Daniel "More than a Prophet"? Images, Imagery, Imagination, and the *Mashal* in Daniel 2

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ABSTRACT

In Dan 2, King Nebuchadnezzar had commanded his wise men to re-imagine his dream or else he would carry out the unimaginable – a mass execution of all the wise men of Babylon. This article argues that the author of Dan 2 imaginatively employed the mashal in the form of a vision of the night to enable Nebuchadnezzar receive what was meant to be a prophetic message. However, the peshar which was supplied by Daniel was strategically couched in wisdom to accommodate the social context of the narrative. In the light of Daniel's allusion (Dan 2:38) to Nathan's prophetic indictment of David in 2 Sam 12:7, and against Koch's claim that Daniel was more than a prophet because he was a man greatly beloved, it is argued here that Daniel's re-envisioning and interpretation of the king's dream served not just to confirm Daniel as a wise man but to introduce him as a prophet. Thus, the combination of wisdom and prophecy in Daniel is what made him "more than a prophet."[1]

Key words: Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, prophecy, wisdom,

A   BACKGROUND TO DANIEL

A recurring and major theme in Daniel is the sovereignty of God or God's power over history.[2] This theme is particularly marked in Dan 2, which is under investigation in this article.[3] The book of Daniel is unique in certain respects especially in terms of its language (a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic) and genre (a mixture of narrative and apocalyptic texts). However, interpretive

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[2]   See Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel* (NAC 18; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 50. Fewell confirms that "The central political issue in Daniel is that of sovereignty. Who is sovereign in the human world? The question, is, of course, also a theological one. . ." See Danna Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty: Plotting Politics in the Book of Daniel* (2nd ed.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 12. Cf. also Choon Leong Seow, *Daniel* (WBComp; Louisville, Ky.: W John Knox, 2003), 14, 22; Choon Leong Seow, "The Rule of God in the Book of Daniel," in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J.J.M. Roberts* (ed. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 219, 220, 245; Amy C. Merrill Willis, *Dissonance and the Drama of Divine Sovereignty in the Book of Daniel* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 4, 15.

[3]   Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel* (ApOTC 20; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 69; Seow, *Daniel*, 35, 63.

difficulties have also been associated with the book, part of which is compounded by the fact that, while it is classified among the Writings in the Hebrew-Aramaic Bible, the LXX and successive translations place Daniel among the Major Prophets.[4] An issue in scholarship therefore is determining whether Daniel was a prophet or whether the book of Daniel is a prophetic book. The term prophet is used in diverse ways in the OT but simply defined, a prophet is one who receives and communicates a message from a deity while prophecy is the utterance or interpretation of that message. The divine message is often an interpretation of present events but in some cases it also predicts or foretells the future.[5] Although it is established that the book shares resemblances with other ancient prophetic books, it is also said to deviate from them substantially. For instance, Koch compares the dark and enigmatic dreams and visions in Daniel to aspects of Jeremiah, Zechariah and Isaiah but he is also quick to point out that "Daniel's strict eschatological perspective also separates this book from the ancient prophets."[6]

Some of the points raised to support the view that Daniel is a non-prophetic book include the facts that Daniel was placed among the Writings in the Masoretic Bible and later Jewish traditions especially two passages in the Gemara of the Babylonian Talmud included the book among the Writings. Ben Sira also did not mention Daniel among the prophets (actually does not mention him at all), and it is argued in addition that, "If the author belonged to the Maccabean era, then his predictions are for the most part *vaticinia ex eventu*." Therefore, he could not have been a prophet. Von Rad's conclusion that Daniel should be placed with Wisdom literature based on form critical criteria is also used to support the view of Daniel as a non-prophetic book.[7]

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[4]   John I. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1989), xxv; John J. Collins, "The Book of Daniel," *ABD* 2:31; John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 1; Victor H. Matthews, *The Hebrew Prophets and Their Social World: An Introduction* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academy, 2012), 207. The book of Daniel is divided into two parts – the Narrative (chs. 1-6) and the Apocalyptic (chs. 7-12) – but this discussion focuses only on the Narrative aspect.

[5]   For detailed definitions of the term prophet or prophecy, see John F. A. Sawyer, *Prophecy and the Biblical Prophets* (New York: OUP, 1993), 1-9; Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophets in the Ancient Near East* (SBLWAW; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 1-2; Gerda de Villiers, "The Origin of Prophetism in the Ancient Near East," in *Prophetic Witness: An Appropriate Contemporary Discourse?* (ed. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm and Etienne de Villiers; Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2010), 13-14; and Matthews, *Hebrew Prophets*, 19, 21-23.

