

**The Book of Daniel:
When Structures
Enlighten Prophecy**

**A Study of Parallelisms
and Progressions
as Means of Communication**

Daniel Arnold

PhD thesis, South African Theological Seminary, October 2013,
presented under the title:

*The Global, Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel.
Comparisons, Parallelisms, and Progressions as Means of
Communication.*

Copyright © Daniel Arnold
All rights reserved for all countries

All Scripture quotations are taken from the MKJV unless otherwise
stated.

Chapter 4

THE LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

There are several overlapping structures in *Daniel*, but the most obvious (to any person reading the book in the original language) is the linguistic structure.

4.1 A book written in two languages

One can find books written in two or more languages but none like *Daniel*.

Two languages may be used when an author or editor wants to communicate to two language groups in their mother tongue in order to be sure to be understood. In multilingual countries, a text is often available in several “national” languages in the same brochure. In the Persian Empire, Haman made sure everybody understood his deadly decree:

“Then on the thirteenth day of the first month the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman’s orders to the king’s satraps, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various people. These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring” (Est 3:12).

Commercial texts often present a similar characteristic. Instruction manuals for products sold internationally can be written in a dozen languages in the same leaflet, the instructions being repeated as often as seems necessary. Religious text can also be found in several languages when a wide audience is targeted. In Switzerland, the Gideon New Testament placed in Swiss hotel rooms is available in a version containing the text in English, German, and French.

Sometimes a small section of a text can be found in another language. This is the case in some scholarly books (more so in ancient ones) when quotations are given in the original

4- THE LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

language with no translation offered to the common reader. This is quite frustrating when one doesn't read that language.

Finally, more rarely, some bilingual magazines publish some articles in one language (German) and others in the other (French).

In all the above-mentioned cases, we never have one story written partially in one language and partially in another. *Daniel* is quite unique, with the book of Ezra being similar. However in Ezra, the change of language seems to be more related to the quotation of the king's decree.

Why does the author of Daniel start with Hebrew (1:1-2:3), then move on with Aramaic (2:4-7:28), and subsequently come back to Hebrew (8:1-12:13)?

- Is it a sign of sloppiness on the part of the author? The writer did not pay attention to the language he is using. That sounds unlikely because when bilingual speakers switch from one language to another, there is usually a reason that can explain the change. See Portier-Young (2010:99) p. 66.
- Is it a lack of editorial work if one considers the book to come from different (linguistic) sources? The editor – willingly or carelessly – avoided modifying his sources.
- Was it a way to hide part of the book's message to some readers? For instance, a Hebrew author could have concealed the Hebrew passages to a gentile audience speaking only Aramaic, the international language of that time.
- Is it a technical device to draw attention to some parts of the book or to distinguish the central section from the beginning and the end? Today authors can use various typographical means to draw attention: bold or italic letters, underlying, capitalisation, and colour variations (red, blue, green letters...); they use paragraphs, titles and subtitles; they relegate less important matters to footnotes or endnotes. Ancient writers were deprived of those means. A change in language would certainly have helped them to draw the attention of any reader (like it would today).

The last proposition is the most convincing, especially when one considers the internal structure of the Aramaic section noticed by Lenglet. The key question (very important for the interpretation of the text) is then: what message did the author

want to underline with the change of language?¹ Could it be (at least partially) that the Aramaic chapters concern more the general public, that is to say, the nations' history, and the chapters in Hebrew relate more directly to Israel? Before defending this position, we will first analyse the structure of the Aramaic section.

4.2 The Aramaic section is organized in the form of a chiasm

The following diagram can summarize the structure:

A.1	A vision of four earthly kingdoms followed by God's eternal kingdom (Dan 2)
B.1	A miraculous salvation of faithful believers (Dan 3)
C.1	A temporary judgement on an arrogant king (Dan 4)
C.2	A permanent judgement on an arrogant king (Dan 5)
B.2	A miraculous salvation of a faithful believer (Dan 6)
A.2	A vision of four earthly kingdoms followed by God's eternal kingdom (Dan 7)

The Aramaic section comprises six stories (six chapters) forming three synonymic parallelisms organized in a chiasmic structure (i.e., inverted parallelisms). At the extremities (beginning and end: A.1 and A.2), we find two visions announcing the world's history. In the second and next to the last chapter (B.1 and B.2), we have the report of believers persecuted for their faith and then miraculously saved. In the centre of the chiasm (C.1 and C.2), we have the judgment of two sinful monarchs.

¹ Sérandour (2000:354) suggests that the distinction between Hebrew and Aramaic rests on the opposition between secrecy and revelation.

4.2.1 : C.1 and C.2: Synonymic parallelism in the centre of the Aramaic section

I start my detailed analysis at the centre (C.1 and C.2) because an author often places the elements that he wants to highlight at the centre of a chiasm.

4.2.1.1 Repetition

Chapter 4 and 5 are *uniquely* connected by the fact that four verses of chapter 5 (5:18-21) recall the events of chapter 4, the humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar.²

“O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour. And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. He killed whom he would, and whom he would he kept alive. And whom he would, he set up; and whom he would, he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was put down from the throne of his kingdom, and they took his glory from him. And he was driven from the sons of men. And his heart was made like the animals, and his dwelling was with the wild asses. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of the heavens, until he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and that He appoints over it whomever He will” (5:18-21 MKJV).

Why take 1/6th of the story’s space³ to repeat what has just been told? This redundancy is not sloppy writing but a literary way to draw attention – at the centre of the chiasm – to the repetitive structure of the Aramaic section. As the reader keeps on reading he will find in chapter 6 events “recalling” chapter 3, and in chapter 7 he will discover a vision that has many affinities with the vision mentioned in chapter 2.

