

CONSTRUCTING A LIVING DEITY – FRAMING THE GOD OF ISRAEL IN THE STORIES OF *DANIEL* AND *BEL AND THE DRAGON*

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ABSTRACT

This article is the concluding part in a series of articles on “Bel and the dragon”. These articles are an investigation into the Greek editor’s/author’s use of body, space, narrative and genre in creating a new reality regarding the Jewish deity. A spatial analysis is used. It suggests that the episodes of “Bel and the dragon”, as well as each of the chapters of Greek Daniel, should be read in a reciprocal relationship with each other. First, such an analysis indicates that the smaller episodes and chapters are part of a larger clash of deities. Second, it shows that the editor/author utilises the different events in the chapters of Greek Daniel to create a new worldview. In this new worldview the God of Israel is an almighty deity while other deities that are revered are false, and not real, living gods. In his own way the editor/author contributes to the way in which Jews regarded their God within the reality of the diaspora.

GREEK DANIEL AS NARRATIVE¹

Greek Daniel was written in order to construct a new reality. The 14 chapters of *Greek Daniel* were written and strategically placed to form one integrated narrative. Thus, *Greek Daniel*’s chapters were edited into a reciprocal relationship to each other. This means that the different chapters not only build on each other, but also influence each other’s meaning. The larger narrative of *Greek Daniel* was designed in such a way that it created a new reality. Within this new reality the God of Israel is portrayed to be all-powerful: a true living God acting outside the worldviews of people.

To construct his narrative, and thus a new reality, the editor/author used different

¹ In this article *Daniel* in italics is used to indicate the *Book of Daniel*. Daniel in normal script refers to the character. In coherence *Bel and the dragon* indicates the narrative while Bel or dragon in normal script is used in reference to the Babylonian deity βηλ, or a mythological animal.

linguistic building blocks linked to the psyche of the ancient people of his time. These building blocks consist of bodily and spatial concepts related to the way in which the ancient people experienced the world around them.

During the Second Temple period, Jews had to rethink their worldview and concept of God. They had to rethink their identity as Jews outside the land of Israel. As a narrative *Greek Daniel* wanted to contribute to this rethinking process. The *Book of Daniel* must therefore not be read as a story about Daniel and his friends, but as a story about how a degraded deity became an all-powerful, omniscient living God. Where *Hebrew Daniel* has 12 chapters, *Greek Daniel* has 14. *Greek Daniel* includes the stories of the *Prayer of the three young men in the fiery furnace* (in Dan 3); the *Story of Susanna* (Dan 13) and *Bel and the dragon* (Dan 14).²

TERMINOLOGY

To help the reader comprehend this article, some important terminology is briefly explained here:

- Editor/author: the person, persons or school responsible for the creation of *Greek Daniel*. Due to the complex origin of *Greek Daniel*, it is possible that different narrators, authors and editors worked on the text.
- Framing: to construct realities within the minds of people. Also *to frame* a reality. This *framed* or constructed reality can be described as a *framework* or *frameset* (Ritchie 2013:1–24).
- Creative properties of language: a language's ability to create realities.
- Worldview: the way in which people experience and understand the world around them. Also called cosmology or frameset.

² There are two Greek versions of Daniel. The oldest version (dating from ca 100 B.C.E.) is that of the Septuagint (LXX) and is often called the Old Greek (OG) version. The second version is the Theodotion (Th) version. Th is considered to be the younger (dating from the second century C.E.) and more elaborate version of the two. Both these versions consist of 42 verses. McLay (2003) points out the complex origins of the LXX and Th. However, within the parameters of *Redaktionsgeschichte*, this article concerns itself with the form of *Bel and the dragon* in the OG. Therefore, the terms LXX and OG are used as synonyms in this article.

- God-spaces: places or entities that functions as an extension of a deity's territory.
- Narratives: structural units demarcated by spatial markers. Stories to influence people's worldview.

PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE

This article is the concluding article in a series of five on *Bel and the dragon*. Its purpose is thus to summarise and to conclude the research of the previous four articles.³ The present article also builds more elaborately on the idea of how *Bel and the dragon* forms an editorial unit with the rest of *Greek Daniel*.

The first article in the series is titled “Constructing realities – *Bel and the dragon* – Identifying some research lacunae”.⁴ The second article focuses on the first episode of *Bel and the dragon* (verses 1–22) and is titled “Constructing a deceitful deity – The disempowerment of Bel”.⁵ In the third article, the second episode (verses 23–27) of *Bel and the dragon* is investigated. It is titled “Daniel dragonslayer”.⁶ The third episode of *Bel and the dragon* (verses 28–42) is investigated in the fourth article of the series with the title “Dining in the lions’ den”.⁷

In each of the previous four articles past research on *Bel and the Dragon* was analysed in detail to identify possible research gaps. In this article only an overview of research gaps and a potential new textual reading model is given. The theory and method used to set up this new reading model is summarised under heading 5 below.

³ Since this is a concluding article, reading the previous four articles of the series before this article is recommended. The seemingly overarching theory used in this article is applied in much more detail in the previous articles. In the previous articles much attention is given to *Greek Daniel*'s individual texts, especially the different episodes in *Bel and the dragon*. Furthermore, this article is part of a master's dissertation done under the supervision of Prof. Pierre Jordaan of the North-West University.

⁴ (De Bruyn & Jordaan 2014:839–859).

⁵ De Bruyn (2014b:382–403).

⁶ De Bruyn (2015a:1–8).

⁷ De Bruyn (2015b:1–9).

PAST RESEARCH, NEW POSSIBILITIES

Scholars tend to focus on *Bel and the dragon* as a complete but loose standing narrative. Thus, neither the individual episodes of the narrative nor its editorial function as *Daniel* 14 in the *Greek Daniel*, are considered. Usually commentaries concentrate on aspects such as the polemic use of the narrative against idolatry (Jones 2003:24–26; deSilva 2002:239);⁸ the relationship between *Daniel* 1–6 and *Bel and the dragon* (Collins 1993:405–419); the place and date of origin (Charles 2004:656; Gruen 1998:168–170)⁹ and intertextual relations.¹⁰ Some scholars highlight different motifs in the narrative such as humour and irony (Smith-Christopher 1996:17–152) or the motif of food (Bergmann 2004:262–283). Usually, commentaries tend to focus on Daniel as the main character of the story.¹¹

Since the narratives of *Greek Daniel* have come into being by using language, one would assume that it would be prudent to keep up with new developments in the studying and understanding of language. However, very few scholars, if any, attempt to incorporate insights from new developments in the field of linguistics in their research on *Bel and the dragon*, or the rest of *Greek Daniel*. It is, inter alia, this lack of incorporating new insights from the field of linguistics that needs to be addressed to enhance our understanding of *Bel and the dragon* as well as *Greek Daniel*.

