

THEMATIC LINKS BETWEEN THE HISTORICAL AND PROPHETIC SECTIONS OF DANIEL

ZDRAVKO STEFANOVIC
Asia Adventist Theological Seminary
Manila, Philippines

The unity, or lack of it, between the two main sections of Daniel (chaps. 1-6 and 7-12) has long been an issue in the study of this OT book. This issue intersects with the problem of the date of Daniel. From a classical and traditional viewpoint, if elements in the historical chapters and the Aramaic language of that section of the book are early (ca. sixth century B.C.)¹ and the book is a unity, then the prophetic chapters belong to that early date too. Exactly the opposite approach on dating was taken by H. H. Rowley.² He held that the historical "errors" in the first part of the book indicate that those chapters were written as late as the second century B.C. together with the prophetic chapters. The prevailing view of this book at the present time is that the book is not a unity, the historical chapters having been written or collected some time earlier than the prophetic chapters, but not so early as the sixth century B.C. Adherents of this view date the prophetic chapters to

¹Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), p. 43; E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980, Reprint), pp. 18-20; L. Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), p. 20; J. B. Doukhan, *Daniel: The Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987); W. H. Shea, "Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and the Book of Daniel: An Update," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 147; Z. Stefanovic, "Correlations between Old Aramaic Inscriptions and the Aramaic Section of Daniel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1987). I am personally indebted to W. H. Shea, without whose assistance this article could not have been written, and also to Leona G. Running for her invaluable help.

²H. H. Rowley, "The Bilingual Problem of Daniel," *ZAW* 50 (1932): 256-268. See also H. L. Ginsberg's reaction in his *Studies in Daniel* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1948), and Rowley's reply in "The Unity of the Book of Daniel," in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), pp. 249-280.

the second century B.C. and the historical chapters to the third and fourth centuries B.C.³

1. *The Major Divisions in Daniel*

Links that can be demonstrated between the historical and prophetic chapters serve to draw those two sections closer together into an ultimate unity of authorship. The purpose of the present study is to point out some of the thematic links and lexical affinities that exist.

A literary criticism of the book of Daniel in terms of the unity of its main divisions is not quite so simple a matter as it might appear to be to the superficial reader who readily notices the natural division between the historical and the prophetic chapters, at the end of chapter 6. Confronting us immediately, for instance, is the well-known fact that the Aramaic section of the book, chapters 2-7, bridges that boundary line. If the division of the book by its contents goes back to its author/s or editors, then we would expect that the linguistic divisions in the book should follow its divisions by the nature of its contents, but they do not.

A similar phenomenon is encountered in terms of the speaker in the various narratives of the book. A division has commonly been made on this basis between the third-person reports of the historical chapters and the first-person reports of the visions in the second main section of the book. But even this division is not so straightforward as it might at first appear. In Dan 10, the introduction to the final prophecy of the book, the narrative begins with a third person report (v. 1) and then it shifts to a first-person report.

Thus, while at first glance it may appear that the person-speaker number lines up with the division of the book by content, there are at least some minor exceptions to this rule. And when it comes to the linguistic divisions, there are some major exceptions in terms of both chapters 2 and 7. This does not fit the pattern of two neatly divisible literary sources, but it could point to a unity in which these overlaps stem from the design of one author.

Another way in which this problem can be approached is to notice links between the historical chapters and the prophetic chap-

³Among the most outstanding commentaries which break the book up into different sources are J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*

ters, or between the Hebrew chapters and the Aramaic chapters. The purpose of this study is to point out some of these links, which in turn reinforce the case for the unity of authorship.

As a simple lexical example of such links, we may notice the word *pat-bag*. This loan word from Old Persian appears in two places in the book of Daniel, in chapter 1 five times (vv. 5, 8, 13, 15, 16) and in chapter 11 once (v. 26). Thus, this uncommon word makes a very specific link between a chapter in the historical section and a chapter in the prophetic section of the book—a common element less likely to have occurred if these two chapters had been written a century or two apart and in different eras, the first during the Persian epoch and the second during the domination of the Seleucids.

Our main focus in this essay, however, is on the larger pictures of commonality between portions of the book of Daniel that frequently are attributed to different authors and origins. These larger pictures are the broad thematic relationships. They may include, of course, the use of the same or similar words, but they need not necessarily do so. Our first two lists of correspondences are between portrayals within the historical part of the book, but in sections which are differentiated by being in Hebrew in the first case and in Aramaic in the second. Then we will move on to consider two sets of striking commonalities between portrayals in the historical portion of the book and the prophetic portion.

2. *Interconnections between the Hebrew and Aramaic Sections*

Our first comparison is between the character and activities of Daniel himself, on the one hand, and King Belshazzar, on the other hand. The fact that in these variations Daniel is called Belteshazzar (perhaps an intentional corruption of the proper Babylonian name Belshazzar) provides at the outset a link that enhances the importance and pertinence of other points of comparison or contrast in the two narratives. The following list of correspondences and anti-theses may be drawn up between these two central figures in these narratives:

on the *Book of Daniel* (New York: Scribner's, 1927), and L. F. Hartman and A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel* (New York: Doubleday, 1978).

