

SUSANNA – FRAMING THE MINDS AND VIEWS OF PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the story of Susanna by combining features of editorial and narrative critique as well as new insights on body and space in the field of linguistics. Furthermore, it is postulated that the Susanna narrative must be read in a reciprocal relationship to the entire Greek Daniel. Accordingly, it is put forward that the narrative of Susanna is utilised as part of a larger narrative structure. With this larger Greek Daniel narrative, a new worldview is created that opposes the worldviews of the ancient Near Eastern people. According to the new worldview the God of Israel is not bound to religious or cultural perceptions. Different bodily and spatial features are exploited to construct this new worldview. The story of Susanna is utilised as technique to influence the reader in rethinking their worldviews.

INTRODUCTION

The story of *Susanna*¹ is part of three additions to *Daniel* found, inter alia, in the Septuagint (LXX) where it constitutes Chapter 13 of the so called *Greek Daniel*. The other two additions are *The prayer of Azariah* (part of Dan 3) and *Bel and the dragon* (as Dan 14). There are two versions of *Greek Daniel*. Consequently, there are two *Susanna* accounts. The first account is that of the LXX which is possibly the older version and therefore often called the Old Greek (OG) version (de Wet 2009:229–231). The second account is the Theodotion (Th) version. Th is considered the more recent and elaborate of the two *Susanna* accounts (de Wet 2009:229–231). In some copies of Th, *Susanna* constitutes the first chapter of *Greek Daniel* and not the thirteenth as in the OG.

¹ For a clearer distinction *Susanna* in italics refers to the story whereas Susanna in normal script indicates the character. The same differentiation is applied to other biblical books that bear the name of a character.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Regardless of the fact that *Susanna* is editorially part of *Greek Daniel*, past research has tended to read the story as an independent insertion, irrelevant to the larger *Daniel* narrative (Gruen 1998:168, 174). No commentary, as far as could be established, thus pays any attention to the editorial unity of *Greek Daniel* or the possible reciprocal relationship between *Susanna* and *Daniel's* thirteen other chapters. The question of why the editor/author of *Greek Daniel* incorporated *Susanna* into his larger *Daniel* narrative is given scant, if any, attention. Commentaries also do not exploit *Susanna's* function within the larger *Greek Daniel* to its full potential. This is especially true of *Susanna's* function as Chapter 13 in those translations or versions which follow the chapter indexing of the Old Greek (OG).

Past research usually focused on origin and dating, language issues, and possible pedagogic meanings of *Susanna* (Steck, Kratz & Kottsieper 1998:293; Collins 1993:426–438). The use of humour was also considered (Gruen 1998:172, 175). Likewise the different roles of Daniel, Susanna and even God were investigated (Gruen 1998:170–176). Special attention is usually given to Susanna as a woman within an oppressive patriarchal society (Jordaan 2009:178–183). Regarding *Susanna's* genre and meaning, scholars generally categorise the story as a Midrash, folklore or a wisdom tale with the following theme: God condemns injustice (Charles 2004:645). Other possible themes are:

- The triumph of virtue (Oesterly 1935:283)
- Encouragement to Jewish people to trust in God and obey God in the midst of adversities and temptations which may arise in their community (Nickelsburg 2005:23–25)
- Loyalty to God and God's commandments despite the temporal dangers which might befall one in the process (deSilva 2004:232)
- The identity of "the living God" (Harrington 1999:109–110, 116)

Most researchers do not consider *Susanna* to recount an actual historical event (Collins 1993:435–436). Even though *Susanna* may have a Hebrew *Vorlage*, most scholars agree that the narrative was written in the Hellenistic period and that it was

incorporated into *Greek Daniel* by 100 B.C.E. at the latest (Collins 1993:426–438). Charles (2004:638, 643–644), however, does not agree with this earlier date. He describes *Susanna* as a product of Pharisaic controversy with the Sadducees in the later years of Alexander Jannaeus (circa 95–80 B.C.). Steck, Kratz and Kottsieper (1998:293) place *Susanna*'s date of origin even later at 70 B.C. Some scholars also ventured to comment on the bodily and spatial aspects of *Susanna* (Nolte & Jordaan 2010:527–547).