[6]   Klaus Koch, "Is Daniel also among the Prophets?" *Int* 39/2 (1985): 124. This view is affirmed by Collins; see Collins, *Daniel*, 52.

[7]   Koch, "Is Daniel?" 119-121; Collins, *Daniel*, 52.

On the other hand, the main argument in favour of Daniel as a prophetic book, according to Koch, is that some early witnesses regarded Daniel as a prophet, and the book of Daniel as a prophetic book. For instance, in the NT, Jesus referred to Daniel as a prophet when he quoted Dan 9:27 in Matthew 24:15; the Septuagint places Daniel among the prophetic writings, Josephus also included Daniel among the prophets, and while fragments of Daniel from the Qumran described Daniel as a prophet, some other Jewish traditions which differed from the mainstream also listed Daniel with the prophets.[8] Having considered the evolution of the interpretive traditions of Daniel, Koch rightly argues that Daniel was more than a prophet. However, his claim that he was more than a prophet because he was a man greatly beloved (a title which Koch says designates a higher position than that of the prophet) and because he was an outstanding seer who announced the mysteries of the end time is inadequate and problematic, as will be argued below.

I would argue in this article based on internal evidence from the book of Daniel that Daniel should indeed be regarded as more than a prophet because he combined elements of wisdom with prophecy.[9] Furthermore, the demonstration of his skill is pronounced in ch. 2. Although Porteous claims that Dan 7 is "in a sense" central to the book of Daniel and binds the whole book together because it connects with the previous unit (chs. 1-6) and with its immediate context (chs. 7-12),[10] in this essay, Daniel 2 is considered pivotal to the book of Daniel in the sense that it shares several motifs with some other aspects of the book, and it contains central elements that point to Daniel as a prophet and to the book as a prophetic book.[11]

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[8]   Koch, "Is Daniel?" 121-24. See also Collins, *Daniel*, 52; Seow, *Daniel*, 2-3. In addition, Islamic traditions outside the Quran recognise Daniel as a prophet, for instance, the 14th century Syrian Islamic author who wrote originally in Arabic classified Daniel among the prophets; Ibn Kathir, *Stories of the Prophets.* 701-774 A.H. (1302-1373 C.E.). (trans. Dr. M. H. Al-Ahmad; Beirut: Dar Ai-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, 2000).

[9]   For a more detailed discussion of Daniel as a wise man, see Funlola O. Olojede, "Sapiential Elements in the Joseph and Daniel Narratives *vis-à-vis* Woman Wisdom: Conjunctions and Disjunctions," *OTE* 25/2 (2012): 351-368. Porteous argues that, "In the book of Daniel something of the old prophetic inspiration is present again confronting the challenge of a new day. It may have incorporated wisdom material, that is to say stories which might have been used to illustrate general truths about life. . ." Norman Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary* (OTL; 2nd rev. ed.; London: SCM, 1979), 17. See also Collins, "Daniel," 35. Note also that intersections between prophecy and wisdom have been established; see Martin A. Shields, "Prophecy and Wisdom," in *DOT: Prophets*: 642-650.

[10]   Porteous, *Daniel*, 20, 95; cf. Paul L. Redditt, *Daniel* (NCBC; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 114.

[11]   This claim does not ignore the character of Dan 7-12 as apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic texts employ complex imagery and coded symbols couched in the

B   IMAGE AND IMAGERY – DANIEL 2 AND ITS CENTRALITY TO THE BOOK

Many scholars have noted that Daniel 1 serves as introduction not only to the narratives in chs. 1-6 but to the whole book. Chapter 2 happens to be the longest chapter in Daniel, and it has been observed that it shares correspondence with ch. 7 because there is a parallel between the dream statue in ch. 2 and the beast vision in ch. 7 and especially with respect to the motif of the four-kingdom schema.[12] Daniel 2 relates the story of King Nebuchadnezzar who had dreams in the night that troubled him because he did not understand the meaning. He then called on his wise men and astrologers to tell him the dream as well as its interpretation. But the wise men tried to make the king understand that they could tell him the interpretation only if he told them the dream.