Due to the works of different scholars,¹² new themes such as *body*, *space*,

⁸ Nickelsburg (2005:24–26) emphasises the underlying theme: “Who is the living God?” Investigation into how spatial and bodily elements are utilised by the editor/author to construct the narratives of *Greek Daniel* indicates that the underlying question *Who is the living God?*, is used as part of the plot to construct a new reality (a new frame).

⁹ Much research was done on the original language of *Bel and the Dragon* (Charles 2004:655) as well as the similarities and dissimilarities between the different Greek versions of Daniel, namely the Old Greek (OG) and Theodotion (Th) versions (Jones 2003:139–140). Research was also done on the origin and history of these different versions (Van der Bergh 2009:310–323; Di Lella 2001:586–60; Collins 1993:237–256).

¹⁰ Some scholars investigate the possible relationship between *Bel and the Dragon* and Isaiah 44–46 and Jeremiah 51 (Nickelsburg 2005:24–26; deSilva 2002:240) as well as the possible connection between the slaying of the dragon (δράκων) and texts such as Psalm 74:12–15, Isaiah 27:1, Acts 28:3–6 and Revelations 12–13 (Ogden 2013:2–4, 384–417).

¹¹ Collins (1993:335–345) investigates the tolerance of the king towards Daniel while Jordaan (2008:45–53) postulates that the author or the Jewish deity uses Daniel as a weapon of attack and defence against foreign powers.

¹² The details of these scholars’ work are given as the article progresses.

narrative and *metaphor* structures emerged in language studies. With these new themes it was recognised that language not only has the ability to reflect realities, but also to create realities (Jordaan & Nolte 2010:527–529; Evans & Green 2006:179, 190–243). It was also realised that there is a link between the human psyche (mind) and the use of language (Evans, Bergen & Zinken 2007:3; Croft & Cruse 2004:7). Not only is language embodied in the minds of people, but the use of words can also influence the way people think (Lakoff 2008:93–110; Ritchie 2013:1–14).

There is scant research on space and body in *Daniel*. Nel (2014:1–7) and Venter (2004:607–624; 2006:993–1004) wrote on space in *Daniel* 1 and 9, but not on space in *Bel and the dragon*. Van der Bergh (2009:310–232) on the other hand investigated the differences in location in the story of *Bel and the dragon*. Yet, these scholars did not consider combining space with the creative properties of language, and thus the possibility that the editor/author utilised space as a device to *create realities*, was never explored, nor was consideration given to the function of space in the *Daniel* narratives. This article tries to fill some of these research lacunae in several ways, viz.:

- Features of narrative critique are combined with the creative properties of language. No commentary, as far as could be established, has considered this possibility before.
- Space and body are viewed as indicators exploited by the editor/author to create specific realities. A body-space frameset is used to analyse *Greek Daniel*.
- The entire *Greek Daniel* is read as a mechanism to create a new identity of the Living God and Jewish devotees within the reality of the Diaspora.
- The 14 chapters of *Greek Daniel* as well as the three episodes of *Bel and the dragon* are read within a reciprocal relationship with each other.

THEORY AND METHOD

Bel and the dragon is analysed on the basis that the author utilises different spatial and bodily elements not only to construct his narrative, but also to give it meaning. In this regard it is important to understand that spaces are used as part of a narrative

technique to influence the plot or to stimulate the agenda of a narrative (Gärtner-Brereton 2008:36–49). Therefore, an investigation of an author’s use of space and body must go further than merely identifying different locations or characters within a narrative. The utilisation of body and space must be investigated within the parameters of narrative critique, because how an author utilises these spatial and bodily elements influence the outcome of the narrative. In the *Book of Daniel* spatial and bodily elements are utilised in different motifs to ultimately frame the God of Israel as a living deity. Thus, although this article, as well as the rest of the series, may seem to follow a *narrative analysis pattern*, the difference is that the *body-space framework* used to investigate the *Greek Daniel* texts explores how the editor/author utilises bodily and spatial aspects to specifically create a new reality and new identity for the God of Israel.

Under the heading “Framing God: Utilising different motifs” (below), the method and theory will be explained more elaborately as they are applied to *Greek Daniel*. For now, only the theory of the on-going process of creating worldviews, realities and narratives (Figure 1) is explained.

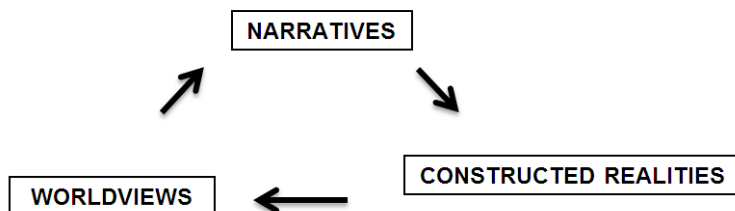


FIGURE 1: The on-going process of creating worldviews, realities and narratives.

All words are the consequence of a need to communicate. Words transport concepts and are the fruit of the human mind. Correspondingly, words are the building blocks of language. In the process of communication words have the ability to reflect not only realities, but also to create them. For different people, different realities exist, but whether it is the reality of school, work or even a public holiday, all these different realities are structured as narratives. School is regulated by laws and syllabi; work is guided by rules and ethics; public holidays are marked by structured time periods and

historical events. All these laws, syllabi, rules, ethics and time periods are constructed by language, as well as forming specific narratives for particular situations.¹³ These structured narratives help humans to make sense of the world and to create cultured civilisations. This is true of all civilisations throughout history. Yet, each human culture (modern or ancient) experiences the world differently. Hence, each community may structure their society differently. Accordingly, all civilisations have their own narratives which they employ to create their own worldviews. It is important to understand that in each culture there is a link between their narratives, worldviews and the creative properties of the language they use to communicate (Figure 1).