4.2.1.2 Similar themes

Chapters 4 and 5 share similar themes. God warns a sinful pagan Babylonian monarch through a dream of impending personal judgment. The king, unable to understand the dream, summons the elite of his pagan interpreters. As they are unable

² For Lenglet (1972:187) chapter 5 is not just a “redoubling” of chapter 4 but its “continuation” since Belshazzar’s condemnation can be understood only in the light of the preceding story.

³ This is the percentage of the words used for those four verses.

to explain the vision, Daniel is called. With competence and courage, the Hebrew prophet interprets the dream and announces to the king the coming judgment. And as predicted, punishment does come soon after, and the king (before or after the judgment) recognizes Daniel's capacities.

The similarities are manifest. Even the organization of the material follows a chiasmic arrangement in both cases.

- Chapter 4 starts and ends with praise to God (a.1 and a.2). The search for explanations and realisation of explanations are stated (b.1 and b.2). In the centre, we find the vision, first stated and then explained (c.1 and c.2).⁴
- Chapter 5 starts with the report of blasphemy and ends with the final judgment (a.1 and a.2). Next we find the vision given, and in the next to last position the vision is explained (b.1 and b.2). In the centre, we find the vain efforts of the Babylonian pagans, and then a successful search for the competent Hebrew prophet (c.1 and c.2).

⁴ Shea (1985a) presents a similar structure but slightly more detailed. He argues for some "cement" verses (4:8-9, 27) that bridge sections b.1 and c.1 on one hand, and sections c.2 and b.2 on the other hand. "These two brief pieces of literary cement act as opposites with respect to the dialogue reported: The king speaks to Daniel in the first case, and Daniel does not reply; Daniel speaks to the king in the second case, and the king does not reply" (1985a:198). Shea's proposal cuts off v.8-9 from v.4-7, and this is unfortunate because v.4-9 form a well nit unit (Nebuchadnezzar's search for explanations). The same can be said about v.27 that should not be detached from v.20-26 as Shea suggests. Verse 27 is the conclusion to Daniel's explanation (v.20-26).

4- THE LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

Chapter 4		Chapter 5	
a.1	Praise given to God (4:1-3)	a.1	Report of blasphemous kingly action (5:1-4)
b.1	Explanations searched for (4:4-9)	b.1	Description of the vision (5:5-6)
c.1	Vision reported by the king (4:10-18)	c.1	Vain search of the “wise” pagans (5:7-9)
c.2	Vision explained by the prophet (4:19-27)	c.2	Successful search for the right interpreter (5:10-16)
b.2	Accomplishment of revealed explanations (4:28-36)	b.2	Explanation of the vision (5:17-28)
a.2	Praise given to God (4:37)	a.2	Report of Daniel’s elevation and of the king’s death (5:29-31)

Chapter 5 alternative structure. Chapter 5 can also be divided slightly differently.

a.1	Prologue: Report of blasphemous kingly action (5:1-4)
b.1	Vision given (5:5-6)
c.1	Reaction of the pagan world (5:7-16) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (i) The king wants to reward his wise men, but they fail to help him (5:7-9). - (ii) The queen recalls Daniel’s well-known deeds at the time of Nebuchadnezzar (5:10-12). - (iii) The king offers to reward Daniel (5:13-16).
c.2	Daniel criticizes the king (5:17-24) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (iii’) Daniel refuses of the king’s offer (5:17). - (ii’) Daniel recalls Nebuchadnezzar’s sinful deeds (5:18-21). - (I’) Daniel condemns the king for his behaviour and arrogance (5:22-24).
b.2	Vision explained (5:25-28)
a.2	Epilogue: Report of Daniel’s elevation and of the king’s death (5:29-31)

This structure presents an elaborated chiasm built mainly on antithetic elements.⁵

4.2.1.3 Differences between Dan 4 and 5

Differences also exist between chapters 4 and 5, including contrasts. Those contrasts do not turn the synonymic nature of those two chapters into an antithetic parallelism. They rather give a more comprehensive perception to the theme of judgment.

Chapters 4 and 5 report the sin of the first and of the last Babylonian monarch. Nebuchadnezzar did not give to God the glory that he should have, but Belshazzar's behaviour was even more reprehensible. Although Belshazzar benefited from a greater revelation than his predecessor (for he knew how God had dealt with him), he decided to ignore it. Thus, the judgement that befell on Belshazzar was more severe. Nebuchadnezzar was brought to a time of humiliation that would lead him (eventually) to repentance. However, Belshazzar's judgement was immediate and permanent. There was no time given to put his affairs in order (he died that very night), and his judgement was final.

Thus, the stories of the judgment of the two kings illustrate the *various* ways that God deals with sinners. No matter how mighty and powerful the pagan monarchs are, whatever sin they have committed, judgement will fall on them. The only questions concern the time and the severity of judgment. Will God extend a period of grace to allow for humiliation, and when judgment comes will it be partial or final? Will He allow time for repentance once judgement has come, or will judgement be definitive?

⁵ Shea (1985b) pointed to the chiasmic structure of chapter 5, but his structure differs significantly from the one I just presented. Shea did recognize the correspondences between the queen's recollection of the past (ii: 5:10-12) and Daniel's recollection of the past (ii': 5:18-22), but he failed to parallel clearly the two sections dealing with the vision – b.1 (5.5-6) and b.2 (5:25-28) – which is unfortunate because the vision is a key element of the story.