Nebuchadnezzar persisted with his demand that the wise men must re-imagine his dream or else he would carry out the unimaginable – a mass execution of all the wise men of Babylon. The wise men must have thought the king's dream was imaginary, but what he was asking them to do was even beyond the imaginary! It is equally difficult to imagine how the dismemberment of all the wise men of Babylon could solve Nebuchadnezzar's problem. Besides, how could anyone recount and interpret a dream that they did not dream and were not told? If the dream was a product of the king's imagination, could the wise men possibly re-imagine that dream?

Theorists note that there is some connection between imagination and dream. They claim that "A part of imagination does work in sleep. . . Yet the

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language of mythology to predict the future or communicate mysteries and secrets revealed by God but makes only partial use of prophetic oracles (Matthews, *Hebrew Prophets*, 169, 209). The book of Daniel is therefore regarded as prophetic here since apocalypse also presupposes prophecy. But we should also note that a connection between wisdom and apocalypticism is recognised in Daniel. Perdue writes: "The book of Daniel is also a mantic piece of wisdom that takes shape in the form and content of apocalypticism." Leo Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus: An Introduction to Wisdom in Ages of Empires* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 416. See also John J. Collins, "Wisdom, Apocalypticism, and Generic Compatibility" in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie* (ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard B. Scott and William J. Wiseman; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 166; Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 207-217.

[12] Collins, *Daniel*, 34; Miller, *Daniel*, 101; for other similarities between the two chapters, see also Porteous, *Daniel*, 38, 95; Willis, *Dissonance*, 5, 16; Seow, "Rule of God," 220-221, 245; Lucas, *Daniel*, 69.

imagination is not simply reducible to dreaming."[13] The wise men therefore must have concluded that the king's dream could also not be reduced to imagination; otherwise they could have figured it out easily. The king's demand could not be met by employing the imagination because some things are just beyond imagination. No one could solve this puzzle except the gods whose dwelling is not with the flesh (2:11).

Ironically, the wise men did not choose to consult the gods even though they admitted a solution could be found with them. Rather, they resigned to their fate. Only Daniel picked up this cue; he could not re-imagine the dream but he imagined that he could get a solution by seeking divine intervention from God. He decided to obtain a stay of execution from the king while he and his friends consulted the God of heaven to solve the king's riddle. It was now up to Daniel to dream another man's dream – to re-envision the king's vision. And the mystery was revealed to him in a vision of the night.

Unknown to the wise men of Babylon, at the centre of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was an image. Daniel now understood that not even in their wildest imagination could the wise men of Babylon have captured the unusual image that Nebuchadnezzar saw (2:27). It was a great image, the statue of a man whose components were made of different metals and of clay (2:31-33). Daniel then offered to recount and to interpret the king's dream. Various meanings have been adduced to Daniel's interpretation of the statue either as a single kingdom or a sequence of kingdoms. Although there is no doubt that the first kingdom referred to Babylon, there are differences of opinion among scholars on the identification of the last three empires or kings.[14] However, we would support Redditt's argument that,

> . . . [I]t is easier to see the statue as referring to one empire than to a succession of empires. In addition, the fact that each succeeding metal is baser than its predecessor fits the succession of the four neo-Babylonian kings better than it does the succession of empires from the Babylonian to the Greek.[15]

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[13] Peter Murphy, "Introduction," in *Imagination: Three Models of Imagination in the Age of Knowledge and Economy* (ed. Peter Murphy, Michael A. Peters and Simon Marginson; New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 5.

[14] Traditional understandings of the statue claim that the divisions refer to the Babylonian, Assyria, Media, and Persia empires respectively or to Babylonian, Medo-Persia, Hellenistic and Roman empires. For further discussion, see Collins, *Daniel*, 161-168; Miller, *Daniel*, 94; Seow, *Daniel*, 34; Sharon Pace, *Daniel* (SHBC; Marcon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 72-76.

[15] Redditt, *Daniel*, 49. Seow also supports this view in a sense by arguing that the text probably refers "not to four empires extending over several centuries but to four reigns" – namely of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius the Mede and Cyrus; Seow, "Rule of God," 222; cf. Lucas, *Daniel*, 76; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 36-43, 49, 57.

At any rate, the issue of the identity of the last three kingdoms remain speculative and outside the immediate concern of this article. Of interest rather is the use of the imagery of image[16] in Dan 2. In Dan 3, reference is made twelve times to the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar erected (3:1[x2], 2, 3[x2], 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18). The image set up by Nebuchadnezzar is said to evoke the image of his dream.[17] But whereas the image in the dream is composed of different metals which also differed in quality, the image in ch. 3 is made only of pure gold and colossal in stature.