DAN 1

1. Daniel is named Belshazzar (1:7)
2. Daniel learns the language (1:4)
3. Daniel refuses to drink wine, doing so in the presence of a Babylonian official (1:8)
4. Daniel successfully passes the test (1:20)
5. Daniel is "quick to understand" (1:4) and makes up his mind (1:8)
6. Daniel refuses to defile himself (1:8)
7. Daniel's reward is a high position granted him (1:10)
8. Daniel's countenance is changed for the better (1:13, 15)

DAN 5

1. The king's name is Belshazzar (5:1)
2. Daniel reads the writing and communicates with the king (5:18-28)
3. Belshazzar drinks wine in the presence of his Babylonian officials (5:1)
4. Daniel reads the writing (5:17)
5. Because of his drunkenness, Belshazzar loses his understanding and is unable to retain control of his mind (5:2)
6. Belshazzar defiles the sanctuary vessels with his use of them (5:22-24)
7. Belshazzar's reward is the loss of his high position (5:30-31)
8. Belshazzar's countenance is changed for the worse (5:6)

Even Nebuchadnezzar can be contrasted with Belshazzar in some respects in these two chapters. In this case we have the good or accepted king of Babylon contrasted with the bad and rejected king of Babylon. The following are a few comparisons that can be made between these two royal personages:

DAN 1

1. Nebuchadnezzar brought Babylon to conquests and prosperity (1:2, cp. 4:30)
2. Nebuchadnezzar was the legitimate king of Babylon (1:1; cp. 2:37-38)
3. Nebuchadnezzar was the son of the founder of the dynasty
4. God gave Jerusalem and the vessels of the temple into Nebuchadnezzar's hands (1:2)

DAN 5

1. Belshazzar brought Babylon to defeat and subjection (5:23-24, 30)
2. Belshazzar was only a coregent holding second place in Babylon (5:7, 29)
3. Belshazzar is identified as the son (or grandson) or successor of Nebuchadnezzar (5:11)
4. Belshazzar took the vessels of the temple into his own hands (5:2)

DAN 1

5. He was really the first king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire
6. The conquest of 605, with which the Empire and Nebuchadnezzar's reign began, is described in this chapter

DAN 5

5. He was the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire
6. The conquest of 539, with which the Empire and Belshazzar's reign ended, is described in this chapter.

3. *Interconnections between Historical and Prophetic Chapters*

In both cases noted thus far, our comparison has been made of details taken from historical-narrative chapters, even though those details are from the Hebrew of chapter 1 and from the Aramaic in chapter 5, respectively. These comparisons show that such relationships can and do cross the language dividing line, but the question remains: Can similar relations be worked out between the historical and prophetic chapters? It appears that they can be, and two different cases are next examined as examples of this type of relationship. In the cases above, our attention has been on features in the character or actions of one historical figure—Daniel or Nebuchadnezzar—in relationship to those of another historical figure—Belshazzar. In the cases below, similar relations are proposed for one historical personage—Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar—in relation to a prophetic and symbolic figure in the book—the final symbolic beast or the little horn.

The first of these two cases relates to a comparison between Nebuchadnezzar and the fourth symbolic beast of Dan 7. Some of the verses cited below for Nebuchadnezzar come from the Belshazzar narrative in Dan 5, but they are verses in which Daniel referred back to the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

	<i>Nebuchadnezzar</i>	<i>The Fourth Beast of Dan 7</i>
1. Both were frightening (<i>dhl</i>)	5:19	7:7
2. Both did as they pleased	5:19	7:7
3. All inhabitants were subject to them	4:22, 5:19	7:7, 23
4. Both devoured people	5:19	7:23
5. Both existed in an unclassified zoological form	4:25	7:7, 19
6. Both capitulated to the judgment	4:34-35	7:11

Just as there are some similarities between Nebuchadnezzar and the fourth beast of Dan 7, so there are also some similarities between Belshazzar, the last Babylonian king after Nebuchadnezzar, and the little horn, the last power to come out of the fourth beast. For purposes of comparison, the assumption is made that the little horn of Dan 7 and the little horn of Dan 8 represent the same power, without arguing the case in detail and regardless of the historical entity to which that symbol is applied.

	<i>Belshazzar</i>	<i>The Little Horn</i>
1. Both appeared toward the end of their empires	5:31	7:8, 8:23
2. Both claimed royal power and prerogatives	5:1	8:23-24
3. Transgression on the part of both resulted in desecration of the temple	5:3-4	8:11-12
4. Both came to their end in rebellion against God	5:22-23	7:26
5. Both came to a sudden end brought about by God	5:26-28	7:26, 8:26
6. Both spoke and acted blasphemously	5:23	7:25, 8:11
7. Both became strong by means of someone else's power	5:16, 23	8:22

4. Summary

I have endeavored to demonstrate above that there are themes, actions, and individual words that are common to differing parts of the book of Daniel. The comparisons of Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar with Belshazzar (Dan 1 and Dan 5) bridge the languages in the book and reveal that the language division cannot be considered as a firm basis for separating these two sections of the book into different literary sources. The thematic and lexical relations suggest a more unified authorship.

A similar comparison was then carried out for the historical figures of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar in the historical section of the book, and the prophetic figures of the nondescript beast and the little horn in the prophetic section of the book. The linkages evidenced through these comparisons cross the boundary of both

the language dividing line and the dividing line suggested by the nature of the historical and prophetic contents of the book. The thematic relationships noted support, once again, the idea that a unified outlook of one author is represented, rather than the production of the book by bringing together separate sources from different time periods.

I have not thus far discussed in detail the dating of these related sections, noting only in passing the fact that historical studies on the historical chapters and linguistic studies on the Aramaic chapters support an early date for both the historical and Aramaic chapters. Given the relations proposed here for the connections between the prophetic chapters written in Hebrew and the historical chapters written in Aramaic (with chapter 7 looking both ways), these connections suggest an early date for the prophetic chapters as well.

The view that the book of Daniel divides neatly between two major sections, the historical and the prophetic, with the linguistic arrangement supporting such a division, is thus seen to be an overly simplistic premise from which to work. Rather, the book presents a number of overlappings across these various junctures—overlappings that connect them rather directly. In this way, these relations provide an additional supporting argument for the unity of the book with respect to its historical and prophetic narratives.