Harrington (1999:109–116) comes close to an editorial theme for the *Editions to Daniel* by placing them under the single theme of “Who is the living God?” This article elaborates on Harrington's idea of a single theme, but it does so more broadly by investigating the editorial unity and reciprocal relationship between *Greek Daniel*'s fourteen chapters. As with Nolte & Jordaan (2010:527–547), different spatial and bodily elements within the narrative will be examined, but this will be done within the reciprocal relationship that *Susanna* has with the rest of *Greek Daniel*. Accordingly, this article proposes a possible new reading model that is based on combining elements from editorial and narrative critique as well as insights on body and spatial elements in the field of linguistics. As a result, this article aspires to provide a unique take on *Susanna*.

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this article is the function of *Susanna* as *Daniel 13*. Thus the chapter indexing of OG (LXX) is followed. For the most part, this article uses the OG account of *Susanna*, but occasionally refers to the Th version.² Furthermore, this study regards a narrative as a story built up by the calculated placing of body and space elements.

In this article I utilise the same theory and methodology as in my previous articles on *Bel and the dragon* (de Bruyn 2014b:386–391; 2015:69–72). Only a short summary of the methodology is thus given to avoid repetition. *Susanna* is analysed on

² McLay (2003:1–100) points out the complex origins of the LXX and Th. However, within the parameters of *Redaktionsgeschichte*, this article concerns itself with the form of *Susanna* in the OG.

the basis that the editor/author exploits a variety of spatial and bodily features not only to create the narrative, but also to give it meaning. Spaces are thus utilised by the author of *Susanna* as part of a narrative technique to influence the plot or to stimulate the agenda of a narrative (Gärtner-Brereton 2008:36–49). The employment of body and space is explored within the parameters of narrative critique, for how an author utilises these spatial and bodily elements influences the outcome of the narrative. The article is based on the theory of an on-going process of creating new worldviews or realities (Fig. 1). In *Daniel* spatial and bodily elements are utilised in different motifs to ultimately frame the God of Israel as a living deity. This article may therefore seem to follow a narrative analysis pattern, yet there are important differences. First, the body-space framework used to investigate *Susanna* examines the narrative in a reciprocal relationship with the rest of the *Greek Daniel* texts. The spatial and bodily features in *Susanna* are thus investigated concerning their relation to space and body in the entire *Greek Daniel*. Secondly, this article explores how the editor/author utilises bodily and spatial aspects to construct *Susanna* in such a way that a new reality is created. In following this methodology, the article aims to indicate that the editor/author utilises *Susanna* as part of a larger narrative to frame the God of Israel as not only omnipresent, but also as acting on behalf of the oppressed.

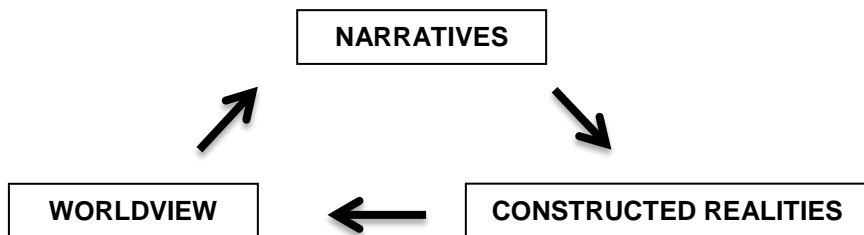


FIGURE 1: The on-going process of creating worldviews, realities and narratives.

A possible power struggle

Furthermore, in my previous articles I suggested that the editor/author of *Greek Daniel* is challenging the worldviews of the people of his time (de Bruyn 2014b:386–391; 2015:69–72), and that the different chapters of *Greek Daniel* as well as the

smaller episodes of *Bel and the dragon* represent a power struggle between worldviews. The same theory is applied in this article to *Susanna*. It means that *Susanna* also represents a power struggle. Naturally, because of the reciprocal relationship between *Greek Daniel's* 14 chapters, the power struggle in *Susanna* must be read in relation to the larger power struggle in *Daniel*.