References to images are not limited to the book of Daniel. The imagery which is employed throughout the OT distinguishes between the image of God and graven images. From the Torah through the Deuteronomistic History and the Writings, a frequent occurrence of the term image is found especially in the context of the warning against moulding or carving images in order to worship them.[18] However, there is also a recurrent use of the imagery in the prophetic books (e.g. Isa 40:19-20; 44:10, 15, 17; 45:20; 48:5; Jer 10:14; 51:17; Ezek 8:3, 5; Nah 1:14; Hab 2:18), mostly also in the context of the condemnation of idolatry or the worship of other gods. Thus, we can see that the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream not only anticipates his image in ch. 3, it connects with the same imagery in other prophetic books and indeed in the OT.

Besides the motif of images, Dan 2 is replete with other imageries which tie the chapter not only to the book but to the entire OT corpus and especially the prophetic books. For instance, Leon Seow has convincingly shown that the imagery of the stone not cut by human hands, which represented a fifth kingdom,[19] the kingdom of God, in Dan 2:37, is a quarry metaphor that finds a parallel in Isa 51:1-2 and it connects with the imagery of the One who comes in the clouds in Dan 7 to symbolise divine power or divine rule.[20] It can be said that Dan 2 employed synecdoche in the imagery of the stone. The stone was a part of a mountain and represented the mountain but it eventually grew into a great mountain (2:34-35, 45).[21] The invisibility of the hand that cut the stone

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[16]   Here, image is used to refer literally to the statue or object associated with Nebuchadnezzar whether in his dream or in real life while imagery refers to the collection of images or an identified metaphoric pattern in the text.

[17]   In line with Goldingay's claim, Fewell affirms that, in Dan 3, "Nebuchadnezzar is duplicating, though with some variation, the image he has seen in his dream." Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty*, 38; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 57.

[18]   Genesis 1:26-27; 5:3; 9:6; Exod 20:4; Deut 16:21; Judg 17:3-4; 18:14; 1 Kgs 16:33; 2 Kgs 23:15; 2 Chr 15:16; 33:7; Ps 106:19-20.

[19]   See Redditt, *Daniel*, 50.

[20]   Seow, "Rule of God," 222-227, 245; Willis, *Dissonance*, 15. For other views, see Collins, *Daniel*, 165 n. 128.

[21]   Willis asserts that "the stone is now a kingdom of divine origin, and the mountain may represent Mt. Zion." See Willis, *Dissonance*, 39; Seow, "Rule of God," 390.

underscores the ephemeral nature of the image and the kingdoms it represents. The abstract hand destroys the concrete image!

The mystery surrounding Nebuchadnezzar's dream as well as the interpretation shares correspondence with Dan 4 where Nebuchadnezzar related another dream (of a tree) or *rāzā* that required interpretation, with Dan 5 where Belshazzar saw the mysterious handwriting on the wall that needed interpretation, and with Dan 7-10 where Daniel himself had apocalyptic visions that even he the renowned mystery solver could not interpret. Thus, Dan 2 is representative of or introductory to a distinct motif in Daniel – of metaphors and their interpretation or of mysteries (parables, riddles) and their interpretation.

In addition to the imageries of dreams and their interpretations, image or statue, and the stone that was cut from the mountain, other metaphorical elements in Dan 2 include the four-kingdom schema, the idea of eschatology and the sovereignty of God, all of which relate to the rest of Dan 2-6 as well as to Dan 7-12. It is safe to argue therefore that Dan 2 is pivotal to the book of Daniel because it compresses in one long narrative the most prominent motifs and imageries in the book. But (as shown above) the most of the imageries in ch. 2 also correspond to similar imageries in other prophetic books.

C   DREAMS AND PARABLES

The imagery of dreams or visions is not only well attested in the OT, it is a strong element in prophecy. In Num 12:6, Yahweh related dreams and visions to prophecy in his utterance: "*Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.*" Accordingly, several OT prophets were said to receive messages from the Lord in dreams or visions, for example, Samuel, Nathan, Isaiah, Ezekiel, to mention a few.[22] Job shows that God gives messages through dreams and visions.[23] Matthews affirms that most often, "prophecy was simply spoken as a report of a vision or dream (1 Kgs 22:19-22). . ."[24]

Dreams are in a sense regarded as a form of metaphor. According to Meadowcroft, "a central component of the dream is often a metaphor, and a key to the interpretation of such dreams is an appreciation of the metaphors therein and the impact of those metaphors on their interpreters."[25] In Dan 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream (supposedly a secret message from God) to