4.2.2 : B.1 and B.2: Obvious synonymic parallelism

4.2.2.1 Similarities

The second and the last Aramaic sections (chapters 3 and 6) present obvious similarities. A royal decree puts faithful Hebrews in danger of death. The believers immediately decide to disobey the king's edict in order to remain loyal to God. Court officials denounce the Hebrews to the king, thus bringing the king's condemnation on the believers. They are sentenced to death, and thrown in a fiery furnace or a lions' den. At this point, God intervenes to save them. He sends an angel, and neither the fire nor the lions hurt the believers. The king witnesses the deliverance and gives praise to God. He elevates the Hebrew believers to high honours. He also warns potential enemies of the God of the Hebrews of severe punishment (3:29), and he sentences to death real enemies of the believer (6:24).

The progress of the events is similar in both chapters.

	Chapter 3		Chapter 6
1	Introduction (3:1-7)	1	Introduction (6:1-3)
2	Personal danger for the believers (3:8-15)	2	Personal danger for the believer (6:4-9)
3	Response of the believers (3:16-18)	3	Response of the believer (6:10)
4	Death sentence pronounced (3:19-23)	4	Death sentence enforced (6:11-17)
5	Miraculous deliverance (3:24-27)	5	Miraculous deliverance (6:18-23)
6	Confession of the pagan king and public warning (3:28-29)	6	Enemies condemned and confession of the pagan king (6:24-27)
7	Believers are rewarded (3:30)	7	The believer prospers (6:28)

The similarities between chapters 3 and 6 are even *stronger* than between chapters 4 and 5. Firstly, the progress of events in chapters 3 and 6 is similar, which makes it easier to compare

4- THE LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

and appreciate the parallelisms. Secondly, the events' outcome is similar for the main characters (believers in both stories are saved from death without any harm) and not antithetical as in chapters 4 and 5 (Nebuchadnezzar is forgiven, but Belshazzar is killed). Thirdly, the presence of God's angel in both deliverance stories is very particular, even unique. In the Old Testament, one finds many accounts of deliverance in which God is involved, but the very presence of an angel is unique to these two chapters.

Each chapter follows a chiasmic arrangement.

	Chapter 3
a.1	The image is erected (3:1)
b.1	King's decree and punishment for those who disobey (3:2-7)
c.1	Nebuchadnezzar thinks he is above deities (3:8-18)
d.1	King's order to throw the faithful in the destructive furnace (3:19-23)
e.1	The king sees God's miracle and is afraid (3:24-25)
d.2	King's order for the faithful to come out of the furnace that did not hurt (3:26-27)
c.2	Nebuchadnezzar praises God (3:28)
b.2	King's decree against those who do not honour the God of the Hebrews (3:29)
a.2	The three Hebrews are honoured (elevated): 3:30

	Chapter 6
a.1	Beginning of Darius' reign at a late age (5:31)
b.1	Organisation of the big Persian empire (6:1-3)
c.1	Court people's evil plan (6:4-13)
d.1	King's sadness (6:14)
e.1	People talk and make pressure on the king (6:15)
f.1	The king hopes God can save Daniel (6:16-17)
g.1	The king's anxious night in the palace (6:18)
g.2	End of the king's night at the palace (6:19)
f.2	The king hopes God could save Daniel (6:20)
e.2	Daniel talks and bring good news to the king (6:21)
d.2	King's joy (6:23)
c.2	Death of court people (6:24)
b.2	The greatness of God's kingdom is proclaimed (6:25-27)
a.2	Daniel prospers under two kings (at a late age): (6:28)

4- THE LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

4.2.2.2 Differences

The strong similarities do not mean the stories are identical. There are nuances, differences of names and situations.

- The story happens during the Babylonian empire in chapter 3 and during the Persian rule in chapter 6. The *first* kings of both empires are involved (Nebuchadnezzar and Darius).
- The two kings have opposing attitudes. Nebuchadnezzar erects a statue representing his gods and himself, and he is outraged when he learns of people disobeying him. Darius plans to elevate a faithful man (Daniel) to a high position, and he is saddened when he realizes he has to punish his minister. Nebuchadnezzar wants to punish the Hebrews to the extreme (he orders the fiery furnace to be heated seven times), but Darius tries desperately to save Daniel.
- The first verse gives numerical information related to the king. Nebuchadnezzar “*made an image of gold, whose height was 60 cubits, and its breadth 6 cubits*” (3:1), and Darius “*received [or took] the kingdom, being a son of 62 [lit. “sixty and two”] years of age*” (5:31 or 6:1)¹. Both notices contain two numbers that are quite close: “*sixty... and six...*” (3:1) and “*sixty and two*” (5:31). The height of the statue indicates man’s work, and the age of the king could be linked to a reward (after so many years Darius “receives” the kingdom).²
- Both kings give orders. Sound dominates the first account. “*A herald cried aloud*” (3:4) and an orchestra plays music (3:5, 7, 10, 15). When people “*hear*” the sound of music, they have to bow down (3:5, 7, 10, 15). At the end, Nebuchadnezzar gives an order, orally it seems (3:29). In chapter 6, writing dominates. Several references are made to the law of the Medes and Persian (6.8-10, 12), and at the end Darius “*writes*” to all people to honour the God of Daniel (6:28).
- At the end of the story, there is a reversal: Nebuchadnezzar is more oriented toward life than Darius. The Babylonian king rewards the faithful, and punishes nobody. He only warns people who are tempted to speak against the God of

¹ See note 12 p. 152.

² According to TWOT (2964) the verb *keb-al'* means “received.” Versions translate the verb either by “*received*” (AVS, SER, NBS) or “*took*” (NIV, MKJV, KJ21, LSG, NEG).

Israel. Darius kills those who accused Daniel and tricked the Persian king. Even their families are killed.

