

Constructing Realities: Bel and the Dragon – Identifying some Research Lacunae

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ABSTRACT

The article applies a spatial-body framework to Bel and the Dragon (LXX/Th Dan 14). This application indicates that the narrative represents a shift in the author's personal worldview. Bel and the Dragon demonstrates how gods other than the Jewish deity are not only powerless as shown in Dan 1-6, but they are false and therefore should be done away with. The author/editor emasculates the Gentile worldview by utilising Daniel to eradicate the other gods. What starts as an invasion of the Jewish deity's god-space in Daniel 1, ends with the extermination of the false Babylonian gods and the emasculation of their avowed divinity (LXX/Th Dan 14). In this way The Greek Daniel ends with an intolerance towards other worldviews. By means of his narratives the apocryphal author/editor creates a new reality and worldview within which the Jews in the diaspora can still be faithful to their God without being afraid of competing earthly powers or other so-called deities. In this article new insights from linguistic studies in regards to space and body are utilised as part of a new text analysis method.¹

Key words: Bel and the Dragon, Daniel, linguistic studies, LXX, diaspora

A INTRODUCTION

Much research has been undertaken on *Bel and the Dragon*. However, due to new developments in certain areas of the study of literature and language, specifically in regards to body and space, fresh insights may be brought to the table to enhance the understanding of this ancient narrative.

*Bel and the Dragon*² is one of three additional stories to the Book of Daniel³ found in the Septuagint (LXX). *The Prayer of Azariah and the song of the three young men* are found between Dan 3:23 and 24. The Hebrew Daniel⁴

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² When Bel and the Dragon appears in italics it indicates the narrative as found in Greek Daniel. When either the individual term "Bel" or "dragon" appears in normal font it refers to a specific deity or a sacred animal respectively.

³ For clarity, Daniel in italics refers to the character of Daniel whereas "Daniel" in normal font refers to the Book of Daniel.

⁴ This term is used in the full knowledge of the fact that Daniel as it is found in the HB consists of two languages, Hebrew and Aramaic. The term Hebrew Daniel is used

has 12 chapters and the Greek Daniel has 14 chapters. *Bel and the Dragon* forms the 14th chapter and *Susanna* either forms the 13th chapter (LXX) or the 1st chapter (Theodotion). There are two versions of the Greek Daniel, namely:

- the LXX, which is possibly the older version and therefore often called the Old Greek (OG); and
- the Theodotion (Th) text which, apart from being considered the more recent version, is also more elaborate.

Bel and the Dragon consists of three episodes. In the first episode *Daniel* uncovers the deceit of Bel's priests and thus shows the king that Bel (βῆλος) is not a living god. In the second episode *Daniel* kills a sacred δράκοντα (serpent/dragon) worshiped by the Babylonians, again showing that the dragon is not a real living god. In the last episode *Daniel* is yet again thrown in a lion's den, but is miraculously rescued by the Jewish deity.

This article's aims are threefold, namely:

- to give an overview of past research apropos *Bel and the Dragon*;
- to identify certain *lacunae* in past research that may be satiated by more recent developments in the study of texts and language; and
- to provide a possible methodology⁵ that is based on some of these newer developments.

B IDENTIFYING A RESEARCH GAP

The past research on *Bel and the Dragon* can be summarised thematically as follows:

- The use of the story as a polemic against idolatry with the theme of "Who is the living God?"⁶ Developments in the field of the study of language and text make it possible to examine this theme more

in coherence with the term HB which usually refers to the OT in the Protestant Canon and to the canonical books in Judaism. The term Greek Daniel refers to the Greek translations of Daniel in the Septuagint and the Theodotion Greek Text.

⁵ This article will only attempt to provide a broad overview as regards the application of the developed methodology. Follow up articles will deal specifically with how this methodology can be applied to each of the episodes within *Bel and the Dragon*. This series of articles is part of a Masters dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Pierre Jordaan of the NWU, Potchefstroom-Campus.

⁶ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 24-26; Ivor H. Jones, *The Apocrypha* (Warrington: Epworth Press, 2003), 139-140; David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 239.

thoroughly and more elaborately than before. For example, an investigation into the way the author/editor⁷ utilises space⁸ in the narrative⁹ can enrich the reader’s understanding of the story as a polemic against idolatry.

- Intertextual¹⁰ relationships. It is possible that the themes of punishment and the uniqueness of Israel’s God may have influenced the narrative of *Bel and the Dragon*.¹¹ These two themes are underlined in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isaiah 44:46 emphasises the stupidity of making idols in contrast to the uniqueness of Israel’s God. In Jer 51:33-35, 52 it is said that the God of Israel will punish the idols of Babylon. Specifically in Jer 51:20-64, Israel’s God promises the destruction of Babylon and its idols. When the utilisation of body and space in Daniel is investigated, as in this article, it is interesting to find that the destruction of Babylon, as it is “promised” by God, already began in the first chapter (BHS and LXX) of the book.

Also on an intertextual level, scholars often use a diachronic approach for comparing the differences in the narrative between the OG and Th as well as the history of these two text versions.¹² In comparing these differences scholars seem to focus on the “counting-of-words” subsequently losing track of the narrative as a whole and the function it would have in Daniel and in Jewish communities.

⁷ Due to the complex origin of Bel and the Dragon, and the possibility of different narrators, authors and editors working on the text, the term editor/author is used to indicate the person, persons or school responsible for the creation of the Greek Daniel.

⁸ The article of Pierre J. Jordaan, “A Clash of Deities in 2 Maccabees 1:10b-17 in terms of Space, Body and Narrative,” *OTE* 26/3 (2013): 718-729, is an example of exploring an author’s use of space in a narrative.