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[22]   Compare 1 Sam 3:15; 2 Sam 7:17; Isa 21:2; Ezek 1:1; Hab 2:2; Zech 1:7, 18.
[23]   "For God may speak in one way, or in another, Yet man does not perceive it. [15]In a dream, in a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls upon men, While slumbering on their beds" (Job 33:14-15).
[24]   Matthews, *Hebrew Prophets*, 30-31.
[25]   Tim Meadowcroft, "Metaphor, Narrative, Interpretation, and Reader in Daniel 2-5," *Narrative* 8/3 (2000): 257.

which Daniel provided an interpretation. Like the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar which he equates with *rāzā* (a secret), Daniel's interpretation came as a metaphor. To express the inexpressible, Daniel had to draw on imagery. The dream was a mystery but its interpretation to a large extent remains a mystery even today since the identities of the second, third and fourth kings remain hypothetical. Nonetheless, the interpretation showed that the destroyer himself who threatened to destroy all the wise men of Babylon would ultimately be destroyed.

The procedure in which a coded message is given to one person by God while another interprets it seems to be attested only in Diasporan settings or at least among non-Israelites as the stories of Joseph and Daniel show. Whereas Joseph interpreted the dreams of the butler and the baker in prison as well as the dreams of Pharaoh (Gen 40; 41),[26] Daniel interpreted the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar twice in Dan 2 and 4, and the writing on the wall for King Belteshazzar (Dan 5). Also, in Judg 6:13-15, Gideon overheard a dream and its interpretation by a man and his fellow from the camp of the Midianites. The assumption in this article therefore is that the biblical narrator(s) coded the message of these dreams in the form of *meshalim* or parables.

A parable is regarded as an analogy. Westermann notes that, "In the parable, as in the comparison, one process is juxtaposed with another with which it is intended to comment upon."[27] In the abovementioned cases, therefore, the messages of the dreams which are coded in the form of *meshalim* are juxtaposed with their interpretations. Sider confirms that, "Not all parables are stories but every parable is an analogy."[28] He further demonstrates that the Hebrew *mashal*, unlike the NT parable which denotes only analogy, often encompasses a broad range of literary types such as riddles, proverbs, taunts, by-words and oracles.[29] Jeremy Schipper who has carried out an exhaustive study on parables and conflict in the HB affirms that the *mashal* evokes some similarity or comparison. He notes that in the past, the *mashal* has been

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[26] Note that Joseph himself had earlier dreamed dreams that appeared to be self-explanatory (Gen 37:1-11).

[27] Claus Westermann, *The Parables of Jesus in the Light of the Old Testament* (ed. and trans. Friedemann W. Golka and Alastair H. B. Logan; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 152.

[28] John W. Sider, *Interpreting the Parables: A Hermeneutical Guide to Their Meaning* (SCInt; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1995), 18, 27.

[29] Thus, the story of Samson and his friends (Judg 14:12-18) in which Samson issued a puzzle and urged his friends to unravel its meaning in a recreational or game setting is seen as a *mashal* with "a riddling character." Sider, *Interpreting the Parables*, 193, 197. Sider defines the *mashal* as, "A Hebrew word denoting 'likeness' generally, applied to various forms of comparison in ANALOGY, both of equation and example, as well as in RIDDLE, PROVERB, TAUNT, AND BYWORD." See Sider, *Interpreting the Parables*, 257 (*Sider's emphasis*).

understood as a genre but this creates difficulties because various genres including proverbs, songs, sayings, taunts, fables, and riddles, are identified as *meshalim*. Subsequently, the *mashal* is defined in terms of function rather than form. It functions as a rhetorical technique used to add force and validate a message or pronouncement.[30] Schipper further shows that biblical dreams also function as comparisons (*meshalim*), and he acknowledges in an indirect way a category of "dream-*mashal*" exemplified by Judg 7:13-15; Gen 37-41; Dan 2, 6.[31]

During the monarchic period and in the exilic period, a prophet with a word from the Lord could walk up to the king or stand before the people and utter a *mashal*. For instance, in 2 Sam 12:1-4, Nathan presented a *mashal* to King David about a rich man who robbed a poor man of the only ewe lamb that he had in order to entertain his wayfaring friend. After getting David to pronounce a judgment against himself (vv. 5-6), Nathan offered the *peshar* (interpretation) to his *mashal* as well as the judgment that was determined against the king (vv. 7-14). Similarly, in 1 Kgs 20:35-43, one of the sons of the prophets uttered a *mashal* to King Ahab and the latter pronounced a judgment against himself before he heard the *peshar*. In Ezek 17:2-10, the prophet was asked to relate a parable to the house of Israel, and in vv. 11-21, he was then asked to interpret the parable to the people. In other words, the prophet issued both the *mashal* and the *peshar*.