- The Babylonian court officials (“*certain Chaldeans*” 3:8) express their hostility against the believers when an opportunity arises, but the Persian court officials (“*the presidents and rulers*” 6:4) create an opportunity to attack Daniel.
- Concerning the means of punishment, the Babylonians used a natural devastating element (fire); and the Persians resorted to the animal world, using lions, a most dangerous carnivore. In both stories, executors made sure no problem would hamper the deadly instrument: The Babylonians heated the furnace to its extreme (seven times) and to its absurdity, the men charged to throw the victims in were burnt, while the Persians made sure the lions were hungry, which turned against the plotters since “*the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces before they came to the bottom of the den*” (6:24).
- Concerning the believers, Daniel’s friends are present in the first story (Dan 3), but Daniel is absent. In the second story (Dan 6), Daniel’s friends are absent, and the prophet’s presence is ambiguous. On one hand, the whole story turns around Daniel. On the other hand, Daniel is very passive in terms of the plot. The prophet seems unaware of his enemies’ machination, and once he learns about it, he doesn’t change anything in his behaviour. When accused, he doesn’t try to defend himself. In fact, Daniel doesn’t say a word in the whole story except once after the night in the lions’ den (6:23-24). But at that time, the story is almost finished, and Daniel’s words change nothing.
- The trial of the believers revolved around matters of worship. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were faced with the order to worship another god than the Lord, and Daniel was faced with the order of not worshipping the Lord.
- Concerning the divine creatures, the angel in chapter 3 is seen by Nebuchadnezzar and described as “*like a son of the gods*” (3:25). In chapter 6, Darius sees nothing, except the fact that the lions did not hurt Daniel. The prophet is the only one to have seen the angel. He says: “*My God has sent His Angel, and has shut the lions’ mouths.*” Since the second angel was active in Daniel’s deliverance (he shut the lions’ mouths), the salvation activity of the first angel is

4- THE LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

left to the reader's imagination. Did the angel untie the three men? This seems the case because the men were bound before they were thrown into the fire, and later they walked untied in the furnace, and the fire had no effect on them.

In conclusion, we may say that the above-mentioned differences are secondary. Chapters 3 and 6 describe *synonymic* stories. We know that in real (normal) life, similar situations happen time and again but with different details. Life does not come out of a factory. The triune God is the Creator of the universe. In him is unity and diversity (Rushdoony 1978). He is the one and the many from all eternity. The fact that we have here (in chapter 3 and 6) a synonymic parallelism with very unusual salvation events suggests that the Saviour is the same at all times, and will work out his salvation according to unchanging principles, even if details vary in each case.

4.2.3 : A.1 and A.2: Parallelism at the beginning and at the end of the Aramaic section

Chapters 2 and 7 share also important similarities. Nevertheless there are significant differences, indeed more so than those found in the other two pairs (chapters 3 & 6, and 4 & 5). But before turning to those differences we need to present briefly the similarities.

Both chapters (A.1 and A.2) contain a godly vision that announces the "political" future of the world. In each case, four earthly kingdoms succeed each other, and then, at the end, God establishes his eternal kingdom.

The two visions focus on kingdoms rather than kings. Thus, unlike chapters 4 and 5 where attention is on a king, here attention is on nations, even if kings may represent a nation. (In chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar stands for the Babylonian kingdom: "*You are the head of gold*" 2:37-38.) Moreover in chapters 2 and 7, the history of world nations is represented (or illustrated) by four nations, and not just two nations as in chapters 8 and 11. In Dan 2 and 7, the kingdoms are numbered (2:29-40; 7:4-5, 7, 19, 23), and iron characterizes the fourth one (Shea 2003:220): legs and feet (2:33, 40) and teeth (7:7).

4.2.3.1 Various similarities and differences

4.2.3.1.1 *The receivers of the dream*

The vision of chapter 2 is given to Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king. The vision of chapter 7 is given to Daniel, a faithful Hebrew believer. Both men are troubled by the dream and need help to understand it. Nebuchadnezzar's trouble is expressed at the beginning of the story (1:1, 3), before the dream's content has been told to the reader. The king is unable to sleep as a consequence of his trouble (2:1). Once informed of the meaning, Nebuchadnezzar is relieved, praises God and rewards Daniel and his friends generously (2:46-49). In chapter 7, Daniel's trouble is expressed twice: after the description of the dream (7:15) and then at the end of the story – after all the explanations have been given to him (7:29). Thus, the king is at peace at the end; Daniel is not.

Nebuchadnezzar was probably concerned at first that the vision given to him was announcing the end of his rule, for he thought that the statue represented him. Seeing the statue completely smashed troubled him deeply. When he learns that he is “only” the head of gold, he is relieved because that meant that his throne was not in jeopardy. He would remain the almighty ruler all of his life. Daniel, on the other hand, is saddened to learn that in the distant future (before the establishment of God's eternal kingdom) some of the faithful believers will suffer unjustly (7:25). Nebuchadnezzar was only concerned for himself; Daniel was preoccupied with God's honour and the welfare of devoted believers.

The search for understanding requires different steps. Nebuchadnezzar seeks first the help of his best Babylonian advisers but gets nothing from them (2:2-12). Then Daniel offers his help, which turns out to be perfect (2:16-47). As for Daniel, once the vision was revealed to him, he asked an angel for an explanation (7:16a). Having received some general clues, Daniel wants more details, particularly clarification in regard to the last earthly kingdom (7:19-22), which the angel grants him (7:23-27).

4.2.3.1.2 *The vision and the nature of the kingdoms*

When we turn to the vision itself, we see some differences in the way kingdoms are represented.