⁹ In this article the word “narrative” is used in different ways. Narrative indicates a story such as *Bel and the Dragon*. Larger narrative refers to the Book of Daniel as a single story with different episodes. Each episode is a smaller narrative or incident within the larger narrative of the whole Book of Daniel.

¹⁰ How the Book of Daniel relates to texts outside the Book itself.

¹¹ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 24-26; DeSilva, *Introducing*, 240.

¹² Ronald H. van der Bergh, “Reading ‘Bel and the Dragon’ as Narrative: A Comparison between the Old Greek and Theodotion,” *APB* 20 (2009): 310-323; Jones, *Apocrypha*, 139-140; Alexander A. Di Lella, “The Textual History of Septuagint-Daniel and Theodotion-Daniel,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 586-607; John J. Collins, *Daniel* (ed. Frank M. Cross; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 237-256.

- The use of humour as a theme in the narrative.¹³ The fact that *Daniel* laughs at the king, underlines the stupidity of worshiping idols as if they are living gods. The laughter of *Daniel* in this narrative is a mocking laughter that goes hand in hand with irony.¹⁴ *Daniel's* laughter can be compared to the scorn of God in Ps 2.
- Intratextual¹⁵ relationships. Daniel 1-6 stands in a relationship to *Bel and the Dragon*.¹⁶ It is important to consider that even though the additions to Daniel may be of an independent tradition, they form an editorial unit with the rest of Daniel, in both the OG and in Th.¹⁷ In this regard, it is important to take notice of *editorial critique's* (*Redaktionsgeschichte*) vantage point in asking the question as to why editors or authors constructed their work (narrative) as they did.¹⁸ In other words: Why did apocryphal editors or authors order their work in a specific way? In regard to Daniel the question then is: Why did the editor shape Daniel in the order of firstly the court-tales (Dan 1-6, and even their specific order), secondly the visions (Dan 7-12) and then thirdly the stories of *Susanna* and *Bel and the Dragon*? Reading Daniel from the vantage point of editorial critique means reading the text with regard to the *strategic placement* of each chapter. In this way there can be a reciprocal relationship between Daniel as a single unit and each individual chapter.¹⁹
- Food in the sense of "eating" and "not eating" as a motive in the narrative.²⁰ If this motive is combined with a spatial frame-work, it becomes possible to read the use of food as a spatial marker whereby different god-spaces can be identified (spatial markers are indications of embodied spaces within a text see below under C3 and D2). In this sense the question can be asked: "who is feeding whom?" Not only is it then possible to establish a hierarchy between characters, as Bergmann²¹ indicates, but it also becomes possible to show which deity is a living

¹³ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 24-26; Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel," *NIB* 7: 17-152.

¹⁴ Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 137, 186-187, 167-177.

¹⁵ The relationship of all the different chapters within the Book of Daniel itself.

¹⁶ Collins, *Daniel*, 405-419.

¹⁷ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 24-26; DeSilva, *Introducing*, 224-225.

¹⁸ Uwe Becker, *Exegese des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 8-9, 77.

¹⁹ Joseph J. de Bruyn, "Daniel 5, Elohim and Marduk: The Final Battle," *OTE* 26/3 (2013): 623-641.

²⁰ Claudia Bergmann, "The Ability/Inability to Eat: Determining Life and Death in *Bel et Draco*," in *JSJ* 35/3 (2004): 262-283.

²¹ Bergmann, "The Ability/Inability to Eat," 262-283.

god by having *power over life and death*. However, Bergmann²² does not connect the motive of food with space or the creative properties of language.

- Origin of the text. The origin of the OG is usually assumed to be around 100 B.C.E. while Th's origin is placed somewhere in the second century C.E.. The story of *Bel and the Dragon* itself probably originated much earlier as part of independent traditions about *Daniel*. Even though the city of Babylon is the setting of the narrative, any place where Jews found themselves in the diaspora could function as a place of origin. Each different origin brings its own different ideology with it. For example, was this narrative written inside or outside of Judea? If from within the Judean homelands there would naturally be a longing for the restoration of the Jewish state and the hegemony of a sole national deity whereas an origin outside Judea might also indicate the precocious acknowledgment of a more universal deity.²³
- Similarities and dissimilarities on a linguistic basis. Rather than examining the possible reasons as to why the editors of both the OG and Th versions would have combined the Hebrew Daniel and its apocryphal editions into a single unit, some scholars seem to focus on the discrepancies between the Hebrew Daniel and its editions.²⁴ In his research, Charles²⁵ has endeavoured to find the original language of *Bel and the Dragon*. He explores the possibility of an earlier Hebrew version of the story. Although his work has brought insight into the origins of the story Charles seems to lose track with the narrative and its function.
- Some research has also been undertaken on the theme, "The king has become a Jew."²⁶ In this research the king is seen in a positive light because of his tolerance of *Daniel* and his acclamation of Israel's deity as the living God. In this regard, the possibility that the king is merely a symbolic character in the narrative – one who epitomises those who have doubts about the God of Israel as the true living God – is not investigated.

²² Bergmann, "The Ability/Inability to Eat," 262-283

²³ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 24-26; DeSilva, *Introducing*, 224-225; Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, 168-170; Collins, *Daniel*, 405-419; Robert H. Charles, *Apocrypha* (vol. 1 of *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*; Berkeley, Calif.: The Apocryphal Press, 2004 [1913]), 656.

²⁴ Ivor H. Jones, *The Apocrypha* (Warrington: Epworth Press, 2003), 139-140.

²⁵ Charles, *Apocrypha*, 655.

