

Week 24, Lecture 67. ¹ Daniel's First Apocalyptic Vision, Daniel 7:1-8.

Textual Witnesses. The MT (Massoretic Text) is a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic.

There are two Greek versions: Septuagint (ca. 200 - 150 B.C.); Theodotion (ca. 100 A.D.) **Corrected in Lecture #70.**

We also have Jerome's Vulgate & the Syriac Versions (both from the 4th century A.D.)

There is no Aramaic Targum of Daniel

Division by Content

Daniel 1-6, folktales; Jews ruled by foreigners suspicious of them, and at times hostile.

Daniel 7-12, apocalyptic visions; Jews ruled by foreigners actively engaged in genocide against them

Daniel 13-14, additional folktales (Susanna, Bel, The Dragon) -- these appear only in the Greek versions.

Division by Language.

Daniel 1 is Hebrew. In the middle of verse 4 of chapter 2 it changes to Aramaic.

Chapter 7 is the last of the Aramaic Chapters. Chapters 8-12 are in Hebrew.

The Language Division does not match the content Division. Possible Explanation

2-6 (Aramaic) is the earliest material; core of folktales.

7 (Aramaic). This apocalyptic vision was added onto the folktales as the genocide **was about to** begin.

1, 8-12 (Hebrew). An introduction (1) and additional apocalyptic visions were added as the situation deteriorated.²

Genre of Apocalyptic, John J. Collins

No genre of biblical literature is more difficult for the modern reader than the apocalypses. This literature is exceptional even within the Bible. In the modern world liberal Christians tend to avoid it, while fundamentalists too easily adapt it to their own ends. Several factors contribute to the difficulty.³

7:1, Time of Belshazzar⁴

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, and told the sum of the matter.⁵

This is written **about** Daniel by a **narrator**.

It sets the "story time" for the dream. The "time of the narrator" is centuries later (more on this as we progress).

7:2-8, The Four Beasts

[Daniel answered and said,] "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.³ And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.⁴ The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it.⁵ And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side; it had three ribs (**or tusks**) in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.'⁶ After this I looked, and lo, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it.⁷ After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.⁸ I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

¹ Lectures are numbered consecutively. Although this is this week's first lecture, its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

² In their Anchor Bible commentary, Hartman and DiLella follow Ginzberg's view that the **entire** book was first written in Aramaic, and that chapters 1 and 7-12 were translated into Hebrew. See pages 14-15, "Aramaic Original of the Whole Book."

³ John J. Collins, "Daniel and the Minor Prophets," *Catholic Study Bible: Revised Edition*, Reading Guide, 377.

⁴ I am following the divisions of Daniel L. Smith-Christopher in his commentary in the *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7, pages 97-108.

⁵ I am following the RSV translation. My emendations are **in bold**.

[Daniel answered & said]. Neither of the Greek translations have the introductory phrase. BHS suggests the phrase might be a later scribal addition to smooth out the reading. Verse two continues in the **first person**, "**I saw**." The **narrator** of v. 1 **completely disappears** from the rest of the story.

The Great Sea.

In the Bible, this generally refers to the Mediterranean. It recalls mythical creation battles (Israelite & pagan). The sea is a repository of the chaos from which the ordered world was made by the LORD (or pagan gods). The fact that the beasts come from the sea indicates that they are evil, in rebellion against God.

The Four Beasts⁶

Lion	a winged lion often represented Babylon in ancient times.
Bear	this represents the empire of the Medes
Leopard	symbolizes the swiftness with which the Persian Cyrus conquered Babylon
Fourth Beast	symbolizes the empire of Alexander the Great (d. 323 B.C.)

The Fourth Beast, 7. Note that the description gets more detailed the further into Daniel's "future" that it gets. Scholars have different theories about who the "ten horns" represent. The original audience would have had no doubt. Alexander was succeeded by **four** generals, who divided his kingdom. For Daniel the two important ones are: Ptolemy (who got Egypt) and Seleucus (who got Syria).
The "ten horns" are probably some combination of these rulers.

There is general agreement that the "**The Little Horn with the Big Mouth**" (v. 8) is Antiochus Epiphanes. We have more detailed descriptions of him (in plain prose) in 1 & 2 Maccabees.

These were written shortly after the crisis of genocide which inspired Daniel was over. Previous rulers, Ptolemaic & Seleucid, had been fairly tolerant of Jewish "peculiarities." Antiochus was determined to enforce Greek customs throughout his empire. Those who observed the Mosaic Law (diet & circumcision) were to be executed. "speaking great things" no doubt includes the name he took: "Epiphanes." "
pun: *epimanes* = "thoroughly mad, completely insane"

Week 24, Lecture 68. One Like a "Son of Man," Daniel 7:9-18.