Progression of movement. In chapter 2, kingdoms are identified with metals, whereas in chapter 7, they are identified with animals. The vision of the statue is more static by its very

4- THE LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

nature; statues don't move, especially big ones (2:31). This one, however, ends up being smashed and the parts are swept far away "*without leaving a trace*" (2:35). In its place, the rock that struck the statue is transformed into a mountain, which is an obvious huge change. Movement is also perceivable in the vision of the statue, in the sense that the description goes from top to bottom, from head to toes. In addition, there is a reference to a succession of kingdoms. "*After you, another kingdom will rise... Next, a third kingdom... Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom*" (2:39-40). Kingdoms are numbered. Thus, movement and progression are perceptible.

In the vision of chapter 7, the movement between the kingdoms is more apparent. To start with, animals move much more than metals (!) and movement is immediately expressed through the statement that the four animals "*came out*" of the sea (7:3). Then, the animals representing the kingdoms in chapter 7 are fast moving ones; eagle, lion, bear, and leopard are not turtles, and if you equip them with wings, speed can only be increased!

The perception of movement is seen at the outset of the vision when it is stated, "*the four winds of the heavens were stirring up the Great Sea*" (7:2). Windstorms carry anything anywhere.³ In comparison in chapter 2, a wind (singular) is also mentioned, but it is only a mild summer breeze and not a multiplication of hurricanes blowing simultaneously from all corners. The breeze is mentioned at the end of the vision (2:35), as an afterthought and not as a fundamental element of the vision.

Progression of oppression. A progression of oppression is also perceptible between the kingdoms and between the visions. *In chapter 2*, the foreign powers are represented by increasingly harder metals: gold, silver, bronze, iron. The hardness of the last metal is specifically stated:

"The fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron... there shall be in it the strength of the iron" (2:40, 41).

The destructive nature of the last kingdom is also underlined:

"Since iron crushes and smashes all things; and as the iron that shatters all these, it will crush and shatter" (2:40).

³ Lenglet (1972:171) describes the movement of chapter 7 as "a dynamic violence that turns everything up-side-down."

In chapter 7, the foreign powers are represented by four “great” (or enormous S21, SEM, SER) beasts (7:3). They are all carnivores and dangerous (lion, eagle, bear, leopard), obviously more threatening than bronze or iron. The first animal seems weakened at some point for his eagle wings are “plucked.” The second animal is described as “raised itself up on one side” (7:5), which can mean the bear was standing on its rear feet ready to attack. In any case, the animal is told, “Arise, eat up much flesh” (7:5). The third animal is a leopard with four wings and four heads, characteristics that can only considerably increase the strength and danger of a “normal” leopard. Its might is specifically stated: “Rulership was given to it” (7:6). The fourth and last animal is so different than the others that no known animal can be identified with it. Its strength, power, and destructive nature are repeatedly stated. The beast is “fearful and terrible, and very strong” (7:7). It is equipped with iron teeth to “devoured and broke in pieces,” and its power is not limited to its mouth. It has ten horns (on top of its head), and it uses its claws (the bottom of its body) to “stamp” whatever has not been destroyed by the teeth (7:7). This destructive description is repeated a second and third time (7:19-20, 23-24) with the added detail that the nails are made of “bronze” (7:19). The greatest threat seems to come at the end through a new, little horn that uproots three of the first ten (7:8, 20, 24). This enemy attacks directly God (“He shall speak words against the Most High” 7:25), and is allowed to overcome the faithful believers.

“He shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and plot to change times and laws. And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and one-half time” (7:25).

Everything moves toward greater oppression. As Coppens (1969:172) puts it:

Nothing indicates that the succession of empires is seen as something repetitive, as if History is repeating itself endlessly according to the same cycle. On the contrary, we have here a linear progression, a forward marching approach that will eventually end up in the final eschatological era.

God’s kingdom. God’s kingdom is brought in, or associated with, a little rock in chapter 2 (2:34-35) and with the “Son of man” in chapter 7 (7:13-14). The “insignificant” rock (a mere stone) is the cause of judgement (the statue collapses

on its base) and the glorious “Son of man” is ushered in from heaven (“*with the clouds of heaven*”) to receive dominion as a just reward.⁴

4.2.3.2 Climactic rather than synonymic parallelism

The comparison made so far between chapters 2 and 7 leads us to identify the parallelism between those chapters as climactic, rather than synonymic. The vision of chapter 7 picks up on the vision of chapter 2 *and brings it further*. More details are given, and there is a concentration of information related to the last earthly kingdom and to the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom. God’s kingdom is described in chapter 2 as a monolithic entity, a huge mountain without any particular characteristics, but in chapter 7 many details are given (7:9-14). One learns about God: his eternity (“*the Ancient of Days*”), his appearance (his robe “*white as snow*” and his hair “*like the poor wool*”), his throne (surrounded with flames and wheels), his servants (a huge number: “*thousand thousands*”), his judgment, and finally the one-person God honours particularly, the Son of man (7:13-14).⁵

Comparison between chapters 2 and 7 cannot be restricted to the visions because chapter 2 contains an important narrative section. And the narrative section is part of the climactic parallelism.⁶

⁴ Lenglet (1972:179) identifies the two “entities” with a “community” (“the eschatological people who receive the power in the world to come”) because he tries to fit in the visions with a Maccabean setting (1972:190). This is unfortunate because chapter 7 – which gives more detail on the end times than chapter 2 – clearly identifies the blessed one as an individual: the Son of man.

⁵ Shea (2003:228) makes an interesting historical comment in relation to the time of Daniel’s first vision. Belshazzar’s first year “refers to the time that his father Nabonidus removed himself from Babylon and went to dwell in Tema in Arabia for ten years... When Nabonidus left Babylon he ‘entrusted the kingship’ to his son Belshazzar according to the Verse Account of Nabonidus (ANET. P. 313). This created the unusual situation where there were two kings ruling the kingdom of Babylon, one in Babylon – Belshazzar – and one in Tema of Arabia – Nabonidus... Thus the year in which this vision was given was the year in which this unusual arrangement of a coregency cropped up in Babylon. In the vision there is a coregency depicted in heaven, in 7:9-14... The Son of Man is installed as an additional ruler of the kingdom, there is a heavenly coregency.”