²⁶ John J. Collins, "The King has Become a Jew: The Perspective on the Gentile World in Bel and the Snake," in *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel* (ed. Robert S. MacLennan and J. Andrew Overman; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 335-345.

- Another theme in research is the development in the character *Daniel* himself.²⁷ Not only is *Daniel* wise, he is a detective who uncovers lies and reveals truth. He also develops a sense of humour in the "Additions to Daniel." Jordaan suggests that *Daniel* serves as a weapon of attack and defence through the ages. In other words, the character of *Daniel* is used in both polemical attacks and defences against idolatry. Again, it can be said that if this theme is combined with a spatial framework, it is possible to indicate that the editor/author utilises *Daniel* not only as a weapon, but as a vessel of the God of Israel.²⁸

In recent language and text studies, new themes such as body, space and narrative structures have emerged. Knowing that the research pendulum is never static, we would like to give it a little push in the direction of these newer developments. Later in the article a fuller description of a possible methodology will be given which may be able to plug certain research gaps left by previous scholars. This methodology will be based on some aspects of *narrative critique*, the use of *space* and *body* within the construction of narratives, and also the *creative aspects* of language.

In terms of narratives, even though Nickelsburg²⁹ describes the Greek Daniel as an editorial unit, he does not give attention to the possible *function* of *Bel and the Dragon* within a larger narrative constructed by the editor. No attention is given to the relationship between the chapters of Daniel either. The same is true of the work of Van der Bergh.³⁰ Despite the fact that he claims to employ narratology as a method, he compares the differences and similarities between the OG and Th but does not focus on the narrative itself as a folktale within the larger Daniel. Thus, he does not utilise narrative critique to its maximum potential.

The study of *space* and *body* within texts has become more and more important in recent research. This is partly due to works of narrative critics such as Foucault³¹ and cognitive linguists such as Evans,³² Bergen,³³ Zinken,³⁴

²⁷ Pierre J. Jordaan, "Daniel as Weapon for Attack and Defence Through the Ages," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 90 NS 19 (2008): 45-53; Smith-Christopher, "Daniel," 185-186; Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah: The Additions* (AB 44; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 164-147.

²⁸ Joseph J. de Bruyn, "A Clash of Gods – Conceptualising Space in Daniel 1," *HTS* 70/3 (2014); Art. #1956, 6 pages; DOI: 10.4102/hts.v70i3.1956; Jordaan, "Daniel as Weapon," 45-53.

²⁹ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 24-26.

³⁰ Van der Bergh, "Reading 'Bel and the Dragon' as Narrative," 310-323.

³¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Middlesex: Peregrine Books, 1979), 113; Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (ed. Colin Gordon; trans. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham and K. Soper; Sussex: The Harvester Press,

Lakoff,³⁵ Johnson,³⁶ Reddy,³⁷ Croft³⁸ and Cruse.³⁹ Few scholars have done research on space and body in Daniel. Nel⁴⁰ as well as Venter⁴¹ wrote on space in Dan 1 and 9, but not on space in the additions to Daniel whereas Van der Bergh⁴² merely regarded the differences in location in the story of *Bel and the Dragon*. In the final analysis, none of these three scholars regarded space as a mechanism utilised by the author or editor to create his narrative and/or as a tool to *create realities*. Thus combining the use of space with the creative properties of language was not really considered. This article uses the term *creative properties of language*, to indicate the mental proses by which language has the ability and power to create realities, such as the reality of traffic laws or liturgical realities (cf. Fig. 1 and C1 below).⁴³

1980), 109-133; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (Great Britain: Peregrine Books, 1984), 202; Michel Foucault, "The Body of the Condemned," in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought, with Major New Unpublished Material* (ed. Paul Rabinow; trans. D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon; Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1984), 170-178; Michel Foucault, "Docile Bodies," in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought, with Major New Unpublished Material* (ed. Paul Rabinow; trans. D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon; Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1984), 179-189.

³² Vyvyan C. Evans, Benjamin Bergen and Jörg Zinken, *The Cognitive Linguistics Reader* (London-Oakville: Equinox, 2007); Vyvyan C. Evans and Melanie Green, *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction* (London: LEA, 2006).

³³ Evans, Bergen and Zinken, *Cognitive Linguistics Reader*.

³⁴ Evans, Bergen and Zinken, *Cognitive Linguistics Reader*.

³⁵ George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); George Lakoff, *The Political Mind* (New York: Viking, 2008); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

³⁶ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

³⁷ Michael J. Reddy, "The Conduit Metaphor: A Case of Frame Conflict in our Language about Language," in *Metaphor and Thought* (ed. Andrew J. Ortony; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 284-310.

³⁸ William Croft and Allen Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004).

³⁹ Croft and Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*.

⁴⁰ Marius Nel, "Function of Space in Daniel 1," *IDS/ILV* 48/2 (2014); Art. #1778, 7 pages; DOI: /10.4102/ids.v48i2.1778.

⁴¹ Pieter M. Venter, "Constituational Space in Daniel 9," *HTS* 60/1&2 (2004): 607-624; Pieter M. Venter, "Space in Daniel 1," *OTE* 19/3 (2006): 993-1004.

⁴² Van der Bergh, "Reading 'Bel and the Dragon' as Narrative," 310-323.

⁴³ Joseph J. de Bruyn, "Daniel 6: There and Back Again – A Deity's Space," *HTS* 71/1 (2015): forthcoming.

It is neither the commentators' lack of command of the Greek language nor their ability to read the text that creates research gaps. It is their tendency to repeat each other rather than to incorporate new insights that can be learned from new developments in language and text studies that create fore mentioned research gaps.

