

DANIEL 7: ITS STRUCTURE AND ROLE IN THE BOOK

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The unity of Daniel 7 and its role in the book's structure are much debated issues.¹ My purpose here is to demonstrate that Daniel 7 in its present form has a coherent literary structure and to show how the chapter acts as a hinge which binds together chapters 1–6 and 8–12.

The Structure of Daniel 7

Older source-critical studies which attempted to distinguish various strata (Hölscher, 1919; Noth, 1926) are still defended or only slightly modified by some (Dequeker, 1973; Weimar, 1975; Kvanvig, 1978; and Kearns, 1980). Against the above views and in support of the chapter's unity are Rowley (1951); Zevit (1968); Casey (1979); Ferch (1979); Niditch (1980); and Collins (1977, 1984).²

Most studies assume that chapter 7 is divided into two sections: vv. 2–14 contain the vision and vv. 15–27 contain the interpretation (e.g., Zevit, 1968, p. 388; Casey, 1979, p. 17; Kvanvig, 1978, p. 95). This division falters on vv. 19–22, which are not part of the angel's interpretation.

In fact, the chapter consists of three formal elements: vision, the seer's request for clarification, and the angel's interpretation. The chapter's

1. For a convenient summary of views, see Collins (1984, pp. 74–83).

2. Niditch (1980, pp. 189–200) demonstrates that chapter 7 is consistently written in a "rhythmic prose style" except vv. 9–10, which are closer to poetry. It is significant that nowhere in the chapter do the poetic tropes of "verb gapping" and "coloration" occur (O'Connor, 1980), a fact which further supports Niditch. This observation eliminates a major factor producing much of the source-critical discussion, i.e., the assumed distinction between prosaic and poetic verses in the chapter.

literary structure revolves around these three elements and can be outlined as an ABCB'A'C' structure:³

	vv. 1–2a -----	Prologue
A	vv. 2b–14 -----	Vision
B	vv. 15–16a ----	Seer's request for clarification
C	vv. 16b–18 --	Angel's brief interpretation
B'	vv. 19–20 ----	Seer's request for further clarification
A'	vv. 21–22 -----	Vision
C'	vv. 23–27 ---	Angel's lengthier interpretation
	v. 28 -----	Epilogue

Distinct formal devices determine this ABCB'A'C' structure. The author uses the phrase "I was seeing" (*ḥāzēh ḥāwēt*), or variations of it,⁴ to indicate the vision:

"I was seeing" (*ḥāzēh ḥāwēt*)—vv. 11a, 21

"I was seeing and behold" (*ḥāzēh ḥāwēt wa'ārū*)—v. 6

"I was considering . . . and behold . . . and behold" (*mištakkal ḥāwēt . . . wa'ālū . . . wa'ālū*)—v. 8

"I was seeing in visions with the night and behold" (*ḥāzēh ḥāwēt beḥēzwî 'im lēlyā' wa'ārū*)—v. 2

"I was seeing in the visions of the night and behold" (*ḥāzēh ḥāwēt behezwê lēlyā' wa'ārū*)—vv. 7, 13

"I was seeing until" (*ḥāzēh ḥāwēt 'ad dī*)—vv. 4, 9, 11b

"And behold" (*wa'ārū*)—v. 5

This formula indicates that vv. 21–22 are part of the vision along with vv. 2b–14 (So also Collins, 1984, p. 75; Ferch, 1979, pp. 142–145.). This is also indicated by the fact that the little horn's war against the saints is

3. Ferch (1979, p. 142) outlines the chapter as follows:

A	vv. 1–2a -----	Prologue
B	vv. 2b–14 -----	Vision
C	vv. 15–16 -----	Seer's reaction to the vision
D	vv. 17–18 ----	Brief interpretation
C'	vv. 19–22 -----	Seer's reaction to and elaboration of vision
B'	vv. 23–27 -----	Lengthy interpretation
A'	v. 28 -----	Epilogue

In order to arrive at a perfect chiasmic structure, Ferch joins vv. 19–22 together (so also Niditch, 1980, p. 184) and labels vv. 23–27 B', parallel to the vision of vv. 2b–14, instead of an expected D', parallel to the interpretation of vv. 17–18.