⁶ Lenglet (1972:171) in his excellent study limits unfortunately the comparison between chapters 2 and 7 to the visions, and thus, misses the climactic dimension of the parallelism.

Chapter 2 is formed of two main parts. First we have a long narrative section that reports Nebuchadnezzar's search for a competent interpreter (2:1-30), and then we have the dream's description and interpretation (2:31-45). Finally, in a brief epilogue Nebuchadnezzar approves of Daniel's words and honours the prophet and his three Hebrew friends (2:46-49). In *chapter 7*, the narrative part is waived. Nothing is said about the context of the dream beside a chronological reference ("*In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon*" 7:1). Not a word is given about Daniel's friends or about the king. The prophet wrote down the dream (7:1), but did he share it with other people? If so, how did they react? We know nothing. Daniel stands alone with his dream. We only have Daniel's personal reaction to the revelation (7:15, 28). The lack of an important element (the context of the dream) in the second section is typical of climactic parallelism. Not every point needs to be repeated. It is far better to go deeper in the second section, and this is exactly what is done in chapter 7. More details are given about the various kingdoms and particularly about the last one. In fact, chapter 7 also has two parts: first the vision with a brief explanation (7:1-18), and then Daniel's questioning about one part of the vision, namely the fourth kingdom (7:19-28).

In conclusion, we can say that the parallelisms reflected by the chiasmic structure of the Aramaic section fit perfectly the subjects treated. Firstly, the successive phases of the nations' history (chapters 2 and 7) are reported in a progressive (climactic) parallelism (A.1, A.2). Secondly, the stable nature of God's redemption (chapters 3 and 6) is reported in a perfect synonymic parallelism (B.1, B.2). Thirdly, the conditional nature of judgement is reported in a synonymic parallelism (chapters 4 and 5) with some noticeable differences: Nebuchadnezzar is forgiven, but Belshazzar is killed (C.1, C.2); God forgives only repentant sinners.

It should also be noted that the Aramaic section opens with Nebuchadnezzar's decision to hide the dream to his advisors (2:2-12), and it closes with Daniel's statement that he kept the matter in his heart (7:28). Thus, the section meant to be read by all (Aramaic is used) ends and closes in secrecy. This is a way to connect the Aramaic section (Dan 2-7) with the Hebrew sections (Dan 1 and 8-12) addressed to the elect.

4.3 Two Hebraic sections: an introduction and a development

The Hebraic sections surround the Aramaic section thus forming a “linguistic” chiasm. The first Hebraic section is short. As a matter of fact, it is the shortest of the book.⁷ It serves as an introduction to the book, and good introductions are short. The second Hebraic section (Dan 8-12) is eight times as long as the first (Dan 1). It consists of three parts arranged in the form of chiasm. Chapter 9 is surrounded with two visions of earthly kingdoms.

	Introduction (Dan 1)	Hebrew
A.1	A vision of four earthly kingdoms followed by God’s eternal kingdom (Dan 2)	Aramaic
B.1	A miraculous salvation of faithful believers (Dan 3)	Aramaic
C.1	A temporary judgment on an arrogant king (Dan 4)	Aramaic
C.2	A permanent judgment on an arrogant king (Dan 5)	Aramaic
B.2	A miraculous salvation of a faithful believer (Dan 6)	Aramaic
A.2	A vision of four earthly kingdoms followed by God’s eternal kingdom (Dan 7)	Aramaic
D.1	A vision of two earthly kingdoms (Dan 8)	Hebrew
E	A vision of a time gap (Dan 9)	Hebrew
D.2	A vision of two earthly kingdoms (Dan 10-12)	Hebrew

⁷ Chapter divisions give sometimes a wrong impression. Chapter 12 is indeed shorter than chapter 1, but if forms one unit with the two preceding chapters (Dan 10-11).

4.3.1 Analysis of the introduction (Dan 1)

At first sight the events of chapter 1 seem rather uninteresting, especially when compared with the rest of the book. There are neither spectacular miracles, nor fascinating visions of international events, nor terrifying persecutions. Trials are mentioned, indeed, but they seem bearable: only a few Hebrews are deported, and some of them are even offered new opportunities to succeed in life. Some temple vessels are also deported, but they are treated with respect (1:2; cf. 5:2-4), and the temple worship in Jerusalem is not affected by their loss. Hebrews are being put to the test, but the time period is short (ten days) and concerns only restricted diet. Promotion is described at the end of the chapter but is limited to services offered to the enemy. What is the purpose of chapter 1? What is its relevance?

Chapter 1 sets the tone for the book. We have here in miniature what happens later on a larger scale. The chapter is divided in three parts (1:1-7, 8-16, 17-21) because the book contains three parts (according to the language division). The central part of chapter 1 (1:8-16) is different than the first and the last parts because in the centre of the book the author uses a different language (Aramaic). Chapter 1 gives a broad perspective: the first and last verses bracket Daniel's Babylonian captivity from the first year ("*In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah*" 1:1) to the last period ("*And Daniel continued to the first year of King Cyrus*" 1:21). This is in tune with the book's global time perspective that goes from the beginning of the time of the Gentiles to the establishment of God's kingdom at the end times.