In Dan 2 (or in the whole of Daniel), the procedure is somewhat different. Nebuchadnezzar had the *mashal* but Daniel provided the *peshar*. It seems that a divine strategy was employed to put the dream in Nebuchadnezzar's heart and the interpretation in the mouth of Daniel. On the other hand, whenever the divine message was too cryptic for the ancient prophets, an angel of God or God himself could help with the *peshar*, for example, Daniel, Zechariah, Amos, among others. Otherwise, prophets interpreted their own *meshalim* in the OT. In the case of the book of Daniel, Koch asserts that, "In this book the prophetic word always is taken as a riddle, the solution of which is given by the angel to Daniel and by Daniel to his readers."[32] Thus, three different processes are observable – first, the person with the *mashal* also supplies the *peshar* (this process seems to be prevalent in the biblical tradition); second, one has the *mashal* and another supplies the

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[30] Jeremy Schipper, *Parables and Conflict in the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2-5, 22. Cited 24 June 2014. Online: http://dx.doi.org/10 .1017/CBO9780511576836). Based on the understanding that the *mashal* should not be reckoned in terms of genre but function, scholars began to categorise the different forms as story-*meshalim*, song-*meshalim*, proverbial *meshalim*, fable-*meshalim*, taunt-*meshalim*, and so forth; cf. Schipper, *Parables*, 2, 43.

[31] Schipper, *Parables*, 46.

[32] Koch, "Is Daniel?" 125.

peshar, and third, the one with the *mashal* is helped by an angel (or God) with the *peshar*.

It should be noted however that the use of the *mashal* in communicating a message was not limited to the ancient prophets. Not all *meshalim* in the OT are messages from God. Individuals often made use of parables rhetorically to justify their utterances. For example, in situations of conflict, the *mashal* was employed as a parabolic curse (Judg 9:7-20), as a petition (2 Sam 14) or as a taunt (2 Kgs 14:8-15 // 2 Chron 25:18-24), among other things.[33] In 2 Sam 14:1-20, the wise woman of Tekoa presented to King David a situation that was not immediately recognised as a *mashal* and urged David to make a judgement based on that hypothetical case, like Nathan did. She used this wise strategy couched in flattery and subtleness to pass her message across in what was undoubtedly a difficult situation. Although its message did not originate from the divine but from Joab, the story of the Wise Woman of Tekoa showed that like the ancient prophets the wise also used riddles and parables to transmit their messages.[34]

But perhaps besides showing that the Wise employed *meshalim,* what is equally instructive about the *mashal* pronounced by the Wise Woman of Tekoa, is that it also shows that the use of *meshalim* was not an exclusive preserve of males in ancient Israel. Women also had the ability and the liberty to employ *meshalim*. And apparently some of those "hard questions" that the Queen of Sheba asked King Solomon (1 Kgs 10:1 // 2 Chr 9:1) were framed as enigmas or riddles (תדויה), which represent a type of *meshalim*![35] It is interesting also that this incident took place in the context of wisdom. Women in the OT also made use of proverbs (a form of *meshalim*), as the example of King Lemuel's mother points out (Prov 31:1).

D   DANIEL – MORE THAN A PROPHET?

We have noted one of Koch's claims that Daniel was more than a prophet because he was an outstanding seer who foresaw the mysteries of the end of the age. The question is, if indeed Daniel was more than a prophet, was it just because he stood out among the wise men of Babylon and had revelations of

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[33]   Schipper, *Parables*, 23-40, 57-73, 100.

[34]   Sider comments on ". . . Nathan's Ewe Lamb (2 Sam 12:1-14), Joab's delegated Story of the Two brothers (2 Sam 14:1-21), and a Prophet's tale of the Escaped prisoner (1 Kgs 20:35-43). Each of these replicates in analogy the misdoings of a king – indirectly to forestall his wrath. Each fiction is presented as a fact to the king. . ." See Sider, *Interpreting the Parables*, 206-207. We should note in addition, that ordinary folks or non-professionals also made use of *meshalim* and they received messages in dreams as well, as the examples of Jotham (Judg 9:7-15) and the dream of the Midianite in the Gideon narrative (Judg 7:13-15) show.