7:9-14, The Heavenly Judgment

As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was **ancient of days** took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. ¹⁰ A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

¹¹ I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

¹³ I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like **a son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Ancient of Days, 9-10. This is a pious way of referring to the eternal God of Israel. His description is reminiscent of ancient Canaanite descriptions of "El," their chief god.

⁶ Information from the notes of the NABRE

The description of his throne, with flames and wheels, appears to draw from Ezekiel.
The scene with the 10,000 x 10,000 is the heavenly court.

It is not entirely clear what **The Books** contain.

Are they records of behavior, good and bad? Are they the decreed history of the world, past & future?

One Like a "Son of Man." In contrast to the previous figures, this one has a human appearance.

Interpretation as to his identity is hotly disputed.

First Question: Does Daniel understand this character as **a collective** or as **an individual**?

Jewish tradition regarded the character as **the Messiah**.⁷

Did this Jewish tradition inspire Jesus to claim this title for himself?

Or did it inspire Christians to claim the title for Jesus **after his resurrection**? (so Fitzmyer)

OR is this Jewish tradition post-biblical? even post-Christian? Is it a **response** to Christian claims about Jesus?

I.e., that the "Son of Man / Messiah" has **not yet come** into human history.

Modern Interpretation: Individual

Modern interpreters who see the "Son of Man" as an individual think Daniel is referring to **the archangel Michael**.

So Collins, in his commentary on Daniel in the Hermeneia series.

This is supported by chapters 10-11, in which Michael has an important role.

However, these chapters were written in **Hebrew**. Remember, chapter 7 is written in **Aramaic**.

It is entirely possible that these were written by different authors.

The original author of chapter 7 might have had one view.

The final editor of who added the Hebrew chapters might have had another view.⁸

Modern Interpretation: Collective

Chapter 7 appears to identify this son of man character with the **"Saints / Holy Ones of the Most High"**

(below, vs. 17, 22, and especially 27). Alex DiLella [one of my teachers] in the AB commentary.

7:15-18, Summary of the Vision

As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious and the visions of my head alarmed me. ¹⁶ I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made known to me the interpretation of the things. ¹⁷ "These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. ¹⁸ But the saints [holy ones] of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, for ever and ever."

In the folktales, Daniel wins fame by interpreting the dreams of others.

In the apocalyptic section, Daniel cannot interpret his own dreams without help!

This is how apocalyptic literature works.

author describes the world situation -- upon which he wants to comment theologically -- in highly symbolic language.

The dreamer / visionary serves as the "straight man." He does not have a clue what it means.

The author provides an interpreter (usually an angel) who explains the meaning to "the straight man."

Thus the reader is informed of the editorial opinion of the author on the theological significance of events.

The Saints /Holy Ones of the Most High

Usually in biblical literature this phrase refers to heavenly beings, angels. However it can also refer to humans.

It is hotly debated among scholars to whom it refers in this passage.

Some scholars combine the two: the **primary** reference is to heavenly beings who **represent** earthly Israel.

⁷ Collins, "Daniel," *CSB*, RG 377.

⁸ Hartmann and DiLella in their AB commentary regard Aramaic as the **original** language for **all** of chapters 1-12.

Week 24, Lecture 69. The Fourth Beast, Daniel 7:19-28.

7:19-28, Elaboration of the Fourth Beast

Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrible, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze; and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; ²⁰ and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up and before which three of them fell, the horn which had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and which seemed greater than its fellows. ²¹ As I looked, this horn made war with the saints, and prevailed over them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom.

²³ Thus he said: "As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. ²⁴ As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. ²⁵ He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time. ²⁶ But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. ²⁷ And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them."

²⁸ Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed; but I kept the matter in my mind. (RSV)

View of Author of Daniel 7. The author imagines Antiochus IV as the last evil king. Immediately after him, God will allow the Saints of the Most High to rule in His name. This benevolent rule will put an end to evil once and for all, and will last forever. The Jews just need to be faithful and "hang on" a little longer until it begins.

Note the Extreme Amount of Detail

Compared to the "hazy history" of Babylon, the history of the 2nd century B.C. is spelled out in great detail.