The chapter addresses the question of personal identity in times of cultural, linguistic, and cultic changes. The questions of subordinate changes are treated in the two external parts (1:1-7, 17-21), and the fundamental question – for the Hebrews – of the faithful application of God's law is addressed in the central part (1:8-16). Let's start with the secondary changes. External circumstances may oblige a believer to learn an unknown language or a new culture. Pagan rulers may change the believer's name, and give him a much less pleasant one.⁸

⁸ The four Hebrew names (Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) contain endings which refer to the God of Israel ("el" for Elohim, and "ia" for Yahweh); the Babylonian names refer to foreign gods: Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach; and Abednego. The meaning of the

Believers may serve the king to the best of their abilities (1:19-20). All of this is acceptable, even if it is not always desired. The question of obedience to God is different. The example chosen to illustrate Daniel's obedience to God is very Hebraic – dietary regulations (1:8-16). Why is it so?⁹ I suggest that the “Jewishness” of the example is deliberate because the author wants to deal with the situation of Hebrew believers. His text is written in Hebrew, thus addressed first to a Hebrew audience. It introduces the other Hebrew texts (Dan 8-12) all of which concern, in priority, Hebrew believers at the end times. With this in mind let us turn to the second Hebrew section.

4.3.2 Analysis of the second Hebraic section (Dan 8-12)

4.3.2.1 Chapter 9

At the centre of that section, we have chapter 9. The vision of the seventy weeks holds an important position in the structure. It is a vision that is different than the other ones, and it has no “twin” vision in *Daniel*. Of the seven visions in *Daniel*, this is the only one that has no parallel vision.

Let's first examine the unique characteristics of this chapter, and then see how this text fits into the book's argumentation.

- **Yahweh.** God is designated under different names in *Daniel*, but only in chapter 9 is he called Yahweh, and this word appears seven times (9:2, 4, 10, 13, 14 [2x], 20), the number representing perfection. The name *Yahweh* stands for the covenant God of Israel.
- **Jerusalem.** The city of Jerusalem is at the centre of attention in this chapter. The word “Jerusalem” is used ten times in *Daniel*, but three times it is used only as an apposition or a geographical direction (5:2-3; 6:10). The

Babylonian names has been disputed. Delcor (1971:64) says that the names of Shadrach and Meshach are very hard to explain. Millard (1977:72) offers the following meaning: “Shadrach: ‘I am very fearful (of God); Meshach ‘I am of little account’; Abed-nego ‘servant of the shining one’; Beltshazzar ‘May he (a god) protect his life’.” Shea (1991a) offers solutions except for Meshac. For Baldwin (1981:81) “The renaming of the foreigners was a matter of convenience rather than ideology, and biblical characters from Joseph onwards (Gn 41:45) accepted new names without fuss”. Miller (1994:64) is of the same opinion.

⁹ It certainly makes it more difficult for Christian pastors to use this text for preaching.

remaining seven references refer directly to the city, and six of those references are found in chapter 9 (2, 7, 12, 16 [2x], 25) and once at the beginning of the book (1:1).¹⁰ The story deals with the misery of Jerusalem and its reestablishment. This sudden interest with the holy city is surprising because the author never mentioned the fall of Jerusalem, an event that was the object of so many prophecies and accounts in the Old Testament.

- **Reference to the past.** This chapter is the sole link with the past in *Daniel*. It is the only place in the book where an explanation for the Babylonian devastation is given, and Daniel confesses repeatedly his nation's past sins. It is also the only chapter that makes a reference to an Old Testament text (9:2), to an Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah (9:2), and to Moses' law (9:11, 13).
- **Long duration.** This chapter is the only one to give a "long duration" chronological reference. Even if commentators differ on the exact meaning of the "seventy weeks" (or "seventy 'sevens'"), it is obviously a very long period. This stands in sharp contrast to "short duration" references found in *Daniel*, all extending to about three and a half years: "a time and times and one-half time" (7:25; 12:7), "2,300 evenings and mornings" (8:14), "1,290 days" (12:11) and "1,335 days" (12:12).

Daniel 9 is heavily loaded with the Old Testament, and with Israel's past. Thus, it is not surprising to find this text at the centre of the main Hebrew section.

4.3.2.2 A climactic parallelism between chapters 8 and 10-12

4.3.2.2.1 Differences between the two sections

The sections surrounding chapter 9 share similarities, but Dan 8 and Dan 10-12 have also significant differences, the most obvious being the imposing length of the last section, three times longer than chapter 8. These two sections form a climactic parallelism. Since the differences are obvious, I will concentrate my comments on the similarities.

¹⁰ In chapters 8 and 11 we find geographical references to Jerusalem (but without using the city's name): the sanctuary (8:11-14; 11:31) and the Beautiful Land (8:9; 11:16, 41).

4.3.2.2.2 Similarities in the context of revelation

- Both visions are dated in the “*third year*” of the reigning monarch: King Belshazzar (8:1), and King Cyrus (10:1). In chapter 10, the author reminds the reader immediately after the chronological reference that Daniel “*was called Belteshazzar*” (10:1; cf. 1:7; 5:12), an information that seems unnecessary at this point of the story since the world is no longer under Babylonian rule. The information may be given to suggest a “connection” between this last section (Dan 10-12) and the vision of chapter 8. In chapter 8 the name of the last king of Babylon (Belshazzar) is mentioned for the last time (8:1); and that name is almost identical to Daniel’s Babylonian name (Bel-*te*-shazzar).¹¹
- In both visions, Daniel is in front of a river which is named (“*the Ulai Canal*” 8:2; “*Tigris*” 10:4). He “*lifts up*” his eyes at the beginning of the revelation (8:3; 10:5), either to see the first animal representing the world (8:3-4) or to see the first person addressing him (10:5-21).
- The main person addressing Daniel is magnificent, grandiose, and standing above the river (8:15-16). In chapter 8, Daniel stands by the river, and the man is in front of him (8:15); and the voice comes from the middle of the Ulai (8:16). In chapter 12, the man who spoke was “on the waters” or “above the waters” (12:6).
- Daniel is impressed, even terrified by the appearance of the divine being and falls to the ground face down (8:15-18; 10:8-9). The heavenly being touches the prophet to help him and restores his strength (8:18; 10:10-19). In chapter 8, the encounter is described in a few words, but in chapter 10, the account is more detailed. A description of the divine being is given (10:5-6), and the even greater fear of Daniel’s companions is reported (10:7). Then the progressive restoration of Daniel is described: the prophet gets up first on his hands and knees (10:10), then words of comfort are spoken allowing the prophet to stand up (10:11). Afterwards the prophet’s lips are touched (10:16), and the prophet’s speech is restored (10:16-17). Finally the prophet is touched again (10:18), and encouraged by new comforting words (10:19-20).