This article is unique in various ways. No commentary, as far as could be established, has previously combined aspects of narrative critique with the creative properties of language. Space and body will thus be regarded as markers utilised by the editor/author to create specific realities. The narrative will also be read as a mechanism to create a new *identity*, not only the identity of the Living God, but also that of Israel within their reality of the diaspora. As shown above, scholars usually read *Bel and the Dragon* as a somewhat loose standing story. In this article *Bel and the Dragon* is treated within a reciprocal relationship not only with its own sub-episodes, but also with the rest of Daniel and thus also the apocalyptic genre for which the Book of Daniel is known. This article focuses on narratives, defined as structural units demarcated by spatial markers.⁴⁴ We thus try to take the latest developments in the study of language into account. Furthermore, this article treats *Bel and the Dragon* as a narrative about a clash of deities. It also focuses on *Bel and the Dragon* as being part of a whole, namely the Greek edition (both OG and Th) of the Book of Daniel.

C THEORY AND METHOD

1 Narrative Critique

Bel and the Dragon is first and foremost a narrative. This fact must not be underestimated in analysing the texts of the Hebrew or Greek Daniel. George Nickelsburg⁴⁵ emphasises the importance and the logic of narratives by stating:

I am interested not simply or primarily in ideas or motifs or contents in some amorphous sense, but in literature that has form and direction: in narrative that has plot with beginning, middle and end (or situation, complication, and resolution); in other types of literature that use particular forms and rhetorical devices with consistency and purpose. The critic's task is to find these forms and directions and to interpret the text with reference to them.

George Lakoff⁴⁶ in discussing narratives goes so far that, from a cognitive viewpoint, it becomes possible to regard almost everything in life as a type of narrative. All life is a narrative and even more so are cultures and

⁴⁴ We do acknowledge that there may be other markers for delimiting the structure of narratives.

⁴⁵ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 3.

⁴⁶ Lakoff, *Political Mind*, 21-93.

worldviews. By means of this cultural or worldview narratives, people give order to their society. Narratives have power, not only to reflect realities, but also to create realities or to hide opposing realities. Narratives are mental structures of the brain and when they are written on paper or voiced, language is used to construct them. Words are the building blocks of narratives and thus have the creative power to create framesets in people's minds through the narratives they structured. It is our view that due to the mental link between cultures, worldviews, language and narratives, the meaning of language and narratives are imbedded in people's psyche.

This means that Daniel and each of its chapters (this is true of all its editions) were constructed to influence the way people think. It was constructed not only with the possible intention of creating new realities about the God of Israel and his identity, but also to say something about the Jewish believers living in the diaspora. This would enhance a Jewish reader's understanding of the text as a polemic not only against idolatry, but understanding the narratives of Daniel as a clash of worldviews and even a clash of different deities. The different and opposing worldviews are that of the author/editor and the gentile (possibly Hellenistic) world. Within the Second Temple Period, Jews had to rethink their worldview and concept of God and his capabilities. They had to rethink their identity as Jews outside the land of Israel. This they had to do whilst being confronted by people who had totally different worldviews (cf. Ps 137, Isa 40 and Dan 1-6).

Lakoff's view on narratives can be combined with that of the French philosopher Michael Foucault. For both scholars narratives are an important key to understand societies. Furthermore, for both Lakoff and Foucault the *body* is an important element in the construction of narratives (cf. heading C2 below). It is important to comprehend the link (figure 1) between narrative and worldviews and also the creative properties of language and narratives.

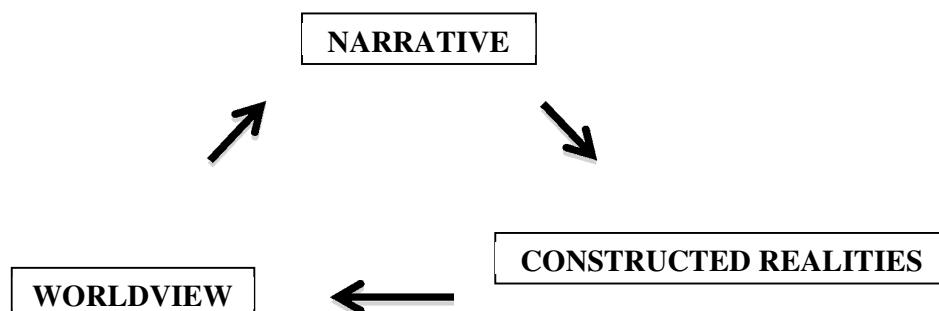


FIGURE 1: The ongoing process of creating worldviews, realities and narratives.

As a narrative, the Book Daniel fits into the process of creating realities (cf. Fig. 1). The book reflects a power struggle in an ancient society. This

power struggle is narrated in the Book of Daniel as two opposing narratives, or two opposing worldviews. We can go further; the larger narrative of Daniel is a power struggle between different realities. It is not just a struggle between Jew and Gentile, but also a battle between deities. This means that the two opposing narratives are interrelated/interwoven. Foucault⁴⁷ uses the concepts *dominant narrative* and *challenging narrative* to describe the struggle between narratives. This is in concurrence with Daniel's apocalyptic nature and will be explained later.

This article approaches *Bel and the Dragon* as part of a larger editorial unit. It means that this individual story forms part of a larger narrative or reality, namely a clash between deities and worldviews. This larger deity war is then uniquely recounted in Dan 14. Daniel 14 is thus treated in a reciprocal relationship with its own different episodes (moments in the narrative), but at the same time as a story within a larger narrative, the Greek Book of Daniel.