4. Source-critical analyses generally assume an original consistency (e.g., Kearns, 1980, p. 19). This approach fails to reckon with an author's use of stylistic variation. (So also Casey, 1979, pp. 11–17; Collins, 1977, pp. 129–132; Niditch, 1980, pp. 189–200.) In fact,

presupposed as part of the vision in the angel's interpretation (v. 25) but is nowhere mentioned in vv. 2b–14.⁵

Parts B (vv. 15–16a) and B' (vv. 19–20) both contain the formula of the seer requesting “the truth concerning” (*yaššibā* . . . ^c*al*—v. 16; *yaššābā* ^c*al* . . . *we* ^c*al*—vv. 19–20).

Parts C (vv. 16b–18) and C' (vv. 23–27) both contain the angel's interpretation which begins, “he said” (^ʔ*amar*—vv. 16b, 23a).⁶

The rhetorical device of inclusion further supports this ABCB'A'C' structure. The phrase, “I was seeing in the visions with/of the night and behold,” initiates and concludes A (vv. 2b, 13a).⁷ Also the phrases, “the winds of the heavens” (*rûhê šemayyā*—v. 2) and “with the clouds of the heavens” (^c*im*-^c*ānānê šemayyā*—v. 13), form an inclusion for vv. 2b–14. The only other occurrence of *šemayyā* is in v. 27a, which forms an inclusion to the whole chapter apart from the prologue and epilogue. The references to the fourth beast as “different” from its predecessors (v. 19) and to the little horn's appearance as “greater than its fellows” (v. 20b) bracket B'. The aba pattern connected with the word “saints” (*qaddīšîn*), “saints . . . the saints of the Most High . . . saints,” ties vv. 21–22 together as a unit. This is especially evident since these are the only occurrences of *qaddīšîn* in absolute state in the chapter. Finally, two phrases serve as an inclusion for C': “all the kingdoms . . . all the earth” (*kol-malkewātā* . . . *kol-ʔar* ^c*ā*—v. 23); and “kingdoms under all the heavens” (*malkewāt teḥôt kol-šemayyā*—v. 27a).

The Structure of vv. 2b–14

This ABCB'A'C' pattern is also the structural pattern of vv. 2b–14.⁸ The formula, “I was seeing” (*ḥāzēh ḥāwēt*), or a variant of it introduces each of the following sections:⁹

the formula “I was seeing” (vv. 11a, 21, 6, 2, 7, 13) plus its variant “I was considering” (v. 8a) occur a total of seven times, and the formula “and behold” (vv. 6, 8a, b, 2, 7, 13, 5) occurs seven times. Sequences with seven elements are rather common in the Hebrew Bible.

5. Niditch (1980, pp. 180–181) argues for following G, which adds to v. 8 *kai epoei polemon pros tous agiouis*. It seems more probable that G represents a later addition to avoid the problem. However, this addition of G does illustrate that at an early date vv. 21–22 were considered part of the vision.

6. Collins (1984, p. 75) includes vv. 15–16 as part of the interpretation (vv. 17–18) in contrast to the formal distinction between the two.

7. On this phrase in v. 7a, see below.

8. Essentially, Ferch (1979, p. 136) and Collins (1984, pp. 74–75) recognize this structure for vv. 2b–14.

9. Collins (1977, pp. 130–131) demonstrates that the stylistic peculiarities of vv. 8 and 11a are not sufficient to consider them editorial insertions. Rather, the unique formula,

A	vv. 2b-7 -----	Four beasts
B	v. 8 -----	Little horn
C	vv. 9-10 --	Throne scene
B'	v. 11a -----	Little horn
A'	vv. 11b-12 -----	Four beasts ¹⁰
C'	vv. 13-14 -	Throne scene

The device of inclusion also supports these divisions. The formula, "I was seeing in the visions with/of the night and behold," introduces the four beasts and the first beast in vv. 2b-4a and introduces the fourth beast in v. 7. The fact that it introduces the four beasts in v. 2b-3 indicates that vv. 2b-7 is a unit. Also, the statement that the four beasts were "each different from the other" (*šāneyān*—v. 3a) forms an inclusion with the statement that the fourth beast was "different from all the beasts before it" (*mešanneyyāh*—v. 7c). Finally, the word "sat" (*yetib*) brackets C (vv. 9-10). Therefore, the pattern ABCB'A'C' represents the structure of both vv. 2b-14 and the whole chapter.¹¹

The Purpose of the Chapter's Structure

Chronologically and logically, the chapter divides as follows:

vv. 2b-14, 21-22 -----	the vision
vv. 15-16a -----	seer's request for clarification
vv. 16b-18 -----	angel's brief interpretation
vv. 19-20 -----	seer's request for further clarification
vv. 23-27 -----	angel's lengthier interpretation

In contrast to a logical presentation, the present shape of the chapter seems to be structured for dramatic effect.