¹¹ Daniel’s Babylonian name is mentioned a few times in Babylonian stories (1:7; 2:26; 4:8, 9, 18, 19; 5:12), but not once in chapter 6 that is dated from the Persian period.

- The main heavenly being uses (or needs) a secondary glorious being either to transmit messages or to fight good battles. This secondary being is named in both stories: Gabriel is the communicator (8:16), and Michael is the fighter (10:13, 21; 12:1).

4.3.2.2.3 *Similarities in the content of the revelations*

The contents (and not just the contexts) of the revelations have similar features.

- In both cases the eschatological revelations deal with two earthly kingdoms, identified in both cases as Medo-Persia and Greece (8:21; 11:2-3).
- We need to point out here that the two revelations differ in form. In chapter 8, the information given is coded with symbolic language, but in chapter 11, it is given in straight language.
- The revelation about the first kingdom is brief in both cases (8:3-4, 19-20; 11:2-4). However, the information about the second kingdom is much more abundant, four times longer in the case of chapter 8 (v.5-14, 21-26), and more than twenty times longer in case of Dan 10-12 (11:2-45). In both revelations, more than half of the information about the second kingdom concerns the last part (or last king), and is directly related to the end times (8:9-14, 23-26; 11:21-45).
- In both revelations the first kingdom is hybrid in nature. In the symbolic language of chapter 8, it is expressed by two high horns “*but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last*” (8:3). Later in the chapter the clue is lifted, the “*two horns are the kings of Media and Persia*” (8:20). In chapter 11, the account of the first kingdom starts with “*Darius the Mede*” (11:1), and then mentions “*there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia*” (11:2).
- In both revelations the second kingdom is characterized at its beginning by a strong ruler whose kingdom will eventually be divided in four parts:

“The he goat had an outstanding horn between his eyes... When he was strong, the great horn was broken. And in its place came up four outstanding ones towards the four winds of the heavens.” (8:5, 8; cf. 8:21).

As for chapter 11:

“A mighty king shall stand up, one who shall rule with great power and do according to his will. And when he

4- THE LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken and shall be divided toward the four winds of the heavens” (11:3-4).

- The last king in both revelations will persecute faithful believers. He will start his kingship as an insignificant person:

“Out of one of them (the horns) came forth a little horn, which became very great, toward the south and toward the east and toward the bountiful land” (8:9).

As for chapter 11:

“A despised one shall stand up in his place, and they shall not give to him the honour of the king; but he will enter while at ease and seize the kingdom by intrigues” (11:21).

- The time of persecution is precisely indicated: “2,300 evenings and mornings” (8:14), and “1,290 days” (12:11) and “1,335 days” (12:12).

4.3.2.2.4 Conclusion: valuable progressions

The last part of the book (Dan 10-12) is the longest. It develops chapter 8, thus forming with that chapter a climactic parallelism. Chapters 10-12 give more information on the angelic helpers, on the last kingdom, and on the last ruler of that last kingdom. Since the language is no longer coded, the clarity of the message is also increased.

4.4 Comparison between the Aramaic section and the second Hebrew section

So far we have compared texts, consisting mainly of chapters. However before ending the analysis of the linguistic structure, we need to do one more comparison. We need to compare the Hebrew sections (mainly the second one: Dan 8-12) with the Aramaic sections (Dan 2-7). How do they compare in terms of structure and in terms of content? The question of content is particularly important since two languages are used.

My suggestion is that language fundamentally identifies the subjects of the prophecy. *Aramaic* was the language of the Babylonian empire, and was thus the international language of that time. The content of the Aramaic section deals primarily

with what concerns the world. *Hebrew* is the language of a specific nation, the nation of Israel, a nation God chose to make a covenant of blessing. Thus, the chapters written in Hebrew concern, in priority, the nation of Israel. The eschatology referred to in those chapters concerns primarily Israel.

An interesting difference between the Aramaic chapters and the Hebrew ones is that the Hebrew ones (especially the second part: Dan 8-12) are also almost exclusively consecrated to the suffering of the believers. Deliverance is announced but only at the end, and very briefly. The Aramaic chapters deal with salvation of the faithful believers (Dan 3 and 6), judgment of the pagan sinners (Dan 4 and 5), and judgement of the pagan nations (Dan 2 and 7). The scene of judgment in Dan 7 concludes that part well. The end of chapter 7 (v.15-28) forms a transition, and although these verses are written in Aramaic, they belong already to the next section. We must emphasize here that transitions are important, as we will see later (see chapter 7). For the time being, we need to notice that the first language transition from Hebrew to Aramaic is also very smooth, since Aramaic doesn't start with the first verse of Daniel 2 but with verse 4, at the moment when the Chaldeans start speaking in Aramaic.

“Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic...” (2:4).