To better our comprehension of language and narratives' capability to create realities, three important building blocks must be considered. These building blocks are the *body*, *space* and *genre*.

2 The Utilisation of Body

Not only are narratives built/composed around bodies in the form of characters,⁴⁸ narratives are also formed within the human body in the form of worldviews and opinions.⁴⁹ Humans use their bodies to interact with the world around them and to experience it. As the world is experienced through the body worldviews/cosmologies and opinions are formed. These worldviews can be value systems, political or economic systems or different religions. It also can be something as simple as the experienced viewpoint that there is a link between eating rotten food and sickness or diseases. Worldviews or cosmologies may also vary from culture to culture. Yet, all humans employ their bodies to conceptualise.⁵⁰ Through bodily experience humans construct different spaces and words which in turn establish frameworks. There is thus a mental link between the body, words, space and narratives. Furthermore, the body can also function as a space or vessel in itself where specific concepts or experiences can be embodied.⁵¹ For example, in *Bel and the Dragon*, the dragon functions as a vessel and embodiment of the god Marduk. The body as

⁴⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 113; "Truth and Power," 109-133; *History of Sexuality*, 202.

⁴⁸ Foucault, "The Body," 170-178; "Docile Bodies," 179-189.

⁴⁹ Lakhoff, *Political Mind*, 21, 93.

⁵⁰ Lakhoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 555-557.

⁵¹ De Bruyn, "A Clash of Gods," 1-6.

vessel will be explained below in C3 and D2. Lakoff⁵² also states that humans understand events in the world in terms of what their bodies can do.

In the narrative of *Bel and the Dragon* as well as in the rest of Daniel, there are many bodies in the form of characters. These bodies usually stand in relationship to each other. There are kings and subjects, servants and masters, the educated and uneducated, the wise and unwise, Jews and Gentiles, conformists and nonconformists, deities and humans. *Daniel* and his friends usually function as a vessel or embodiment of the God of Israel.⁵³ In this way the God of Israel is himself a character in the larger narrative of Daniel. The author/editor utilises *Daniel* to help the Jews form an understanding of what their God can achieve in the world – even outside of Israel. As the author/editor's readers began to form a new understanding of their God, they also began to understand something of his identity. Other bodies in *Bel and the Dragon* are those of the Gentile king, Babylonian priests, Bel, and the dragon. These bodies/characters are used to construct a worldview where Bel and the dragon are worshiped as living gods. Two opposing narratives or realities are thus formed, one about the gods of the Gentile world and the other about the God of Israel. The bodies/characters within these narratives are then utilised in such a way that at the end of *Bel and the Dragon* and the Book Daniel, a new reality about the God of Israel and what he can (or will not) do is created. The next building block in narratives that is discussed, is space.

3 Utilising Space

This goes beyond the identification of different spaces in terms of places. Rather it is an investigation into the creative properties of words that are associated with specific spaces. It is an attempt to show how authors or editors create narratives or realities by utilising spaces within its conceptual frameworks.

Space forms one of the basic domains of human thinking.⁵⁴ At the same time space is the basic framework within which the body functions. It was stated above that humans experience the world through their bodies. In experiencing the world around them humans construct structural spaces through which they can categorise phenomena such as *below*, *on top*, *inside*, *outside* and *under*.⁵⁵ For example, by means of the experience of climbing a mountain, different spaces can be identified. Words are then created to reflect or identify these spaces as *above* and *below*. Homesteads are usually experienced and categorised as *private space* and not everyone is welcome to

⁵² Lakoff, *Political Mind*, 27.

⁵³ De Bruyn, "A Clash of Gods," 1-6.

⁵⁴ Martin Haspelmath, *From Space to Time: Temporal Adverbials in the World's Languages* (München: Lincom Europa, 1997), 1.

⁵⁵ De Bruyn, "A Clash of Gods," 1-6.

enter that space. Friends are metaphorically experienced as *close* and customarily may enter someone's private space. Within their different cultures humans may experience certain spaces as *sacred* or *holy* and then use words such as temple, church or synagogue to give meaning to the experience of those specific spaces. Sometimes body and space are combined in what can be described as *embodied spaces*. These embodied spaces are the way (and sometimes place) in which (where) human experience and consciousness takes spatial and material form in different *locations* and *entities*.⁵⁶ For example, within the worldview of humans throughout history, deities and their spatial domains can be embodied in different forms or entities like a temple, an altar and even a person such as a high priest or king. In *Bel and the Dragon* the Babylonians and the king viewed the idol and dragon-animal as embodiments of their deities (Cf. the use of body in C2 above). These sacred embodied spaces can be described as *god-spaces*.

Jerusalem is not mentioned in Dan 14, but is named in Dan 1. The Jewish homeland of Judea is however, mentioned in *Bel and the Dragon* (Th v. 33). For the Jews, the space of the city of Jerusalem as well as the land of Judea (Israel) was holy. It was seen as close to God⁵⁷ and in their worldview Jerusalem functioned as the *axis mundi* between heaven and earth.⁵⁸

Spatial markers are indications of embodied spaces within a text. These spatial markers can be summarised as follow: *the human body* as a vessel of the *self*; *body-space*, which centres around the human body; *gendered spaces*; *inscribed spaces*; *contested spaces*; *trans-national space*;⁵⁹ *trajector*; *landmark*; *frame of reference*; *region*; *path*; *direction* and *motion*.⁶⁰

In Dan 6 and again in Dan 14 the lion's den functions as what can be described as *contested space*. The lion's den starts out to be an extension of the king's punishing-space but at the end of both narratives the lion's den is identified as being part of the god-space of the God of Israel. The same is true of the fiery furnace in Dan 3.