[35]   Compare the Queen of Sheba's hard questions to the riddle posed by Samson to his friends in Judg 14:12-18.

the end of times as Koch argues? This question will be considered in what follows.

One of the arguments used to exclude Daniel from the prophets is that Daniel did not make use of prophetic formulas such as "Thus says the Lord." Koch argues that Daniel did not present his revelations as God's utterance but omitted "the normal prophetic identification of the prophet's message with the Word of God himself." The reason for this according to Koch is that, "We do need to take into account. . . that in the last pre-Christian centuries the immediate identity of God's words with human utterances had come under suspicion." Therefore, such prophetic formulas as, "Thus saith the Lord" were no longer in vogue. He mentions the example of Jesus who though was called a prophet abstained from using such formulas.[36]

However, a closer look at 2 Sam 12 shows that in revealing the meaning of his *mashal*, Nathan confronted David in v. 7 and declared, "You are the man!" This indictment finds a parallel in Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in which he declared to the king, "You are this head of gold" (Dan 2:38). Similarly, in recounting the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream, Daniel says of the great tree, "It is you, O king. . ." (Dan 4:22). With the allusion to Nathan's statement, Daniel appeared to be drawing from the prophetic tradition to which he presumably belonged even though he did not use the common traditional formula, "Thus says the Lord." But he employed metaphors perhaps to soften the effect of the message on the king as he seemed to subtly declare: "You are a glorious king, representing a glorious kingdom. And even though this image would be destroyed, it would not begin with this head of gold." On Nathan's use of the *mashal* in 2 Sam 12, Westermann explains that ". . . the parable has a veiling function because of the difference in power between the king and the prophet."[37] Apparently, the narrator of Daniel 2 adopted a similar approach by using the *mashal* to veil the message to King Nebuchadnezzar. The parabolic message as well as the interpretation served as a decoy that would hinder a king known for his anger (2:12; 3:13, 19) from unleashing his wrath on Daniel who represented all the wise men of Babylon, and whose interpretation of the dream would eventually serve as the tool for their collective salvation.

It seems to me also that Daniel abstained from the common prophetic formula because he was restricted by his social location. That the narratives in the book of Daniel had their setting in a Diasporan context is not in doubt. The message of the book was also meant to address Diasporan Jews.[38] While the

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[36]   Koch, "Is Daniel?" 126.
[37]   Westermann, *Parables of Jesus*, 26.
[38]   Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King, Ancient Jewish Court Legends* (HDR; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Pace, *Daniel*, 6; Willis, *Dissonance*, 21.

main consensus in scholarship is that the literary setting was probably the sixth century B.C.E. Babylon, its authorship is ascribed to the Persian period and the final redaction to the second century B.C.E. in the Hellenistic period.[39] According to Willis, "This social location creates the potential for social and political tensions. . . The scribal communities in the third and second centuries find themselves socially elevated but politically subordinated (2:46-49). . ."[40] Presumably, the Israelite prophets must have encountered similar tensions during that period. Although there were other prophets who prophesied while in exile such as Deutero-Isaiah or Jonah, their message was generally directed at the exilic community. But Daniel operated from the royal court and his messages to the king especially in chs. 1-6 must have been shaped by his location.

In Dan 2 which is our representative text in this article, Daniel was addressing a foreign king in a Diasporan royal court setting and not an Israelite king in his home country. Therefore he had to tap into the wisdom resources available to him in that setting.[41] Daniel employed the language of wisdom, that is, diplomacy, to address Nebuchadnezzar as he deliberately underplayed the prophetic character of his message by repeatedly taking recourse to wisdom which he attributed to God (Dan 2:20-23, 30). It should be recalled that Daniel along with his three friends had exhibited evidence of natural wisdom (Dan 1:4) before undergoing further training in the school of wisdom for three years (Dan 1:5, 17). Subsequently, both the queen-mother and King Belshazzar also referred to Daniel as wise (5:11, 14). His wisdom became so legendary that in Ezek 28:3, the King of Tyrus is mocked with the question: "Are you wiser than Daniel?" Collins reiterates the view that, "It is generally agreed that Daniel and his companions represent 'wisdom circles' – they are said to have 'knowledge and understanding in all literature and wisdom' (1:17)."[42] Daniel's acknowledgement of the role of wisdom in his interpretation therefore enabled him not only to identify with the wise men of Babylon (cf. 1:20; 2:2) but to play safe in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar.