In this structure the brief interpretation of vv. 16b-18 plays a significant role. It serves as a brief, all inclusive interpretation of the whole vision. In doing so, it quickly summarizes the preceding and dramatically anticipates what follows. V. 17 interprets the four beasts and v. 18 antici-

mištakkal hāwēt . . . waʾālū . . . waʾālū, distinguishes the little horn in v. 8 from the four beasts. *ʾālū* occurs as a variant of *ʾārū* in 2:31; 4:7, 10. The formula *hāzēh hāwēt* re-introduces the horn in v. 11a after the digression of the throne scene.

10. Ferch (1979, pp. 136-137) separates the fourth beast (v. 11b) from the first three (v. 12). However, the formula, "I was seeing until" (v. 11b), indicates that both v. 11b and v. 12 form one unit.

11. Possibly a variation of this pattern can be recognized between v. 14a and v. 27a. The order of v. 14a ("dominion, and honor and kingdom" *šolṭān wiqār ūmalkū*—abc) is reversed in v. 27a ("and the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness" *ūmalkūtāh wešolṭānā ūrebūtā*—cab). The pattern cab is a mirror image of bac.

pates the saints' possession (*h_{sn}*) of the kingdom (v. 22). It also serves as a *middle pivot* or *hinge* which connects with the beginning and end of the chapter.¹² V. 17 identifies the four beasts as four kings/kingdoms arising from the earth. The only other place which mentions the four beasts together is v. 3, where they arise from the sea. V. 18 states that "the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever and to eternity." The only other verse which states that "the saints of the *Most High*" will be given the kingdom is v. 27a. Therefore, vv. 16b–18 serve as a brief climax by acting as a hinge which unites the preceding and following together. (So also Ferch, 1979, p. 138.)

But why did the writer save part of the vision (vv. 21–22) until its present location? Casey (1979, pp. 24–27) argues that the little horn's war against the saints does not occur until vv. 21–22, because the "one like a son of man" is a pure symbol of the saints coming in triumph. It was not possible to picture him as persecuted, since he was a triumphant symbol. After the author identified him as "the saints of the Most High" (v. 18), he could then describe the saints as persecuted. However, if the "one like a son of man" only symbolizes the saints in triumph, why is the little horn not portrayed as being *defeated* before vv. 13–14? (Cf. v. 26.) In fact, other features of the vision do not occur until after v. 14: "its claws of bronze" (v. 19); "ten horns *on its head*" (v. 20); and "its appearance mightier than its fellows" (v. 20). Since these latter elements are clearly part of the one vision seen earlier, one should understand vv. 21–22 to be part of that vision also. To bring this out in translation one could translate v. 21a as "I had seen" (Plöger, 1965, p. 105; Ferch, 1979, p. 138). A different explanation for the present location of vv. 21–22 can be offered. The author passed over the horn's war against the saints in v. 8 and v. 11a to hasten to the climax of the judgment scene (vv. 9–10, 13–14). He reserved the reference to this war for vv. 21–22 in order to prepare dramatically for the climactic, lengthier interpretation which focuses on the little horn's war and its defeat at the judgment (vv. 24–27).

In summary, parts C and C' are the climaxes of the drama in this ABCB'A'C' structure. In vv. 2b–14, parts C (vv. 9–10) and C' (vv. 13–14) climax the vision with the judgment scene. In the structure of the whole chapter, parts C (vv. 16b–18) and C' (vv. 23–27) serve as the climaxes by focusing on the judgment.

12. Amos 7:11 provides a good example of a middle pivot or hinge (D. N. Freedman, private correspondence). 7:11 serves both to recall the beginning and to anticipate the end of that unit (7:9–17). V. 11a, "Jeroboam shall die by the sword," recalls v. 9c, "I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." V. 11b, "Israel shall go into exile away from its land," anticipates those very words in v. 17f. Cf. Parunak (1983).