As stated above, if the Greek Daniel (both OG and Th) is read as a larger narrative, it shows that what began as an invasion of the God of Israel's god-

⁵⁶ Stephan M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga, *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 1.

⁵⁷ Frank L. Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *A Commentary on Psalms 101-150* (vol. 3 of *Psalms*; Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2005), 515.

⁵⁸ Lee Humphreys, *Crisis and Story: Introduction to the Old Testament* (illustr. ed.; New York City: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 61, 64-67.

⁵⁹ Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga, *Anthropology of Space and Place*, 1-37.

⁶⁰ Jordan Zlatev, "Spatial Semantics," in *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (ed. Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 318-350.

space, is turned around into an invasion and destruction of the Babylonian deities' god-space and then goes on to end with the killing of the Babylonian gods in Dan 14. Consequently *genre* as a building block will now be discussed.

4 **Genre**

The Book of Daniel is apocalyptic in its nature. Apocalypticism is part of an *Hellenistic Zeitgeist*. This genre became popular with Jewish writers in the time of forced Hellenisation of Jews under Alexander the Great's successors.⁶¹ Apocalypticism reflects a unique worldview. Some of the prominent features of this unique worldview are reflected in Daniel. These features are the dualistic distinction between a physical world and a spirit world; an eschatological deity war between good and evil; and life after death.⁶²

In the view of what was said above about the link between worldviews and narratives (cf. C1 and Figure 1), Daniel can be described as a larger narrative. As a narrative Daniel conveys a message to the Jewish faithful with regards to the identity of their God. It creates the reality that God is not only in Jerusalem, but is working everywhere within the profane world and no other deity can stop him. God is all-powerful and omnipresent. This particular worldview is challenged by the worldview of the gentiles who believed that, *inter alia*, the God of Israel was an inconsequential deity who was defeated when Nebuchadnezzar invaded his holy city and Temple (Dan 1). This opposing worldview created a religious and political crisis for the Jews. Their crisis becomes more acute when they are persecuted for remaining steadfast to their God. Within the narrative framework of apocalypticism the editor/author comments on historical events in his own time. Indeed, his narrative exemplifies the fact that he believes that the world is in a crisis because alien and ungodly powers are undermining the harmony previously established by the Jewish deity. The faithful must understand that because of this new cosmic struggle between their God (good) and false, alien deities (evil) they will also have to suffer. The suffering of the faithful is thus a consequence of the larger clash of deities. However, God will be victorious and in the final days (ἔσχατος; cf. Dan 10:14 to the end of Dan 12) all evil will be vanquished.

⁶¹ Richard S. J. Clifford, "The Roots of Apocalypticism in Near Eastern Myth," in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism* (ed. John J. Collins, Bernard J. McGinn and Stephen J. Stein; New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 2003,) 3-29; Frederick J. Murphy, *Early Judaism: The Exile to the Time of Jesus* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002), 126-136; John J. Collins, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End," in *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity* (vol. 1 of *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*; ed. John J. Collins; New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2000), 157; Paul L. Redditt, *Daniel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 13.

⁶² Clifford, "Roots of Apocalypticism," 15; Murphy, *Early Judaism*, 126-136; Collins, "From Prophecy," 157.

In the story of *Bel and the Dragon* the cosmic struggle between God and the forces of evil are presented as a struggle between various deities and their respective worldviews to better determine who the living God is. *Daniel* believes that the Babylonian gods are not living gods. He therefore engages the priest of Bel and the Babylonians in a struggle based upon their respective worldviews. In the process *Daniel* uncovers the deceit of the priests of Bel and slays their revered dragon. As a consequence *Daniel* is persecuted, sentenced to death and accordingly, thrown into a lion's den. Now the God of Israel is challenged to save his loyal servant and vessel. After seven days the God of Israel is demonstrated to be victorious by winning the challenge and revealing that only He has power over life and death.

D COMBINING AND APPLYING SPACE, BODY, NARRATIVE AND GENRE

In the following sections, *body*, *space*, *narrative* and *genre*, will be combined with the intention of addressing some of the research lacunae that were previously identified. For us it is important to focus on the narrative rather than to spend time on the discrepancies between the OG and Th. It is normal for folktales to have more than one version. Therefore, this article focuses on the narrative as a whole using both the OG and Th versions. Furthermore, this article focuses on possible reasons as to why the narrative was created. *Bel and the Dragon* is treated as a story within and with a reciprocal relationship to the Greek *Daniel*. This article only broadly applies a spatial framework to text. It will also try to indicate how *Bel and the Dragon* fit with the rest of *Daniel*. In follow-up articles the spatial framework of body and space will be applied to each of the three episodes of *Bel and the Dragon*.

1 The Larger Narrative

If *editorial critique*, apocalypticism and Lakoff's⁶³ idea that worldviews equal narratives are combined, it becomes possible to regard *Daniel* as a larger narrative.⁶⁴ Within this larger narrative each chapter of *Daniel* is strategically placed to create a new progressive worldview about the God of Israel. Within this new worldview the identity of Israel's God and the Jewish faithful are also recreated.

If Hebrew *Daniel* was written around the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes⁶⁵ and the first Greek edition of *Daniel* around 100 B.C.E., it can be concluded that *Daniel* was written for persecuted Jews who lived in the Hellenistic period of the ANE's history. In both the Hebrew and the Greek *Daniel* the author/editor utilises spatial markers, such as the character of

⁶³ Lakoff, *Political Mind*, 21-94.

⁶⁴ De Bruyn, "Daniel 5," 623-641.