The PEOPLE of the saints of the Most High, 27

To me, this is the clearest evidence that the author of Daniel 7 is thinking of the "son of man" figure as:

a **collective**, rather than as an individual

a human being, rather than an angelic being (such as the archangel Michael)

What is NOT included [Keck, NIB]. The abomination of desolation / desolating sacrilege

It would have certainly been included here **if it had already occurred.**

Therefore this Aramaic chapter was written before the Hebrew chapters that speak of this "desolating sacrilege"

Comments by Collins

The message of the vision is that pagan rulers are evil and in rebellion against God, but that they will be defeated by the power of God. The symbolism of the vision, however, with its beasts and fire and figure riding on the clouds, expresses this idea with exceptional power and vividness. Consequently, the imagery has been used over and over again in new situations. It provides language that can express the evil, which erupts from time to time in human affairs (think of the Holocaust . . .) and which can also express a hope that does not depend on human power. The message of the vision is one of hope. Although the forces against us may be demonic, the power of God and the angels will ultimately prevail.⁹

Daniel (and other apocalyptic literature) **does not predict detailed events in our own time.**

It is addressed to the Jewish people of the 2nd century B.C.

However, by **analogy**, their faith can inspire our faith in **similar** circumstances.

⁹ Collins, CSB, RG 377.

Week 24, Lecture 70. Loose Ends [from Last Week.]¹⁰

The Greek Versions of Daniel¹¹

This is what I said last week: **There are two Greek versions: Septuagint (ca. 200 - 150 B.C.); Theodotion (ca. 100 A.D.)** Turns out that the Septuagint (Old Greek) version of Daniel is probably from closer to **100 B.C.** Furthermore, what is called the "Theodotion" version of Daniel is **not** the same as the rest of what is called Theodotion. Theodotion-Daniel is actually a **pre-Christian** translation, not the same as the one done by Theodotion ca. 100 A.D. This is what happens when you get a NT-guy lecturing on the OT at a fast pace.

Preference for Theodotion

The Church preferred Theodotion-Daniel to Septuagint-Daniel. It replaced the original Septuagint version of Daniel whenever it copied the copied the book. Hence manuscripts of the Old Greek (Septuagint) version are extremely rare.

Remarks from St. Jerome

The reason for the replacement escaped even such a worthy as St. Jerome (d. 420), who wrote in the preface to his translation of Daniel: "The Churches of the Lord Savior do not read the prophet Daniel according to the Seventy Interpreters, but use the edition of Theodotion; why this happened I do not know.... But this much I can affirm: [the LXX] differs a great deal from the truth [*veritas hebraica*, the Aramaic and Hebrew MT] and for good reason was rejected." (PL 28, col. 1357) In his commentary on the Book of Daniel, Jerome complains that the LXX omits the text of Dan 4:6, and then he writes: "Therefore, in the judgment of the Church's leaders, the [LXX] edition of this book has been rejected; and in public is read the edition of Theodotion, which agrees both with the Hebrew and with other translators." (PL 25, col. 514)¹²

Definition of Apocalyptic

Hartmann & DiLella discuss "Apocalyptic" on pages 62-71 of their AB commentary. They discuss the difficulty of coming up with a definition that covers all of apocalyptic literature. They prefer not to give an "overall definition," and then force Daniel into that "box." Rather they analyze the characteristics of Daniel. This is their definition of apocalyptic, **as it appears in Daniel**. It is a literary genre characterized by three factors:

Literary Characteristics

(1) that employs the devices of anonymous and pseudonymous authorship, dreams and visions as vehicles of revelation, historical panoramas in the form of *vaticinia ex eventu*, symbolic language understandable to the Jewish audience intended, and esoteric content;

[see page 67 for more]

Stance & Purpose

(2) that was devised as non-violent resistance literature having as its purpose to console, strengthen, and exhort the Jews persecuted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the present wicked age to remain faithful to their religious heritage; and

Future Hopes

(3) that promises as a reward for such fidelity eternal life by means of resurrection in the new age which will be the Kingdom of God¹³

¹⁰ Originally this lecture was given the following week, after I had more information, and realized I had made some mistakes.

¹¹ This is treated in exhaustive detail by Hartman and Di Lella, pages 76-84, "The Greek Forms of Daniel."

¹² Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary on Chapters 1-12*, vol. 23, Anchor Bible (Doubleday, 1978), 79.

¹³ Hartman and Di Lella, *Book of Daniel*, 70-71.

Apocalyptic Imagery is **Suggestive, not Representational**

The symbolism in Daniel and in much of the rest of the Old Testament (especially the Song of Songs) as well as in the Book of Revelation is **not representational**, and therefore it cannot be pictured realistically as if in a colored photograph. Rather the symbolism is **suggestive**; that is to say, images are projected in order to **suggest** (and **not to depict**) the realities the writer wishes to convey. An example will perhaps best illustrate this important point. In Rev 5:6, Jesus is described as a Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes. It would surely be freakish as well as repulsive to visualize realistically such an animal. What the author of the Book of Revelation intended by these symbols is that Jesus has universal dominion (seven horns) and knowledge of all things (seven eyes), the number seven signifying perfection or universality, the horn dominion or power, and the eye knowledge.¹⁴

¹⁴ Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 69.