The same conclusion can be reached from another angle. It is true that all of life can be explained as narrative (Lakoff 2008:21–93). All narratives have power. Some narratives are used to reflect or explain realities. Others, such as laws, are used to create realities by which societies are regulated. Still, narratives also have the ability to hide incompatible “truths”. Narratives are structured in the brain and, when they are communicated, language is used to construct them. The building blocks for these narratives are words. Thus, words have the ability to create frameworks in peoples’ minds through the narratives they structure. Throughout history people’s worldviews were and are real: it was and is the way the world functions. What people believe, they experience as real. Truth is thus something that people believe to be real, but truth can also be created or framed by constructing powerful narratives. It is this link between narratives, constructed realities, and worldviews that is used by crafty politicians and newspapers to influence the way people think. Narratives, for example those about the possible existence of weapons of mass destruction, might be created and used by one country to legitimise the invasion of a foreign country. At the same time they may hide the truth about the invader’s desire to secure oil supplies from the invaded

¹³ Here ethics is regarded as narratives framing people to behave in a specific way to better the workplace and ultimately to enhance work quality. School syllabi, for their part, are nothing other than narratives deemed necessary by a specific society to frame its young people into good citizens. In the same way public holidays are framed and conducted by historic events. Public holidays are even sometimes used to recreate historic realities. For example, on July 4, many Americans will dress up and re-enact their War of Independence, while during the Christmas holidays the nativity story recreates the birth of Christ for many Christians.

country. These narratives may be from the modern era, but the technique to influence people by telling stories surely goes back to the beginning of civilisation. It is the same technique used to frame Mark Antony as a non-Roman in his struggle with Octavian.¹⁴ It is also the same technique the editor/author of the *Book of Daniel* used to influence the worldviews of the people of his day. Combining this technique with aspects of *Redaktionsgeschichte* (Becker 2005:8–9, 77), this article is based on the theory that the editor/author shaped his book in such a way that he creates a new reality in which the God of Israel is framed as a living deity.¹⁵ With this new reality of his, the editor/author challenged the popular worldviews of the gentile world.

FRAMING GOD: UTILISING DIFFERENT MOTIFS

Different motifs emerge when a body-space framework is used to analyse *Greek Daniel*.

Opposing worldviews

Greek Daniel reflects a clash of worldviews. It is thus not only a polemic story against idolatry. In essence *Greek Daniel* represents a clash of deities (a deity war) (De Bruyn 2014a:1–6; De Bruyn & Jordaan 2014:839–859). The opposing worldviews and deities are that of the editor/author and of the gentile world of the Second Temple period.¹⁶ This is based on the following assessment:

¹⁴ In the HBO series *Rome* (2007), season 2, episodes 9–10, the news reader narrates that Mark Anthony, inter alia, paints his face and prays to dogs and cats. This is done to bring Mark Antony into discredit with the Roman plebeians and to legitimise Octavian's war against him.

¹⁵ The theory of *Redaktionsgeschichte* is the main reason why it is stated in the introduction that each of *Greek Daniel*'s chapters, as well as the three episodes of *Bel and the dragon*, were strategically placed not only in a specific order, but also in a reciprocal relationship with each other.

¹⁶ *Hebrew Daniel* was written and compiled in the time of Jewish persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Murphy 2002:16–136, 52). *Greek Daniel*, in the form of the Theodotion (Th) version, is usually assumed to be written around 100 B.C.E. The editor/author refers to possible older traditions and narrates the Daniel stories within his own reality where the faithful are persecuted and where the authority of the God of Israel and the reality of his presence are challenged daily by the Seleucid king.

Lakoff's (2008:21–93) assessment of narratives (discussed above) can be combined with that of the French philosopher Michael Foucault. For both scholars narratives are vital for the understanding of societies. Additionally, for both Lakoff and Foucault the body is an important element in the construction of narratives (discussed below). Yet, it is important to comprehend the link (Figure 1) between narrative and worldviews as well as the creative properties of language and narratives.

As a narrative, *Greek Daniel* fits into the process of creating realities (cf. Figure 1). The power struggle between Jew and Gentile in the Second Temple period is narrated in *Greek Daniel* as two opposing narratives, or two opposing worldviews (De Bruyn 2015a:1–8; 2015b:1–9; 2014b:382–403). We can go even further; the larger narrative of *Greek Daniel* is a power struggle between different realities. This means that the two opposing narratives are interrelated/interwoven. Foucault (1984a:202; 1980:109–133; 1979:113) uses the concepts “dominant narrative” and “challenging narrative” to describe the struggle between narratives. This concurs with *Daniel*'s apocalyptic nature and will be explained later.

In the First and Second Temple periods the ancient people thought that specific regions, cities or territories were under the protection of specific gods. Therefore, in everyday life, but more so in wartime, people called upon their gods for protection. It was believed that the people with the strongest gods would win wars. When a war was lost, it was believed that the gods were not strong enough to protect their people. It was believed that the territories of the people (and their gods) who lost the war became subjected to the gods of the nation who won the war (cf. Walton 2006:97–102; Murphy 2002:159).

The religion of the kingdoms of Judah and northern Israel reflects this ancient worldview. As a nation, Israel was viewed as the sacred property of their god (Exod 19:5–6; Deut 14:2). In Israel the presence of their god was manifested in different ways. Mount Zion was experienced as the throne of their god while Jerusalem was viewed as his holy city (Psalm 48). The temple in Jerusalem was revered as the house of the Israelite god and the centre of creation (Psalm 29). The Davidic king himself was regarded as an earthly extension of the deity's heavenly god-space (Psalms 2, 45

and 110; De Bruyn 2012:456–470). The Arameans assumed that the authority of the god of Israel was confined to the mountains and not the plains (1 Kings 20:23), and later the Assyrian king told Hezekiah not to trust in YHWH for He could not protect his city of Samaria (Isa 36). After the Babylonian exile many Jews in the Diaspora believed or at least feared the possibility that the God of Israel did not have the power to operate in lands outside of Israel (Ps 137; Isa 40; Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:515–516).

Against the worldview of that time, the non-Jewish world believed that after Jerusalem, the city of Israel's god, was invaded and his temple defiled, He appeared to be a defeated and degraded deity with no power and authority. In the minds of the people the God of Israel had lost the control of his territories to the gods of first the Babylonians, then the Medes and Persians and then the Greeks. According to this reality, the God of Israel did not appear to be able to act inside the territories of the victorious deities, much less to defeat them. Therefore, in *Greek Daniel* the Gentiles proclaimed their gods as “living gods” with the power over life and death. In chapter 1 Marduk is presented as the only provider of nourishment while his king is depicted as the tree of life (Dan 4). In chapter 3:15, Nebuchadnezzar proclaims that no other god could rescue Daniel's friends from the fiery furnace. In chapter 6 prayers may not be said to any god except the king. Based on the belief that deities eat a lot, the king in *Bel and the dragon* first proclaims βηλ (Bel) and then a δράκων (dragon) as living gods (De Bruyn 2015a:1–8; 2015b:1–9; 2014a:1–6; 2014b:382–403).