⁶⁵ Murphy, *Early Judaism*, 126-136, 152.

Daniel, Jerusalem, Babylon, Bel, the dragon and the lion's den to create a new reality about the God of Israel.

In this larger narrative there are two opposing and clashing worldviews, that of the author/editor and that of the Gentile world. These clashing worldviews are also reflected in *Bel and the Dragon*. Most cultures of the ANE believed that the different gods each had their own spatial domains of power and authority on earth.⁶⁶ Aspects of this worldview are also found in the HB (cf. 1 Kgs 20:23; Exod 19:5-6 together with Deut 14:2; Ps 29; Ps 48). According to the HB, Jerusalem represents God's heavenly dwelling place while Zion is his throne. When the children of Israel were taken into exile and God's Temple and holy city were invaded, he – according to this worldview – was defeated and his spatial domains became part of that of the Babylonian deities. After his defeat by the Babylonian deities, the God of Israel was not supposed to have any power, especially not inside the spatial domains of the alien deities.⁶⁷

However, the author/editor creates a new worldview. He carefully utilises smaller narratives (in the larger narrative of Daniel the smaller narratives are the different chapters of the book), which in turn are constructed by using different spatial markers such as temples, the character of *Daniel*, cities, regions deities, *etcetera*. These smaller narratives are then strategically ordered so that a new reality materialises (cf. Fig. 2). In each smaller narrative it is shown that even though people may believe the God of Israel is a degraded deity, in reality he is stronger than any other deity and he can act how he wants. Even more so, not only can the God of Israel act as he wants, but the whole world falls under his authority and everything happens according to his greater will and plan.

In this larger Daniel narrative, two major spaces can be identified, the *earth* below and the *spiritual world/heaven* above. Daniel 1-6 narrates how God's power and authority is not bound to specific locations as the popular worldview previously proclaimed. God's power now stretches all over the world, despite people's beliefs. In Dan 7-12 the Daniel narrative moves to *heavenly space above*. Within a typical apocalyptic framework the author/editor shows that God is indeed a universal God. Everything that happens in the world below, even the suffering of the faithful like *Daniel* and his friends, is not only part of a bigger clash between the forces of good and evil, but is also part of God's strategy. Reading Daniel as a larger narrative shows that what began as the initial invasion of the Jewish deity's god-space is subsequently turned around into the invasion and destruction of the Babylonian

⁶⁶ De Bruyn, "Daniel 5," 623-641; John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 97-102.

⁶⁷ De Bruyn, "A Clash of Gods," 1-6.

deities' god-space.⁶⁸ Israel's God is thus identified as omnipresent, almighty and powerful. The Hebrew Daniel only moves between these two larger spaces from Earth *below* to Heaven *above* (cf. Fig. 2 [A→B]). A possible reason could be that the author/editor wanted his readers to focus on God and the new life that awaited them in his abode (Dan 12).

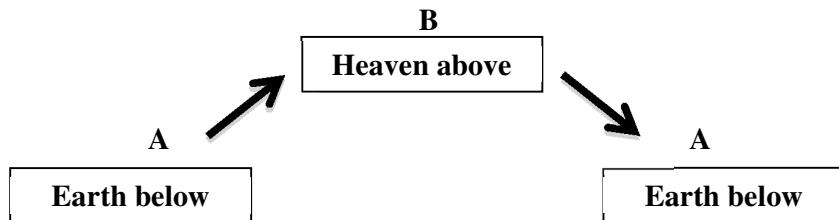


FIGURE 2: The movement of *space* in the narratives of Daniel

However, Greek Daniel follows a spatial scheme of Earth *below* to Heaven *above* and then back down to Earth *below* (cf. Fig. 2 [A→B→A]). By adding chs. 13 and 14 the Greek editor/author shows his readers that the newly discovered identity of God has renewed consequences on earth. God will not have the faithful (in the form of Susanna and *Daniel*) fall victim to persecution, but God will give them life. However, the consequences of God's new identity and the fact that he will be victorious in his clash with evil (alien pseudo-deities), goes even further. In Dan 1-6 the author creates the reality that the God of Israel is more powerful than other deities. In Dan 14, after *Daniel* is shown the heavenly strategy of God (Dan 7-12) the author/editor comes to the conclusion that if God is going to be victorious in the end (ἐσχατος), there is no place for false gods on earth. There is only one living God, and that is the God of Israel who requires his faithful to eschew all alien cosmologies and worldviews. This is symbolised by *Daniel* who slays the priests of the false god Bel as well as his revered dragon. In Dan 1-6 *Daniel* is utilised as a spatial vessel of the God of Israel to establish a powerbase for God outside of Israel. In some sense *Daniel* is used as a defence mechanism for the presence of God. The way in which the author/editor utilises *Daniel* progresses from chs. 1 to 14 until *Daniel* becomes a weapon of destruction with which the God of Israel exterminates the pseudo-deities.

From the vantage point of apocalypticism the believer should know that within this universal clash of good and evil, both heaven and earth are contested spaces. However, in the end (ἐσχατος), all spatial domains will belong to God, for in reality they already do.

⁶⁸ De Bruyn, "A Clash of Gods," 1-6.

2 The Smaller Narrative of Daniel 14

Analysing *Bel and the Dragon* within its reciprocal relationship with the rest of Daniel indicates that the same two opposing worldview-narratives that are the bases of the rest of the book are still contesting with each other in this smaller narrative of ch. 14. The struggle between deities materialises with the underlying question: "Who is the living God?" As the smaller narrative progresses through its three episodes, the question: "who is the living God?" becomes a mechanism to progressively create the identity of the God of Israel. *Life* and *death* thus becomes concepts to construct a narrative as well as identity and reality. At this stage only a broad overview is given.