As a wisdom tale or Midrash, *Susanna* may fit into this apocalyptic nature of *Greek Daniel*. In this article *Susanna* is thus also read as part of a larger deity war, a common feature of apocalyptic literature.

In *Susanna*, the cosmic deity war between good and evil that stretches through *Daniel* is localised in the city of Babylon. Within this city, which is the heart of the Babylonian gods' power base (cf. Dan 1; de Bruyn 2014a:1–6), wickedness has corrupted the minds and hearts of two Jewish elders. Instead of exercising their authority as elders and judges in accordance with the laws of God, they abused their authority by trying to force the righteous *Susanna* to have intercourse with them. However, rather than sinning against her God and her husband and thus becoming corrupt herself, *Susanna* refused the two elders. The two elders retaliated wickedly by falsely framing *Susanna* as adulterous. After being persecuted publicly, *Susanna* was condemned to death, but before she could be executed, the God of Israel came to her rescue by utilising *Daniel* to uncover the deceit and wickedness of the two elders. In *Susanna*, the struggle between narratives or worldviews may thus be described as a clash between righteousness and wickedness, integrity and corruption, and justice and injustice.

In *Susanna*, the cosmic war between good and evil is set in the city of Babylon and around the characters of, inter alia, *Susanna*, *Daniel*, and the elders.

The body

In narratives the body is usually represented in the form of characters (Foucault 1984b:170–178; 1984c:179–187). Characters may therefore also be described as embodied entities and are often utilised to represent concepts from an author's own world (Kamionkowski 2010:1–10). In *Susanna*, for example, the elders may represent

corrupt and unjust Jewish leaders of the editor/author's own world, while Susanna might represent virtuousness and faithfulness to the God of Israel. The concepts of good and evil, as experienced by the editor/author in his/her/their world, are thus embodied in Susanna and the elders. In this way the persecuted and virtuous Jewish reader may find him or herself connected to *Susanna*, in that their experience of the world is similar to Susanna's. Thus, in a narrative, the body can also be a mechanism by which the author taps into the mind of the people he or she wants to influence.

As a mechanism, the body can thus be utilised not only to interact with the world around it or to conceptualise and frame worldviews, but can also function as a space or a vessel in itself where specific concepts or experiences may be embodied (Lakoff 2008:27; Lakoff & Johnson 1999:555–557).

In *Susanna* there are the bodies of, inter alia, Σουσάννα (Susanna); the δύο πρεσβύτεροι (two elders); Δανιήλ (Daniel); an ἄγγελος κυρίου (angel of the Lord), and the κριταὶ (judges). In short, there are heroes and villains, protagonists and antagonists, those who are persecuted and those who oppress, those who are just and virtuous and those who are not, as well as deities and humans. There are also body parts, such as the minds, eyes and hands of the elders, as well as the heart and head of Susanna. These bodies and body parts are utilised to construct a worldview where the God of Israel is not a distant degraded deity, but a deity who liberates the weak and the faithful even in territories supposedly “outside” his domain.

Space

Based on the methodology of my previous articles (de Bruyn 2014a:1–6, 2014b:386–391; 2015:69–72) I propose that in *Susanna* the bodies of Daniel and the angel are not only utilised as characters, but also as spatial embodiments of the God of Israel. Βαβυλῶν (Babylon) is indicated in the text as a space that embodies lawlessness and wickedness. As opposed to Babylon the συναγωγή (synagogue; OG verse 28) functions as an extension of the God of Israel's god-space while the παράδεισος (garden) signifies private space. By utilising these different space builders, the editor/author creates an environment which persecuted Jews might not only relate to,