The Role of Daniel 7 in the Book's Structure

Much discussion has centered on the role of Daniel 7 in the book's structure.¹³ Much of the problem arises from the fact that chapter 7 is written in Aramaic, which seems to tie it to the stories of 2–6. Lenglet (1972) has persuasively demonstrated that 2–7 form a unit by being arranged chiasmatically. Chapters 2 and 7 present four kingdoms, after which the eternal kingdom of God is set up. Chapters 3 and 6 narrate the acts of the martyrs and God's miraculous delivery. Chapters 4 and 5 relate to each other by describing God's judgment on the proud rulers of Nebuchadnezzar (4) and Belshazzar (5). Chapter 1, written in Hebrew, serves as an introduction to the whole book by introducing Daniel.

Yet chapter 7 clearly begins the second half of the book, which consists of Daniel's four visions (chapters 7, 8, 9, 10–12). Daniel's visions are narrated in the first person, whereas the stories of 1–6 are narrated in the third person. Daniel 7 does not chronologically follow chapter 6, since chapter 6 is dated to the time of Darius the Mede, whereas chapter 7 is dated to the first year of Belshazzar. Collins (1977, pp. 7–19; 1984, pp. 28–33) seems to have solved the puzzle by arguing that chapter 7 is an *interlocking device* which unites the stories of 1–6 with the visions, written in Hebrew, of 8–12.¹⁴ The final author integrated the two halves by creating an overlap between them. Therefore, the four kingdoms followed by the eternal kingdom in chapter 7 recall chapter 2, and chapter 7 is written in Aramaic to conclude the Aramaic section of 2–7. Yet chapter 7 also begins Daniel's four visions.

My purpose here is to clarify this interlocking role of chapter 7. Daniel 7 does not only interlock the two halves of the book in a general way, but more specifically it serves as a *middle pivot* or *hinge* which ties together the beginning and the end of the book.

Chapter 7 recalls chapter 2 as noted above. It is noteworthy that only in 2:21 and 7:25 is there a reference to one "changing the seasons". God "changes the times and the seasons" (*mehašnē ʿiddānayyā wezimnayyā*) in 2:21, whereas the little horn intends "to change seasons and law" (*hašnāyāh zimmîn wedāt*) in 7:25.

Chapter 7 also anticipates the end of the book. Chapter 7 expands on chapter two's vision by adding the following details among others: the

13. For a summary of views, see Eissfeldt (1965, pp. 516–528) and Collins (1984, pp. 27–30).

14. Cf. Rowley (1951) for a similar view. Gooding (1981) argues that chapters 1–5 form the first half of the book and chapters 6–12 the second. His proposal contradicts the formal criteria for connecting chapters 2–7 and 7–12.

little horn's persecution of the saints, his end, the judgment scene, and the eternal kingdom of God given to "the people of the saints".¹⁵ It is these added details which receive the focus of attention at the end of the book.

The final judgment comes when the "little horn" meets his end after persecuting Israel (11:45–12:1). Daniel's people, "all who are found written in the book" (12:1), are delivered. The resurrection takes place with some receiving "everlasting life" and others receiving "everlasting contempt" (12:2). It is clear that this two-fold division of people is the result of the judgment depicted in chapter 7, since the "book(s)" of judgment is only mentioned in 7:10 and 12:1. Also, only in 7:25 and 12:7 do we find the phrase "a time, (two) times, and a half a time" (*iddān we^ciddānīn ūpelag^c iddān*, 7:25; *mô^cēd mô^cādīm wāhēšī*, 12:7).

Therefore, Daniel 7 serves as a pivot or hinge in the book's present structure. It recalls the kingdoms of chapter 2 and concludes the Aramaic section of 2–7. It stresses the final judgment and thus anticipates chapter 12. In fact, Daniel 7 itself has a *middle pivot* (vv. 16b–18), a fact which adds further support to this view. (See above.)

In conclusion, Daniel 7 in its present form exhibits a coherent literary structure, and it serves as a hinge which ties together chapters 2 and 12 in the book's structure.

15. For our purpose here it is not necessary to decide if the *qaddīšīn* are angels or humans. On the debate see Collins (1977, pp. 123–152) and Hasel (1975).

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