However, the editor/author sets up his own reality to challenge this “gentile” reality. By carefully employing the different events in *Greek Daniel* and by utilising bodily and spatial concepts, the author creates the omnipresence of Israel's God by showing his capability to operate inside the territories of other deities. In the worldview of the editor/author only the God of Israel is a living God. All other deities are false. Each chapter of *Greek Daniel* uniquely narrates this clash between these worldviews.

Genre

The *Book of Daniel* is known by its apocalyptic genre. The genre itself is part of a Hellenistic *Zeitgeist* and became popular with Jewish writers in the time of forced Hellenization under the heirs of Alexander the Great (Clifford 2003:15; Murphy 2002:126–136; Collins 2000:157; Redditt 1999:13). This genre reflects a unique worldview some of whose prominent features are reflected in *Greek Daniel*. They are the dualistic distinction between a physical world and a spirit world; an eschatological deity war between good and evil; and life after death (Clifford 2003:15; Murphy 2002:126–136; Collins 2000:157).

The apocalyptic worldview of *Greek Daniel* is a narrative that conveys a message to the Jewish faithful with regard to the identity of their God. Integrated into the narrative of *Greek Daniel*, the editor/author utilises apocalypticism to create the reality that God is not only in Jerusalem, but that He is everywhere, He is working within the profane world, and no other deity can stop Him. God is all-powerful and omnipresent.

Within the narrative framework of apocalypticism the editor/author comments on the historical events of the persecution and forced Hellenization of the Jewish faithful of his 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 should 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) all evil will be vanquished (cf. Dan 10:14 to the end of Dan 12). In *Greek Daniel* the cosmic struggle between good and evil begins when the holy city of the God of Israel, Jerusalem, and his temple are invaded by the forces of Babylon (Dan 1). Throughout the rest of *Greek Daniel* this cosmic struggle escalates until the God of Israel is finally victorious and Bel (Marduk) and his sacred dragon are destroyed (Dan 14).

In the story of *Greek Daniel* the cosmic struggle between God and the forces of evil is 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. In every chapter Daniel therefore engages those who would persecute him and his friends in a struggle that is based upon their respective realities. In the process Daniel uncovers the falseness and incompetence of the foreign gods and the deceit of their priests until, finally, he slays the revered dragon of the Babylonians. As a consequence Daniel and his friends are persecuted, sentenced to death and accordingly once, cast into a fiery furnace and twice thrown into a lion's den. On all of these occasions the God of Israel is challenged to save his loyal servants and earthly vessels. After each challenge the God of Israel is victorious by winning the contest and revealing that only He has power over life and death. Chapter by chapter the challenges to the sovereignty of the God of Israel become more intense until finally, in the narrative of *Bel and the dragon*, all challengers to the God of Israel are vanquished. In *Bel and the dragon* Daniel slays the priests of Bel, demolishes his temple and kills the divine dragon (De Bruyn 2014b:382–403; 2015a:1–8). At the end of *Greek Daniel* the God of Israel is shown to be the only real living deity. All evil is overcome.

This cosmic struggle will now be explained more fully in terms of bodies and spaces.

Bodies

The human body plays a vital role in constructing narratives. First of all the human body is used as a referential tool to construct narratives. This means that worldviews and opinions are formed as and when humans experience the world around them. To experience and to interact with the world, humans use their bodies. It is during this interaction with the world that humans construct narratives in their minds, i.e., in their bodies, to frame what they believe about themselves and the world around them. As a reference tool, the body can thus be used in various ways (Lakoff 2008:27; Lakoff & Johnson 1999:555–557), viz.:

- 1) for interaction with and experience of the world;
- 2) for conceptualisation and forming of worldviews (cosmologies) and opinions;
- 3) for the construction of spaces, frameworks and concepts, which in turn are

- communicated via the body in the form of words (written or spoken);
- 4) to function as a space or vessel in itself where specific concepts or experiences can be embodied (cf. 6.4 below);
 - 5) for comprehending world events in relation to what human bodies can or cannot do.

However, when it comes to narratives, the best known function of the body is probably that of a character within a narrative (Foucault 1984b:170–178). Thus, narratives and worldviews can be constructed within and around the body. In short, nothing can be comprehended without body. If there is no body there is no content; if there is no character there is no ideology.

The persecuted Jews for whom *Daniel* was written (Jack 2012:147; Murphy 2002:126–136, 152), experienced the world as oppressive, anti-Jewish, profane and ungodly. In writing his narrative, the editor/author takes his readers on a journey through history to meet different characters. He then utilises these characters in a plot to reconstruct his readers' worldview so that they may think differently about their persecutors and the deities of the world. As a narrative, *Greek Daniel* has protagonists and antagonists; those who are persecuted and those who persecute; heroes and villains; kings and servants; docile and emancipated bodies; as well as gods and men. For the readers these characters embody the heroes and villains of their own time. The oppressed Jewish faithful are thus personified in the character of Daniel and his friends, while the Hellenistic oppressors, such as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, are embodied in characters such as Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. In both *Daniel* 6 and 14, the kings Δαρείος (Darius) and Κῦρος ὁ Πέρσης (Cyrus the Persian, according to Th) are utilised as personifications of those people with doubts about the God of Israel (De Bruyn 2015b:1–9). Although they allow the persecution of Daniel, they do so unwillingly. Neither Darius nor Cyrus take the lead in persecuting Daniel; rather, they get tangled up in the plots against Daniel by their officials.

The opposing deities in *Greek Daniel* are, on the one hand, the God of Israel, and on the other, those of the Babylonian-Persian world. Although his presence is implied in *Daniel* 1–5, Marduk, the Babylonian high-god, is mentioned only in *Daniel* 14 by

the name Bel (Βελ).¹⁷ The Persian gods are never named. In *Bel and the dragon*, the priests of Bel, a deified dragon, and the prophet Habakkuk (Αμβακοθμ) are also introduced as characters.