but in which they could also find hope in the God of Israel.³

APPLYING METHODOLOGY

Outline of Susanna

The opening verses bring the reader into a mental space of conflict (OG verses 1–6) which also may be described as contested space. The story is set in Βαβυλών – a spatial environment that brings hardship and persecution to the Jewish mind. Babylon was the centre of the Babylonian gods’ power. It was from this city that Nebuchadnezzar marched forth to conquer the world, and to destroy the Jewish homeland (Dan 1:1–3). It was also to Babylon that the temple vessels of the Jewish deity were brought as a symbol of his degradation (de Bruyn 2014:1–6). It was in Babylon that the Jewish king was kept in bondage, and it was in Babylon that the Jewish youth, such as Daniel and his friend, were stripped of their Jewish identity (Dan 1). Furthermore, within the context of *Daniel*, Babylon was the spatial setting of frequent clashes between the God of Israel and the Babylonian gods (Dan 1–6). Time and again the God of Israel was challenged by the Babylonian king and his gods to demonstrate his capabilities and authority outside of the Jewish homeland. The text states that wickedness comes from Babylon (Th verse 5). Babylon was thus indeed a dangerous space for Jews (Nolte & Jordaan 2010:527–547).

To highlight the threat of the Babylonian setting and to heighten the tension between good and evil in the narrative, the editor/author states that the wickedness of Babylon had corrupted the minds of two Jewish elders (OG verses 5–6). Tension rises when the wickedness of Babylon tries to penetrate even the private homes and lives of faithful Jews (OG verses 7–9). It is possible to consider here that the editor/author utilised a female protagonist (i.e., Susanna) in order to stress the vulnerability of the Jews in the dangerous environment of Babylon. Within the patriarchal society of that time, women were regarded as more vulnerable than men (Nolte & Jordaan 2010:527–

³ This is based on the works of inter alia Gärtner-Brereton (2008:53); Zlatev (2007:318-350); Walton (2006:87-134); Evans & Green (2006:363-399); Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003:1-37); Haspelmath (1997:1).

547). Susanna's defencelessness against her male persecutors indeed comes to the fore in the narrative. This is demonstrated by how quickly and without regard for the law the two elders persuade the congregation to condemn Susanna (OG verses 38–41).

Against the corruptness of the Jewish elders and, in a sense, against the wickedness of Babylon itself, Susanna is set up as a symbol of righteousness, and a faithful practitioner of the law of Moses (OG verses 2–4).

The tension between good and evil rises further when the wickedness and corruption of Babylon almost overwhelm the local synagogue (OG verse 28).⁴ As a holy place for the Jews, the synagogue represents the god-space of the God of Israel. When the Jewish elders, judges and congregation wrongfully condemn Susanna (OG verses 41–45), they trample on the law of Moses. Instead of being an environment of justice and righteousness, the synagogue of the Jewish deity is defiled by the actions of the corrupt Jewish elders. Instead of being a space of safety where Susanna should have found justice, the synagogue becomes a space of conflict.

In a dramatic twist, the God of Israel intervenes (OG verses 44–45). Not only does the God of Israel defend his god-space, but he also defends those who are faithful to him. Just as Susanna is being led away to be put to death, an angel of the Lord appears.⁵ The angel then bestows a spirit of discernment upon the young man Daniel. Since Susanna found no justice from her unjust persecutors, the God of Israel himself will now be her judge. To defend Susanna and to give her justice, the God of Israel utilises the young Daniel. Note that Daniel means "God is my judge". As in stories of *Daniel 1–6* and *Bel and the dragon*, Daniel is not only utilised as a defence mechanism, but also as a skilful investigator (Jordaan 2008:45–53). However, in *Susanna*, Daniel also functions as a judge on behalf of the God of Israel.

After a skilful investigation, Daniel reveals Susanna's innocence by uncovering the deceit and wickedness of the two elders (OG verses 48–62). At the end of the narrative, the two elders themselves are put to death. The synagogue is thereby restored as a space of justice and safety for the faithful.

⁴ In Th the synagogue is not explicitly mentioned. It seems that according to Th the congregation of Jews gathered in the house of Joakim (Th verses 25–30)

⁵ Th has no mention of an angel.

Identifying different narratives

This article analyses *Susanna* as a part of a larger apocalyptic conflict between deities. Thus, the challenge is to examine if and how well *Susanna* fits into the deity war narrative stretching throughout *Greek Daniel*. This task is undertaken by identifying the different sub-narratives that are present in *Susanna*. Furthermore, each of these smaller narratives may be considered as structures built upon both bodily and spatial elements.

Struggle between righteousness and unrighteousness

In the first narrative that may be identified, the tussle between deities embodies itself as a conflict between righteousness and unrighteousness.

