covenant, he pleaded for restoration of the people and the city Jerusalem from its desolation based on the nation's repentance (9:17–19).

However, Daniel's prayer of national repentance (9:4–19) was met with a response from the angel Gabriel that Yahweh had decreed a sevenfold punishment on Israel (9:24). This official declaration meant the exile had *not* resulted in the nation's intended repentance. Through Moses, Yahweh had promised that if covenant curses did not result in repentance, he would revisit punishment upon Israel sevenfold (Lev 26:18, 21, 23, 27). Since the nation failed to repent after the seventy years of discipline under Babylon, Yahweh multiplied that time

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[21] The seventy years of serving Babylon (Jer 25:11–12) includes not only the Babylonian exile proper, but also the time of Judah's vassalage while Babylonian was the reigning superpower. The remnants of the Assyrian empire (allied with Egypt) fell in the campaign of Haran in 609 BC, leaving Babylon as the Ancient Near East's superpower. Thus, seventy years of serving Babylon was from 609–539 BC.

[22] "… so that your eyes will be open to this house night and day, to the place which you said, 'My name will be there,' to hear the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. You must listen to the plea of your servant and your people Israel which they pray toward this place; and you must hear from the place where you live, from heaven you must hear and you must forgive" (1 Kgs 8:29–30).

sevenfold, thus appointing 490 years (70 years x 7) until the end of (national) transgression and sin, atonement for (national) guilt, and the establishment of everlasting (national) righteousness (9:24). The righteous remnant of Israel, then, would not live long enough to enter the restored and eternal kingdom of Israel. Once again, their hope for the kingdom must come through the resurrection to eternal life. Furthermore, as with the message from Daniel's first two visions (chs. 7–8), the Jews would face a tumultuous experience during the times of Gentile rule: Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed, and war would continue to the end (9:26). The Gentile ruler would enter a covenant for seven years with "the many" (the unbelieving majority of Israel) but break that same covenant halfway through that time (9:27).[23]

Thus, as with Daniel's first two visions, the third vision (9:24–27) which followed the prayer of repentance would tell Daniel's believing audience that they could expect grim times ahead for those who held to covenant fidelity, and that their hope for the kingdom lay in the resurrection to eternal life. Simultaneously, the vision warned the unbelieving majority of Israel against allegiance with Gentile rulers due to their untrustworthiness and their propensity to cause desolation in Jerusalem and among the Jewish people. For any Gentile readers, they could see that the Most High, already established earlier in the book as sovereign over kings and kingdoms, would ultimately bring all Gentile rule to an end. In these ways, Daniel's prayer of national repentance (9:4–19) and the subsequent vision explained by Gabriel (9:24–27) contribute to Daniel's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

In **Daniel's fourth vision (10:1–12:13)**, the account of Gentile dominion and great wars prior to inheritance of the eternal Israelite kingdom further reinforces the message that the faithful and believing remnant of Israel must expect and prepare to endure through great tribulation while they anticipate inheriting the kingdom through resurrection to eternal life.

Daniel's shocked response to the vision, being breathless, anxious, and his strength gone (10:15–17) reflects the assumed response of the believing remnant to the visions. They, too, would be stunned at the predictions of extensive warfare, destruction, and political intrigue. But like Daniel who was told not to fear but to be strong, and to have peace (10:18–19), they also could overcome the anxiety by hoping in the resurrection and life in the kingdom (12:2).

This fourth vision primarily portrays three character groups: the faithful Jews, the unfaithful Jews, and the Gentile kings. In the scene created by the vision, the Gentile rulers are the main actors; the Jewish response delineates between the faithful and the unfaithful. In the midst of battles where many will fall (11:12, 26, 41, 44), the unfaithful Israelites are violent and will rebel, but without success (11:14). Gentile rulers with their hearts set against the holy covenant (i.e., the Law) (11:28) will seduce and show favor to the Jews who forsake the covenant (11:30, 32) and will desecrate the temple and abolish the burnt offering (11:31). But the faithful Israelite who knows his God will act with strength (11:32), just as Daniel (ch. 6) and his

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[23] Apparently a Jewish temple must exist during this time in order for the Gentile ruler to put an end to the sacrifice and offering (9:27).

three friends did (ch. 3). These are the wise / insightful ones who instruct others and lead many to righteousness (11:33, 35; 12:3, 10).[24] Despite their efforts, however, the wicked would continue in their wickedness (12:10). Those believing Israelites are the ones who will fall by being killed or taken captive (11:33–34). This falling, however, will have a purifying, refining effect in the end (11:35) and ultimately lead to the resurrection to eternal life (12:2). Some of the believing Israelites alive at the time of the end will attain to the kingdom (12:12), but for Daniel and other Jews in the meantime, they would need to place their hope of inheriting the kingdom in the resurrection (12:13).

Thus, with his fourth vision (10:1–12:13), Daniel communicated to the believing remnant of Israel the realities of the time between their day and the eternal Israelite kingdom. That period would be characterized by Gentile rule, raging wars, political intrigue, and extensive death. Gentile rulers would incentivize Jews to abandon the Law,[25] but Daniel intended the believing remnant to maintain their covenant fidelity and to instruct their unbelieving brethren in righteousness (i.e., the Law). Doing so could certainly lead to death, but their "falling" would have a purifying effect and they would rise again to eternal life and shine forever like the stars because they led many to righteousness. Among the unfaithful Jews reading Daniel, they could know that Daniel's instruction was intended to promote their own righteousness and fidelity to the Law. Persistent unfaithfulness would only lead to eternal condemnation and disgrace. For any Gentile readers, they would see the conclusion of Gentile domain at the appointed time of the end, and the establishment of the eternal Israelite kingdom. Like Nebuchadnezzar, they could humble themselves before the Most High and participate in that eternal kingdom via resurrection. In these ways, Daniel's fourth vision contribute to Daniel's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the believing remnant of Israel would live in covenant fidelity and teach righteousness (the Law) to the unbelieving majority, even to the point of death, while placing their hope in the resurrection and inheritance of the kingdom, (2) the prideful and unbelieving majority of Israel would humble themselves in penitence before Yahweh, and (3) the Gentiles would honor and respect the God of Israel and his people, the Israelites.

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[24] The same term for "wise" or "insightful," שׂכל, is used of Daniel and his friends (1:4, 17).

[25] Such as not being killed, as in ch. 3 and ch. 6.

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