More will be said about how these characters function below. For now it will suffice to say that despite their persecution Daniel and his friends endured. Time and again they experienced the might and care of the God of Israel. Despite all efforts to oppress Daniel and his friends, all those powers who opposed the God of Israel failed in their onslaught. Thus, as the reader meets these characters he/she becomes aware of the uniqueness of the God of Israel amongst the deities of the world. The reader is therefore not a mere bystander in the narrative of *Greek Daniel*. By personifying the reader's persecutions in the character of Daniel, and the reader's doubt in the characters of Cyrus and Darius, the reader becomes an "eyewitness" to the revelation of the "real" identity of the God of Israel. For the editor/author the reader is the object of his narrative. The editor/author utilises Daniel's experiences to frame the reader's mind towards a new understanding of the God of Israel.

Spaces and embodiments

The significance of spaces in a narrative is linked to the worldview behind a specific narrative (Gärtner-Brereton 2008:47–48). Therefore, different aspects of space and how it can be linked to the worldview of *Greek Daniel* will now be explored.

The importance of space

Space is the axis around which human thinking rotates (Haspelmath 1997:1). Space is also the basic structure within which the body functions. Humans construct spatial paradigms as they experience the world through their bodies. Humans use these spatial frameworks to categorise phenomena such as "below", "above", "inside", "outside" and "under" (De Bruyn 2014a:1–6). For example, by means of the experience of

¹⁷ Bel was another name for the Babylonian god Marduk (Abusch 1995:1014–1025). Since Marduk was the Babylonian high-god it is quite possible that the mentioning of Nebuchadnezzar's god in Dan 1:1–3 was a reference to Marduk. The same is possible concerning the construction of the golden statue in Dan 3.

sitting “under” the cover of a tree, or “in” its shade, different spaces can be identified. Words are then created to reflect or identify these different spaces as “under” the branches of the tree; “in” the shade of the tree; or “outside” the shelter of the tree. These types of spaces are usually more physically identifiable via the different senses of the body. Thus, they may be described as primary experienced spaces. Secondary spaces, on the other hand, are more abstract and bound to the cultural or religious frameworks of people. Private space, such as a homestead, is an example of secondary space. Other examples of secondary spaces are defined by words such as temple, church or synagogue. These specific spaces are experienced as holy or sacred spaces due to the religious paradigms of some people.

Combining space and body

Occasionally aspects of space and body overlap in what may be described as “embodied spaces”. These embodied spaces are the way (and sometimes place) in which (where) human experience and consciousness take spatial and material form in different locations and entities (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003:1). For example, throughout history, people believed that entities such as shrines, altars, a city, and even kings or priests, can embody deities and their spatial realms (Gärtner-Brereton 2008:53; Walton 2006:87–134). These sacred embodied spaces can be defined as “god-spaces”.

Spatial markers are indications of embodied spaces within a text. Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003:1–37) state six spatial markers: the human body as a vessel of the self; body-space, which centres around the human body; gendered spaces; inscribed spaces; contested spaces and trans-national spaces. Zlatev (2007:318–350) adds another seven markers, viz.: trajectory; landmark; frame of reference; region; path; direction; and motion.

In *Greek Daniel* many of the characters the reader encounters are also utilised as spatial embodiments. For example, Daniel is utilised as a vessel of the God of Israel whereas Habakkuk (Dan 14) embodies God’s care. In *Daniel* 3 Daniel’s friends are also utilised as markers of the God of Israel’s territory. Similarly, the angels are

utilised as an extension of the God of Israel's power and might (Dan 7–12, 14). Thus, Daniel and his friends, Habakkuk and the angels embody aspects of the God of Israel's god-space. Likewise, the forces of evil, the foreign deities, also have their embodiments. They are, for example, Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 1, 4), Belshazzar (Dan 5), Darius' evil ministers (Dan 6), Bel and his priests (Dan 14) and the divine dragon (Dan 14). This will be explained as the article continues.

Heaven and earth spaces

The narrative of *Greek Daniel* shows that what began as an invasion of the God of Israel's god-space (Dan 1) is turned around into the invasion and destruction of the Babylonian deities' god-space. *Greek Daniel* goes on to conclude with the killing of the Babylonian gods in *Daniel* 14. This can be based on analysing the following spatial scheme.

Two major spaces come to the fore in *Greek Daniel*, viz.: earth below and heaven above (Figure 2).

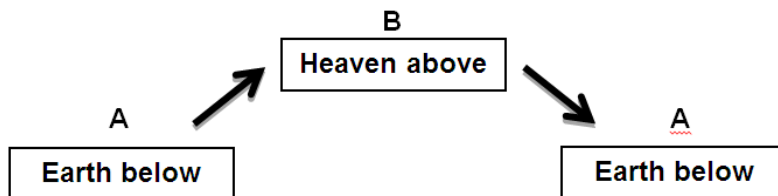


FIGURE 2: The movement of *space* in the narratives of Daniel

As *Greek Daniel* unfolds, the reader is taken from earth below (Dan 1–6) to the heavens above (Dan 7–12) and then back down to earth (Dan 13–14). This movement in space gives the book a pyramid structure which accentuates chapters 7–12 – the events in heaven. These events describe the cosmic struggle between the God of Israel and the forces of evil which embody themselves in earthly kingdoms, such as the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Seleucid empires. From a heavenly vantage point, Daniel is shown that God is in total control of everything that happens in heaven above and on earth below. The God of Israel is victorious in the struggle with evil (in the end, the ἔσχατος). In effect, The God of Israel's victory over evil is already

becoming a reality on earth (Dan 1–6 and 13–14).

Different god-spaces

In *Greek Daniel*, the God of Israel's god-space is indicated by markers such as Jerusalem, Judea, the temple on Mount Zion, the Judean king, and Daniel and his friends. The evil deities' god-space is marked by, inter alia, the city of Babylon, the province of Babylon, the temples of Marduk in *Daniel* 1 and 14, kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, the priests of Bel and the dragon (Dan 14).