In exile, many of the Jews probably lost their faith and identity. *Daniel 1* narrates all the measures undertaken by Nebuchadnezzar to remake the Jewish exiles as Babylonian citizens. According to the popular worldview of the time, the Jewish God was a degraded, powerless deity. When confronted with this foreign worldview, many Jews capitulated rather than remain faithful to the God of Israel and his laws. In reaction to this foreign reality the editor/author wrote and compiled *Greek Daniel* as an alternative reality. In this alternative reality the editor/author utilises *Susanna* to demonstrate not only the authority of the God of Israel, but also to call on the Jews to remain faithful even in the face of persecution.

In short, this narrative describes how the God of Israel saves an innocent woman from lawlessness in a wicked city. Here, the dominant narrative signifies that lawlessness and wickedness have corrupted many of the exiled Jews, even some of the Jewish elders. However, the opposing narrative suggests that God will identify and protect the righteous, those who are ever faithful and upholding the law of Moses. In addition, God will reveal and punish those who let themselves be corrupted by the evil of the world.

The editor/author embodies the dominant narrative in the characters of the two Jewish elders. Rather than representing the leadership and justice of the Jewish deity (cf. Exod 18:13–26), these two elders allow their minds to be corrupted by the

wickedness of their Babylonian environment. Consequently, they turned their eyes away from Heaven (OG verse 9). Instead of embodying the Jewish deity's god-space, the two elders become vessels of evil. As opposed to the two elders, Susanna embodies faithfulness and righteousness. Not only did Susanna fear the God of Israel, she also upheld the law of Moses (OG verses 1–4).

Susanna was a woman of beautiful form (γυναικα ἀστεϊαντῶ εἶδει, OG verse 7) who was married to a Jew named Joakim. Being corrupted by the wickedness of Babylon, the two elders started to plot against Susanna. Overcome by lust they planned to have sex with her, even if they had to force her. By having extramarital sex (albeit unwillingly) with the elders, Susanna would have become guilty of adultery. Thus, by this action, initiated by the two elders, not only Susanna's house but also her body would be corrupted by the evil and wickedness of Babylon. So strong is the onslaught on Susanna that she describes the hands of the elders as something she cannot escape from (οὐκ ἐκφεύξομαι τὰς χεῖρας ὑμῶν, OG verse 22). The hands of the elders that should have been instruments of the Jewish deity's justice have become instruments of evil and markers of a corrupt environment – a space that can ensnare righteous people and twist them to also become corrupt.

However, Susanna commits herself to the God of Israel. OG verse 35 narrates that, in the face of persecution, Susanna's heart stays on her God and she lifts her eyes up to God. Thus, Susanna does exactly the opposite to the two elders. When confronted with the evil of Babylon she does not falter as the two Jewish elders did. Susanna refuses to have sex with the elders. Full of vengeance, the elders now plot to have Susanna killed. They decide to frame Susanna as an adulteress (OG verses 36–41). To frame her, the elders lie to the Jewish community. According to their lie, they saw Susanna having sex with a young man in her garden. Despite Susanna's innocence, the Jewish congregation falls victim to the corruption of the elders. Accordingly, the congregation condemns Susanna to death and, for a moment, innocence falls victim to injustice.

But then, just as Susanna is being led away to her death, the God of Israel intervenes. Suddenly an angel of the Lord comes and bestows a spirit of discernment

upon the young Daniel. In defence of the innocent, the God of Israel sets up his own embodiment of justice. Thus, the God of Israel himself becomes Susanna's judge. Again, take note that Daniel's name means "God is my judge". Through skilful investigation, Daniel reveals the truth: Susanna is innocent and the elders are guilty not only of lying and framing Susanna, but also of corruption. Instead of Susanna, the two elders are now put to death. With their deaths corruption and injustice is vanquished from the Jewish congregation. Only righteousness (Susanna) and justice (Daniel) prevail. The God of Israel has indeed saved the innocent and faithful while the wicked were punished. It is therefore better to remain faithful to the God of Israel and his laws than to be corrupted and unfaithful to the Jewish deity, for God will protect his own.