The author/editor utilises *Daniel* as a priestly (OG) vessel of Israel's God. The gods of the Gentile world are embodied within Bel and the sacred δράκων (dragon). The author/editor also utilises space in the embodiment of the city of Babylon, Bel's temple and the lion's den. In the contest to determine the real living god, both food and nourishment are used as motifs. In the first episode the king asks *Daniel*: καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ βασιλεὺς οὐ δοκεῖ σοι Βηλ εἶναι ζῶν θεός ἢ οὐχ ὄρδας ὄσα ἔσθιει καὶ πίνει καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν (Th v. 6).⁶⁹ Thus, to be a god, the deity should eat a lot and humans should bring him/her much food. Humans thus should nourish the gods. However, *Daniel* uncovers the deceit of Bel's priests. The truth is that it is not Bel that eats the food but the priests! Bel's god-space in the form of his temple is identified as a place of deceit. In reality, however, the truth is that Bel is no god, for he does not eat. Furthermore, the fact that he is no living god is emphasised by the fact that he cannot rescue his priests from death. Thus, in this episode Bel's divinity is weakened and he is given a new identity, namely that of a useless, and dead god.

In the second episode the king shows *Daniel* a δράκων worshiped by the Babylonians as a god. Again the divinity of the δράκων is built upon the fact that it eats. Yet again the author reveals the divinity of the δράκων as false. *Daniel* feeds the creature a mixture of fat, hair and tar. To the shock of the Babylonians, the δράκων dies. Where Bel was shown not to be a god because he did not eat, this episode shows that the δράκων is not a god because of the fact that it did eat, but died. In a subtle way the author/editor indicates that a real god does not need food. The question thus remains: "Who is the living god?" and "How does his divinity function?" These questions are answered in the third episode where *Daniel* is once more thrown into a lion's den.

In the third episode, God's vessel is handed over to die in a lion's den. Now *Daniel* and the lion's den becomes a space for the God of Israel to demonstrate his authority. This episode is thus parallel with Dan 3 and 6.

⁶⁹ Do you not think that Bel is a living god? Do you not see how much he eats and drinks?

Contrasting to the ANE worldview, the author/editor of Daniel now recreates the new identity of Israel's God to the fullest. According to God's new identity He has the power to intervene within the domain of death. Not only does the God of Israel rescue *Daniel* from death, He also nourishes him. In the form of the prophet Αμβακοθμ (OG v. 33), God brings *Daniel* food in the lion's den. At the end of the Dan 14 narrative the reader can now answer the underlying question: "Who is the living God?" Answering this underlying question is a linguistic mechanism to create a new reality about the God of Israel.

As the king in the narrative experienced the truths about the Babylonian gods through his own body, he comes to the realisation that the only true living God, is the God of Israel. By utilising everyday experiences and traditions the author not only changes the king's mind, but in reality creates a new worldview for the reader to believe in. In this new reality the God of Israel is not a degraded deity. He is all powerful and even controls life and death, and offers tangible proof of his promise of a new life after death (cf. Dan 12).

3 Consequences for the Reader

If the reciprocal relationship between Daniel and *Bel and the Dragon* is analysed, interesting consequences for the reader comes to the fore.

The Jews may stay faithful to the God of Israel, for even if they suffer, he is in total control. Not only is he in control of the earth (Dan 1-6), but also of the universe (7-12), and even life and death (Dan 3, 6 and 14). The reality of the fact that God is in total control and that other gods are not only powerless, but false, is taken to a next level in Dan 14. The author/editor undermines the Gentile worldview by utilising *Daniel* to kill the other gods. What started as an invasion of God's god-space in Dan 1 ends with the killing of the Babylonian gods and destruction of their divinity. The narrative has thus gone full circle.

Thus, for the Jews living in the diaspora the right thing to do is to stay faithful to God for He is in full control of even their lives and deaths. Religious syncretism and foreign religious practises should not be tolerated. Because God will be victorious over evil, it is the faithful's duty to fight evil in their daily lives even if it means showing intolerance to other religions.

E CONCLUSION

The application of a spatial-body framework, combined with aspects of narrative and editorial critique, shows that Greek Daniel is an extended narrative about the God of Israel clashing with the forces of evil. In each chapter, spatial concepts are utilised to create this larger narrative. With his narratives the author/editor creates a new reality and worldview within which the Jews in the diaspora can still be faithful to God without being afraid of earthly powers or other so-called deities.

Daniel represents a shift in Israel's religious worldview. At first God's god-space was seen as embodied in the Tabernacle and the Arc of the Covenant, and later the Temple. Later on Mount Zion, the Davidic king and Jerusalem became part of God's god-space. In Daniel the boundaries of the Jewish deity's god-space becomes unlimited. God operates where he chooses and his faithful are vessels or embodiments of God's actions.

In Daniel there is also a shift in worldview that can be described as a shift from co-existence/tolerance to intolerance. First it is shown that God is capable of acting inside other deities' god-spaces (Dan 1). Then he starts to take over other deities god-spaces (Dan 2-6). In Dan 7-12 it is shown that the Jewish deity is indeed a universal God and that all things on earth fall under his command. In Greek Daniel the book ends with intolerance towards other worldviews. *Bel and the Dragon* demonstrates how other gods are not only powerless as shown in Dan 1-6, but they are false and therefore should be exterminated.

In creating a new identity for the God of Israel, the author/editor attempts to convince his readers that God's authority is universal and that he is the only true living God.

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