Greek Daniel begins with the degradation of Israel's God. This is indicated by the destruction of the God of Israel's god-spaces (Dan 1:1–3). These god-spaces are the holy city of Jerusalem, the temple on Mount Zion, and the Judean king. Nebuchadnezzar invades these spaces and takes the God of Israel's king and temple treasures to Babylon. Here within the god-space of the Babylonian high-god Marduk, Israel's god is humiliated as his sacred treasure is placed within the temple of Nebuchadnezzar's god (probably Marduk). Furthermore, Daniel and his friends are inscribed with new names to mark them as the property of the Babylonian deities and to break their connection with the God of Israel (Dan 1). Thus, Israel's god loses all god-spaces. But then the narrative takes an interesting twist: the tables are turned and the Babylonian gods begin to lose their domain at the expense of the God of Israel. This becomes evident as the story progresses, for despite their new names, Daniel and his friends remain linked to their God as his spatial vessels. Not only does the God of Israel nourish his vessels (Dan 1 and 14), He rescues them from death (Dan 3, 6 and 14). Not only is it shown that the God of Israel can operate outside the land of Israel within the domains of other deities; these deities are shown powerless to stop Him. *Greek Daniel* begins with the destruction of the god-spaces of the God of Israel and ends with Daniel destroying Bel's temple, killing his priests and the Babylonian divine dragon (cf. Figure 3). In Daniel 1 the God of Israel loses control, but at the end of Daniel 14 He is not only in control of Marduk's domain, but He is shown to be in control of the whole cosmos as well as life and death (De Bruyn 2015b:1–9; De Bruyn & Jordaan 2014:839–859). In Daniel 1 the editor/author utilises Daniel and his friends

as a powerbase for the God of Israel within the god-space of Marduk. From this small powerbase, the God of Israel conquers first Nebuchadnezzar's palace (Dan 1), then the city and province of Babylon (Dan 3), then the Babylonian kings (Dan 4–5), and eventually the whole Babylonian empire (Dan 5). The God of Israel then gives the Babylonian empire to the Persians (Dan 5:25–27). Giving this territory to the Persians indicates that the Persian gods are not stronger than the God of Israel: a “fact” that is emphasised when Daniel is rescued by his God from the lion's den (Dan 6). Each of these smaller narratives starts out with the God of Israel having no real power base, but when the smaller narratives end, He has conquered an even larger part of the evil deities' god-spaces (cf. Figure 3). As early as Daniel 1 the reader is shown that the God of Israel can operate within the god-space of other deities (De Bruyn 2014a:1–6). As the narrative progresses the reader is framed to believe that the God of Israel not only has power to operate within, and to conquer other deities' god-space, but there is nothing that these deities can do to stop Him.

In *Daniel* 7–12, Daniel is taken up into the heavenly space where he is shown the cosmic battle between good and evil (Figure 2). As the reader travels with Daniel, he/she is shown that this cosmic struggle between the God of Israel and the evil forces has consequences for those who are faithful to the God of Israel – they will be persecuted. However, their persecution is not a consequence of the inability of the God of Israel to protect them, but rather a part of His heavenly strategy. The Jews can keep their faith, for in the end their God will be victorious.

In *Bel and the dragon*, Daniel and the reader are down on earth again. As stated elsewhere, the victories of the God of Israel in heaven have consequences on earth. The events that started in *Daniel* 1 now come full circle. The conquest of the God of Israel leads to the final destruction of Bel's (Marduk) god-space. His temple is destroyed and the priests of Bel are killed (Dan 14). The power of the God of Israel and his abilities are demonstrated even further in that his priestly vessel, Daniel, kills the deified dragon (De Bruyn 2015a:1–8). In these events the foreign gods are again proven powerless. Not only are they revealed as false gods, but they are demonstrated as incapable of having power over life and death. Not only can they not protect their

priests from being killed, but they cannot even avoid being killed themselves. In contrast to these false gods, the God of Israel is now revealed as almighty, wielding power over life and death – a real, living God. As with previous events, the God of Israel penetrates the god-spaces of foreign deities to nourish Daniel when he is yet again thrown into a lions' den (De Bruyn 2015b:1–9).

Greek Daniel's movement through different spatial territories emphasises the power and omnipresence of the God of Israel. The editor/author frames this movement in space with the temple of the God of Israel (Dan 1) and the temple of Bel (Dan 14). Both these temples are destroyed. The editor/author utilises these destroyed temples to demonstrate the difference between the God of Israel and other deities. Despite the destruction of his temple, the God of Israel can operate and conquer wherever he wants. Bel cannot. The destruction of Bel's temple demonstrates his powerlessness, whereas the destruction of the temple of the God of Israel, establishes his uniqueness. This can best be depicted by the following sketch (Figure 3).

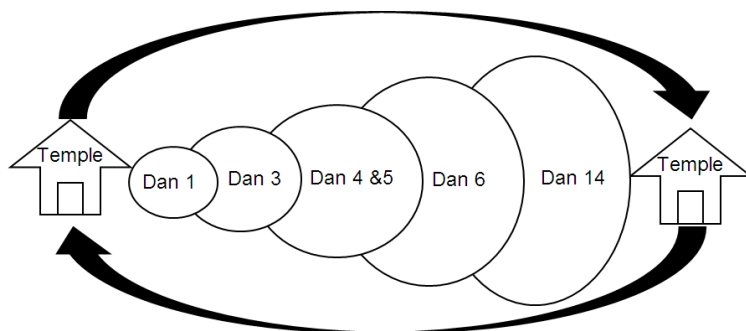


FIGURE 3: The movement in spatial territories to emphasise the ability of the God of Israel to act and conquer outside his own space.

As the God of Israel conquers new territories in each chapter, the editor/author uses his readers' psychological link to the ancient Near Eastern worldview to construct a new reality about the God of Israel and his identity, as well as about foreign deities. Viewed from a heavenly perspective, all earth as well as heaven is under the control of the God of Israel (Figure 4).

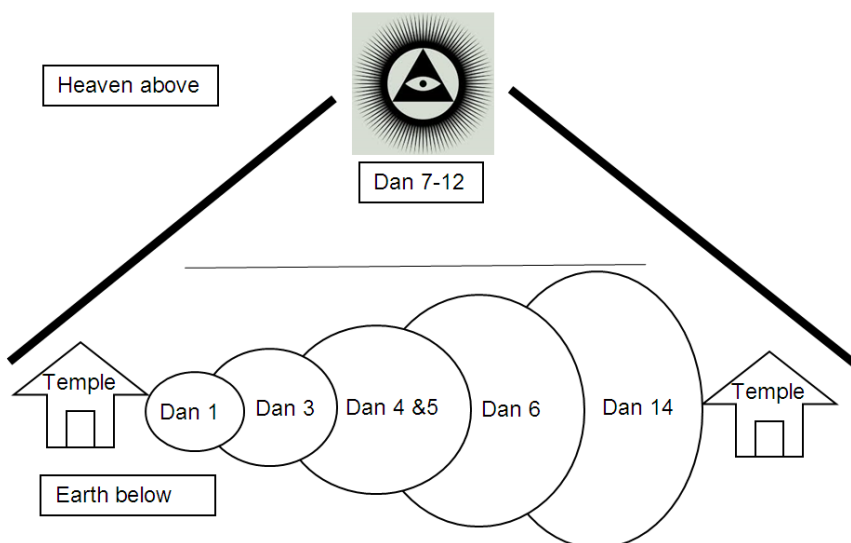


FIGURE 4: The pyramidal structure form by the spatial marker of Greek Daniel.