Framing Susanna – the struggle between truth and deceit

When the two elders decided to take revenge on Susanna for not wanting to have sex with them, they decided to influence the Jewish community against her. They do this by falsely portraying Susanna as adulterous (OG verses 36–41). They tell a false tale about Susanna in which she is framed as unfaithful to her husband, and thus to the God of Israel. However, in their rush to take revenge on Susanna, their story was fabricated hastily. According to their story, the two elders saw Susanna having sex with a young man in her husband's garden. When the elders went to confront them, the young man fled before they could confirm his identity. Upon questioning Susanna, she allegedly refused to make known the young man's identity. In this clash between truth and deceit, the dominant narrative is the reality of Susanna's innocence. The elders challenge Susanna's innocence with their own deceitful narrative which frames Susanna as someone she is not.

With their false story, the two elders are successful in influencing the Jewish community against Susanna. Yet, if there is one thing that *Susanna* clearly demonstrates, it is that the truth can never be undone, even when it may seem hidden by sensational, deceitful narratives. Persuaded by the two elders' story, the congregation finds Susanna guilty of adultery. However, after the God of Israel

intervenes by bestowing a spirit of judgment upon Daniel, the truth is revealed.

Daniel does not narrate an alternative story about Susanna, yet he successfully uncovers the truth by reframing the Jewish elders for what they truly are – corrupt, wicked liars, full of deceit. As a skilful investigator, Daniel quickly reveals the flaws in the elders’ story. After separating the two elders, Daniel merely asks each one under which tree in the garden did he see Susanna having sex (OG verse 54)? The one elder said under a mastic tree (OG verse 55) while the other said under a holm tree (OG verse 58). With their incorrect answers the two elders fall victim to their own lies and deceit. With their own words, the two elders, who falsely exposed Susanna as a sinner (OG verse 32), are now rightfully exposed for the evil men they are.

After the truth about the two elders and Susanna is revealed, Susanna is acquitted, whereas the two elders are put to death. Even in the dangerous evil space of Babylon, the truth could not be hidden from the God of Israel. By uncovering the truth about Susanna and the deceitful story of the elders, Susanna’s trust in the God of Israel as all-knowing and all-seeing (OG verse 35) is demonstrated as true and right. The God of Israel not only has the ability to see hidden truths, he also defends those who live truthfully. And if the God of Israel can see and act within deceitful spaces, allegedly not under his control, he may not be as degraded as the popular worldview of ancient days would portray him. Accordingly, contrary to popular belief, *Susanna* also reveals the truth about the God of Israel.

Old wickedness against young wisdom

Another narrative that may be identified is the struggle between ignorant wickedness and wisdom. This narrative embodies itself in the clash between the wicked elders and the young Daniel. As stated above, the elders were supposed to be extensions of the God of Israel’s wisdom and justice. As elders, the Jewish community revered them as judges – leaders who should guard the interests of the congregation on behalf of the Jewish deity. Within an ancient patriarchal community, people respected them and followed their leadership on the basis that they were elders of the community. In contrast to young people who were regarded as not yet wise, the elders were

acknowledged as the guardians of wisdom. However, in *Susanna*, this patriarchal view is not only challenged, but portrayed as unwise in itself, for wisdom does not necessarily come with age.

The reason for the elders' foolish actions derives from the fact that they did not look towards heaven. Instead, they turned their hearts away from the God of Israel and let themselves be corrupted by their Babylonian environment. This led to their unwise mistreatment of Susanna. *Susanna* narrates how the Jewish deity then breaks with tradition and establishes his judging wisdom in the young man Daniel. As a youth, Daniel persuades the congregation of the wickedness of the two elders. According to *Susanna*, true wisdom does not come with age, but because of a relationship with the God of Israel. The Jewish deity is thus not bound to tradition, but he acts through whom he wants, even young people.

The narrative then ends with a prayer that God may give wisdom to the Jewish youth. With the narrative of *Susanna*, young people are encouraged to act wisely and to stay true to the God of Israel.