We have seen that it is not unusual for one person to utter the *mashal* and another, the *peshar*, as the stories of Joseph's dream interpretation (Gen 40; 41) and of Gideon in Judg 6:13-15 show. The writer of Dan 2 imaginatively

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[39]   Collins, "Daniel," 29; for more on the complex issues regarding the dating of Daniel, consult Miller, *Daniel*, 24-43; Pace, *Daniel*, 3-4, 8; Seow, *Daniel*, 12; Willis, *Dissonance*, 21-22.
[40]   Willis, *Dissonance*, 20-21.
[41]   In 14:7, 19 of the Greek version of Daniel, Daniel contrarily mocked the king who claimed that Bel was a god. But this study relies on the MT.
[42]   Collins, *Daniel*, 49. The wisdom the young men exhibited is however regarded as different from the wisdom of the Jerusalem circle represented by Ben Sira, in that it was mantic in character because of the emphasis on dreams and mysteries. See Collins, "Daniel," 33, 35.

created a situation in which the king received a cryptic message that he could not interpret. The image in the dream was striking enough but its meaning eluded the king. Clearly, divine strategy was employed to give a *mashal* to Nebuchadnezzar in his vision of the night, and Daniel had to draw from the rich repertoire of both the prophetic and wisdom traditions to deliver the *peshar*. But unlike the Israelite prophets before their king, Daniel (or any other foreigner for that matter) had no liberty to appear at will before the Babylonian king. Therefore for Nebuchadnezzar to receive a message from God, he had to dream his own dream. However, the examples of both Nathan and the Wise Woman of Tekoa also show that prophets as well as wisdom practitioners (whether male or female) were at liberty to employ the *mashal* and the *peshar*. Although these two elements are present in Dan 2, the process whereby both are issued by the same messenger was altered to accommodate the complexities associated with the social context thereby causing wisdom to intersect with prophecy. Remarkably, by demanding of the wise men to provide him the dream and the interpretation, King Nebuchadnezzar was in essence subscribing to the more frequent format in which the person who had the *mashal* also supplied its *peshar*. And to his credit, Daniel was able to look beyond imagination as he connected with the divine. His God then demonstrated his sovereignty by supplying Daniel with both the dream and the interpretation.

E   CONCLUSION

Koch has argued that Daniel is more than a prophet because he is "a man greatly beloved" (Dan 10:11, 19), and that he is in fact not a prophet.[43] However, I would say that Daniel is more than a prophet not just because he was greatly beloved, as that could suggest that God did not love the prophets, but because he was able to combine wisdom with prophecy in a setting that did not guarantee liberty to Israelite prophets or allow them to freely ply their trade. Some scholars have rightly identified Dan 2 as a piece of Wisdom writing.[44] But the prophetic elements and imagery in the chapter are also unmistakable. Daniel's employment of the *mashal* and *peshar* in ch. 2 in a manner that is characteristic not only of OT prophets but also of the wise helps us to see that in him both the prophet and the sage converge.

Although Daniel as a whole combines wisdom, prophetism and apocalyptism, the elements of the first two are more pronounced in ch. 2 while apocalypticism is also registered in the cryptic message symbolized by the image. Thus, in the sense that Daniel was able to navigate between these three genres, he can also be seen as more than a prophet. Daniel's ability to receive a message from God was rooted in prophecy but his interpretive abilities and style of delivering his message are grounded not only in prophecy but also

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[43]   Koch, "Is Daniel?" 125.
[44]   André LaCocque, *The Book of Daniel* (trans. D. Pellauer; London: SPCK, 1979), 37.

more pointedly in wisdom. It appears that because of the precarious setting in which prophets found themselves at the time of Daniel it became a necessity for prophecy to take up the face of wisdom. In other words, prophecy just got wiser! And Daniel became not just "more than a prophet" or "more than a wise man" but he became both – a prophet and a wise man. In this sense, then, the uniqueness of the book of Daniel is upheld, as the interpretation helps us to understand the prophetic and wisdom character of the book besides its apocalyptic components.

In the present age of growing secularism in which many governments do not take kindly to religion and in which prophecy has no place or bearing, wisdom can be envisioned as a complementary or supplementary tool to achieve the purpose of the divine and to demonstrate that God remains sovereign over history as this reading of Dan 2 has demonstrated!

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