The editor/author also frames the omnipresence of the God of Israel by utilising Jerusalem and Judea as spatial markers in a circle-motif – *Daniel* 1 and 14 (Figure 5). Movement from the land of Israel in *Daniel* 1, through the spaces of the Babylonian and Persian Empires, through the space of heaven, comes to a full circle in *Daniel* 14 when the editor/author connects the lions’ den with Judea. Theodotion’s version of *Bel and the dragon* (Dan 14:33) reports that the prophet Habakkuk was taken by an angel from his place in Judea to Babylon. Judea was the homeland of the Jews. It was also part of the god-space of the God of Israel. According to popular worldviews, the Jewish deity was confined to the borders of Judea. Thus, he was not supposed to have power in Babylon, especially since he had been degraded by Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of his temple and the holy city of Jerusalem (Dan 1). However, the editor/author utilises Jerusalem and Judea to demonstrate that the Jewish deity’s power and authority are not bound to specific locations. The editor/author validates his claim by narrating that the angel of God can move freely outside the borders of Judea. Even more: he can breach the god-spaces of other deities, such as the lions’ den, the pit of death. This creates a worldview where the land of Israel is seen as the centre of

the world. The God of Israel can act outside and within any space, but He keeps Himself attached to the land of Israel.

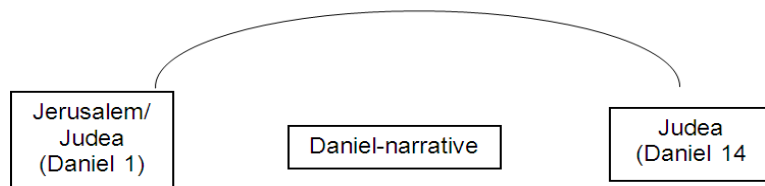


FIGURE 5: *Greek Daniel* framed by the Jewish homeland

The motif of βρῶμα – life and death

Bergmann (2004:278) defines the motif of βρῶμα (food) as boundary marking in the sense that food is used to establish a hierarchy between the different characters in the narrative. However, in *Greek Daniel* food also embodies life and death.

In both *Daniel* 1 and 14 food plays an important role. In *Daniel* 1 the young men are supposed to be nourished by eating from the king's table. However, Daniel and his friends preferred not to be under the care of the king and his gods, but rather to trust in the providence of the God of Israel. After a ten day trial, it is established that the God of Israel did have the ability to care for Daniel and his friends, within the god-space of Marduk, without being stopped. The capability of the God of Israel to sustain life is demonstrated even more thoroughly in *Bel and the dragon* when he nourishes Daniel in the lions' den.

The prophet Habakkuk is called by an angel of the Jewish deity to take food to Daniel in the lions' den. This happened on the sixth day. The angel himself flew down and took Habakkuk directly to Daniel inside the pit. The food is used to sustain Daniel's life, i.e., it is used to give Daniel life in death. The food is commissioned by the God of Israel. Unlike in the previous two episodes of *Bel and the dragon* (Dan 14:1–22; 14:23–27) where so-called deities are fed by human hands, Daniel is nourished by the God of Israel. The God of Israel himself does not eat. Nowhere in *Greek Daniel* is there any mention of the God of Israel being fed by humans. On the

contrary, the Jewish deity is always described as the one sustaining life and nourishing the lives of Daniel and his friends (cf. Dan 1).

Contrary to biblical doctrine about the God of Israel, people in the ancient Near East believed that their deities should be nourished by their worshippers. This belief is turned upside down in *Bel and the dragon*. First, Daniel shows the king that Bel does not eat and therefore could not be a living god (Dan 14:1–22). Then Daniel goes on and demonstrates to the king that the divine Babylonian dragon is also not a living god (Dan 14:23–27). Although the dragon may eat, it dies after being fed some special cakes. Since the dragon could not sustain its own life, it could not be a living deity.

Greek Daniel is thus framed with two accounts of the Jewish deity sustaining life by special nourishment (Figure 6; Dan 1 and Dan 14). Again, in his own way, the editor/author is framing the way his readers think. He is recreating the identity of a deity in such a way that only the God of Israel can meet the criteria. The editor/author is demonstrating to his readers that a true living god does not need nourishment; rather, a true living deity is one who sustains others. The editor/author is demonstrating to the readers that only the Jewish deity has real power over life and death. Daniel, who was supposed to die in the lions' den, is raised from death by a deity, who, according to popular belief, was apparently powerless. In framing *Greek Daniel* with the motif of food, the editor/author emphasises capability of the God of Israel to care for his people.

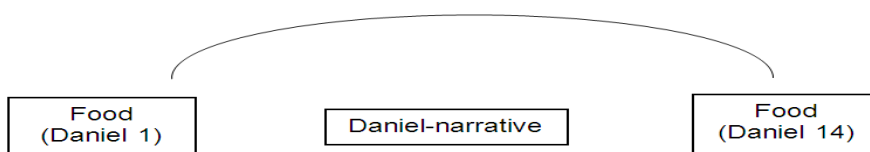


FIGURE 6: *Greek Daniel* framed by the motif of food.

Αμβακοθμ

Αμβακοθμ (Habakkuk) prophesied in the Babylonian era, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem (Collins 1993:416). He would therefore have been very old if he was still alive at the time of Cyrus, the king in *Bel and the dragon*. It may be argued that the editor/author utilises Habakkuk as an embodiment of hope. God will

provide and sustain the life of his elected people no matter how dire their situation may be. In Habakkuk 3:16–19 the author relates that the God of Israel will sustain life even though there may be no more food. God will preserve his people. Habakkuk 3:18b states: “χαρήσομαι ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρῳ μου (LXX)” – I will rejoice in God my saviour. This is exactly what happens in the third episode of *Bel and the dragon* (Dan 14:28–42). The God of Israel delivers Daniel’s from death. God sustains Daniel’s life by giving him food when he had none. By employing Habakkuk as a character (body) in the narrative, the editor/author probably wants his readers to envision the Habakkuk-tradition as they comprehend the new identity of the God of Israel as a true living deity.