The Jewish deity and the forces of evil

The cosmic war between the God of Israel and the forces of evil represents itself best in the opposing god-spaces of Babylon, the παράδεισος of Joakim and the local synagogue. In the clash between these two supernatural entities, the house of Joakim and more specifically his παράδεισος presumably starts out to be under the authority of the Jewish deity. Of Joakim it is said that he was more honourable than all others (OG verse 4) while his wife, Susanna, is described as fearing God (OG verse 2). Yet, all was not well in the παράδεισος of Joakim. The allusion to the παράδεισος story of Genesis 3 cannot be missed here. However one must be cautious not to read too much into it. Still, as with the παράδεισος of Eden, evil was lurking about. But instead of a ὄφις (serpent), evil not only embodied itself in surrounding Babylon, but also in the characters of two Jewish elders.

In Genesis 3 the serpent had freedom of movement in the παράδεισος of God. Similarly the two Jewish elders have unrestricted access to the παράδεισος of Joakim.

Another similarity between Genesis 3 and *Susanna* is the role of a female character. Just as Eve has been tempted by sin, Susanna is confronted by the wickedness of the two elders. As part of their plot, the two elders asked Susanna to have sex with them (OG verses 14–19). With this confrontation, the παράδεισος of Joakim now becomes contesting space. However, when confronted by evil, Susanna, unlike Eve, decided not to sin against her husband or her God in becoming an adulteress. In contrast to the elders, Susanna remains faithful to the God of Israel and the law of Moses. Thus, the παράδεισος of Joakim remains part of the Jewish deity's god-space.

Despite its failed attempt to corrupt the house and garden of Joakim, evil now tries to penetrate the synagogue of the Jewish deity. Plotting their revenge, the two Jewish elders hurried to the synagogue. Instead of worshipping the God of Israel, the two elders defile his sacred space by telling lies and corrupting the congregation (OG verses 28–41). When the congregation heard the elders' false testimony they condemned Susanna to death. Apart from being a place of worship, a synagogue, as with the temple of God in Jerusalem, was supposed to be a symbol of the Jewish deity's justice. It was the place where the law of Moses was studied and taught. If there was one place where Susanna should have found justice, it was in the synagogue, for it was the one place where Jewish believers could escape the dangers of surrounding Babylon. However, with the actions of the Jewish elders and the congregation, the evil of Babylon not only seems to enter the Jewish deity's holy space, but also to take hold within it. With the defilement of his god-space, and the condemnation of Susanna, the God of Israel himself is now challenged.

Swiftly the God of Israel reacts. He sends an angel to bestow on Daniel a spirit of discernment. With Daniel as a mechanism of defence, the Jewish deity starts his offence in reclaiming his god-space. With cunning cross-examination Daniel uncovers the deceit of the two Jewish elders (OG verses 44–62). When the congregation finds that they were misled, they acquit Susanna and condemn the elders to death instead. In this, the invasion of the Jewish deity's god-space is prevented. The defilement of the Jewish deity's sacred space is punishable by death. At the end of the narrative the synagogue is not only a place of worship and justice; it also becomes a symbol of the

Jewish deity's triumph over evil. The synagogue is re-established as a place where the Jewish faithful can escape the evils of the world.

With this narrative the editor/author creates a reality where the God of Israel is capable of not only defending his own god-spaces, but also of rescuing his faithful.

In relation to Daniel

Throughout *Greek Daniel*, false assumptions and worldviews are overturned. This is especially true in the narratives of *Daniel* 1–6 and 13–14. Enhanced by the spatial-pyramid structure the *Greek Daniel* has, all of these narratives are utilised to construct a new reality about the God of Israel.

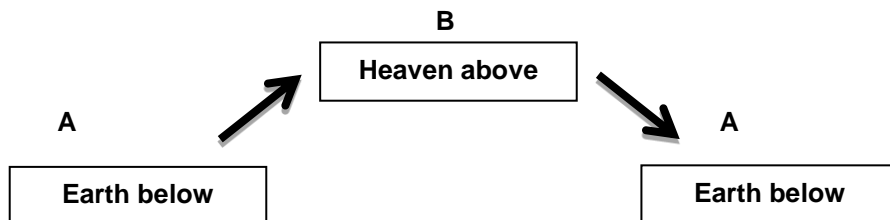


FIGURE 2: The movement of space in the narratives of Daniel.