The body and character of Daniel

Greek Daniel is not a story about Daniel. Even though the book carries his name, Daniel is merely utilised as a spatial vessel to create a powerbase for the God of Israel outside the land of Israel. In some sense the editor/author utilises Daniel as a defence mechanism for the presence of God. Within the parameters of the Ancient Near Eastern worldview, Daniel is utilised as an extension of the god-space of Israel’s God. The way in which Daniel is utilised progresses from chapter 1 to 14. Not only is Daniel utilised as a defence mechanism, he also becomes a weapon of destruction with which the God of Israel exterminates the pseudo-deities.¹⁸

In the OG version of *Bel and the dragon* (Dan 14:1–2) Daniel is called a ἱερεὺς (priest).

In analysing *Greek Daniel*, Daniel can be described as a wise man. He also acts as a detective who uncovers lies and reveals truth (Jordaan 2008:45–53). In *Bel and the dragon* he also develops a sense of humour (Smith-Christopher 1996:185–186; Moore 1977:146–147) in that he laughs at the naivety of the king.

In Daniel 1-6 the editor/author utilises Daniel (and his friends) to create the reality

¹⁸ Jordaan (2008:45–53) 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. However, it is important to comprehend that the editor/author utilises Daniel not only as a weapon as Jordaan suggests, but as a vessel of the God of Israel.

that the God of Israel is more powerful than other deities. In Daniel 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 (ἔσχατος), 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. It is also after being shown God’s heavenly strategy that Daniel laughs at the worldview of the king and the Babylonians. Being “taken up” and shown God’s heavenly scheme, legitimises Daniel as a true vessel of the God of Israel, for God had revealed to him not only the future, but also secret knowledge. In this way the editor/author legitimises what Daniel says and does. It thus legitimises Daniel’s alternative worldview when he proclaims that the God of Israel is the only true Living God (Dan 14) in contrast to Bel and the dragon. It also legitimises the new reality that is created by the editor/author.

The editor/author binds his readers to Daniel by a shared experience of persecution. The readers are confronted with foreign worldviews, deities, and oppression in the same way as Daniel is. Daniel is thus also a mechanism by which the editor/author gives ‘inside’ knowledge to his readers. As *Greek Daniel* unfolds, the reader is taken along with Daniel on his discovery not only of Gods’ new universal identity, but also of God’s heavenly strategy. At the end of *Greek Daniel* the reader knows what Daniel knows and in this way the editor/author creates a new worldview in the minds of his readers.

The living God

Throughout *Greek Daniel*, but specifically in *Bel and the dragon*, the God of Israel is framed as the only true Living God (τὸν ζῶντα θεόν). To frame the God of Israel means that his identity is reconstructed within a new experienced reality. As the editor/author creates a new reality, the God of Israel is framed as a living deity to fit this new reality. The God of Israel is framed in such a way that the manner in which people revered Him, is influenced. Through the eyes of Daniel, the reader experiences

the God of Israel in a new manner. Israel's God is not bound to Jerusalem, but omnipresent. His power is not confined to the borders of Israel, but he is all-powerful and can operate wherever he wants without being stopped by other deities (Dan 1–6). Other deities, such as Bel, need to be enacted by their priests in order to appear to be living gods. Bel needs to be fed by humans so as to appear to be a god, but his food has to be eaten by his priest to ensure that people believe him to be a living deity (Dan 14:1–22). The God of Israel does not eat to prove himself to be a deity, but rather, as a deity, he gives life to his people by nourishing them instead of them feeding him (Dan 1 and Dan 14:28:42).

When *Greek Daniel* comes to its conclusion, the term “living”, used to describe the God of Israel, is much more than a mere adjective. It is a metaphor. It is a metaphor because it is used as part of a newly created reality about the God of Israel that is based on the experience of the character Daniel.¹⁹ Thus, when the editor/author talks about the “Living God”, it is not a just a statement that the God of Israel is alive, for that was also said about other deities, but rather it is a frameset within which the God of Israel is placed (De Bruyn 2015b:1–9). “Living God” thus reflects the God of Israel's capabilities, might and sovereignty. It is a phrase used to talk about the God of Israel in terms of a new worldview. Once the reader has read *Greek Daniel* he/she can no longer talk about the God of Israel in terms of the old worldviews people had. At the end of *Greek Daniel*, one can only talk about the God of Israel in terms the editor/author's newly constructed worldview.

Within this new worldview Jews should not fear foreign worldviews, other so called deities, or kings such as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who imagined himself to be a god. The God of Israel is in total control. All other gods are not only deemed as powerless, but also as false, and their god-spaces are places of deceit.

Furthermore, as a priest, Daniel may be a vessel of God, but God is not dependent on people to proclaim his god-space. He himself proclaims his god-space by protecting his chosen vessels (Dan 1, 4, 6, 13 and 14). As vessels of God, his chosen people are instruments of his will and command. When necessary God's chosen

¹⁹ This is based on Ritchie (2013:1–24) who defines metaphor as “seeing, experiencing, or talking about something in terms of something else”.

people may become visible embodiments of God's power, just as Daniel did. However, God's chosen people are not actors to an illusory deity, but they are instruments of the true Living God. The Jews living in the Diaspora should therefore remain faithful to God. Religious syncretism and foreign religious practises should not be tolerated.

CONCLUSION

Greek Daniel was written to create a new reality and to influence the way in which the ancient people revered the God of Israel. This new reality represents a shift in Israel's religious worldview. At first the god-space of the God of Israel was perceived as embodied by the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant, and later the temple. Subsequently, Mount Zion, the Davidic king and Jerusalem became part of God's god-space. In *Greek Daniel* the boundaries of the God of Israel become unlimited. As a true living deity, the God of Israel operates where He chooses, while his faithful are the embodiments of his actions. To highlight God's omnipresence and all-powerfulness, *Greek Daniel* is framed by three motifs, viz.: a temple, the Jewish homeland, and food. The shift in worldview in *Greek Daniel* can also 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 authority. However, *Bel and the dragon* demonstrates an intolerance towards other worldviews. Other deities are not only powerless as shown in Daniel 1–6, but they are falsely revered and should therefore be obliterated.

The framing of *Greek Daniel* with different motifs as well as the movement in space (below to above and back down to below) highlight the reciprocal relationship the chapters have. Thus, the different chapters in *Greek Daniel* build on each other in such a way that ultimately the God of Israel is framed as the true living deity.

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