To establish the pyramid structure of *Greek Daniel*, the editor/author utilises the two spaces below and above. *Greek Daniel* takes the reader on a journey from earth below (Dan 1–6) to the heavens above (Dan 7–12) and then back down to earth (Dan 13–14) again. With this arrangement of chapters emphasis is placed on the events in heaven (chapter 7–12). These events describe the cosmic war between the Jewish deity 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, despite what people may believe, the God of Israel has full control over both heaven above and earth below. Furthermore, the God of Israel is not restricted to the Jewish homeland. On the contrary, the Jewish deity is actively conducting all events in heaven and earth on behalf of his people. God's presence and activities in heaven as well as in earthly spaces will have consequences. Not only will his presence overturn false worldviews, but his activities will bring about a total

victory over the forces of evil in the ἔσχατος (end of days).

The story of *Susanna* is similar to the stories about Daniel and his friends being persecuted. Yet, there are two distinct differences. First, in *Susanna* the persecuted is a woman, not a man. Secondly, the persecutors are not foreigners, but fellow Jews and elders of the community. In relation to *Greek Daniel*, *Susanna* demonstrates that, similar to the fact that the Jewish deity is not restricted to specific locations, he is, in his actions, also not restricted to a society's gender spaces or age restrictions. Within the reality of *Greek Daniel* the Jewish deity is a God for every male and female believer, regardless of their age. In addition, the God of Israel does not only use elderly people as his instruments on earth, but he utilises who he likes, even though they may be as young a person such as Daniel. Finally, *Susanna* also demonstrates that the God of Israel even punishes his own people – not only foreigners. It is not one's Jewishness that indemnifies one from God's punishment, or that insures God's help; it is one's faith or lack thereof. Therefore, within the view of *Greek Daniel*, Jews should remain faithful to God and not let themselves be corrupted for, in the end, they could be punished alongside the foreign oppressors.

Significance for the reader

Within the reality of Seleucid persecution the editor/author of *Greek Daniel* creates an alternative worldview. Within this new worldview *Susanna* is utilised to create a reality where the holy places of the Jews are symbols of "us against the world". However, to be a Jew does not indemnify a person from doing wrongful things. The God of Israel protects those who are willing to remain faithful, even in the face of oppression.

In *Greek Daniel* the editor/author takes his readers on a cosmic journey from earth to heaven. On their journey the reader is confronted with the reality of a war between the God of Israel and evil forces. The faithful should understand that their suffering under Seleucid tyranny is part of this deity war. However, when the Jews are confronted by corrupt oppressive forces, they should not be afraid or capitulate to evil, for the Jewish deity's victory over evil is already becoming a reality on earth (Dan 1–6

and 13–14). No foreign worldview can stand before the reality of the Jewish deity's authority and power. Therefore, the faithful are called upon to be steadfast in their faith and to follow the examples of Daniel and Susanna.

CONCLUSION

In this article *Susanna* was analysed on the basis that the editor/author exploits a variety of spatial and bodily features not only to create his narrative, but to influence the people of his time. The editor/author wants the readers to rethink their worldviews and the reality of the Seleucid persecution.

First, the editor/author sets *Susanna* within a reciprocal relationship to *Greek Daniel* as well as its apocalyptic genre. Secondly, he taps into the minds of the people of his day by utilising different bodily and spatial features known to them. Thirdly, he frames his narrative in such a way that he creates a new worldview to oppose that of the ancient Near Eastern people. In this new worldview the God of Israel is framed as an all-powerful and omnipresent deity who acts on behalf of the oppressed and the righteous. The Jewish deity is not a far-away degraded god, but a deity who liberates the weak and the faithful even in territories supposedly “outside” his domain. With this new reality, the editor/author also challenges the mentality of those people who exercise power in corrupt ways.

In *Susanna* the apocalyptic deity war of *Greek Daniel* represents itself as a struggle between righteousness and unrighteousness, virtue and wickedness, and justice and injustice, as well as a clash between wisdom and ignorance.

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