Daniel 6: There and back again – A deity's tale

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This article states that, with his narrative, the author of Daniel 6 creates the presence of Elohim outside Jerusalem and Israel, within non-Israelite environments. Applying a body-space frameset to the texts of Daniel 6 helps to read the text as a construction of concepts. With his narrative the author creates the presence of Elohim outside Jerusalem and Israel, within non-Israelite environments. Furthermore, a spatial frameset shows that the story of Daniel 6 can be read as a conclusion to a larger narrative that stretches from Daniel 1–6. In this narrative the author utilises spatial concepts such as the character of Daniel; the lion's den; Jerusalem and King Darius, to establish the omnipresence of the God of Israel. In constructing this presence-of-God reality the author conveys a message of hope and trust in the authority of the God of Israel. In this regard Daniel 6 is not just a story about the character Daniel being persecuted for his faith; rather it is a story about the God of Israel establishing his presence and his ability to act through and within space and time.

Introduction

The title of this article may bring the journeys of Bilbo Baggins to mind. However, this article is not a story about a hobbit journeying through Tolkien's Middle-Earth; rather it is an essay about a deity travelling through the ages and history of empires establishing his presences in unknown worlds. The goal of this article is to demonstrate that the text in Daniel 6[1] is a construction of written words built-up from the *spatial experience* of human cognition. Here it is argued that the language used by the author of Daniel 6 to construct his narrative, mirrors certain fundamental properties and design features of the human mind (De Bryn 2014:1; Evans & Green 2006:5). In communicating with his readers, the author deliberately employs certain concepts not only to construct his narrative, but also to create a specific reality (Croft & Cruse 2004:7).

The research, on which this article is based, forms part of a broader new development within the methodology of studying language and the way in which humans communicate. This new science is known as 'cognitive linguistics'. Briefly put, cognitive linguistics involves the study of the complex relationship between language and the mind (De Bryn 2014:1; Evans, Bergen & Zinken 2007:3). In this new science it is postulated that texts, as mediums of communications (Becker 2005:45), are embedded in an author's cognitive paradigm. This means that the author of Daniel 6 utilises specific concepts, embedded in his own cognitive world view, to convey his narrative to his readers.

This article uses a so-called 'spatial-body frameset' to analyse the text in Daniel 6. It focuses on how the author specifically uses spatial concepts (markers) to construct the reality of the omnipresence of the God of Israel. In constructing this 'presence-of-God' reality the author conveys a message of hope and trust in the authority of the God of Israel to his readers.

The analysis of Daniel 6 offered in this article corresponds to similar research on Psalms 2, 110 (De Bruyn 2012:456–470; 2013a:193–209) and Daniel 1, 3 and 5 (De Bruyn 2013b:623–641; 2014:1–7).

Problem

This article is unique in that it differs from previous research in three ways. Firstly, it uses a *spatial-body frameset* based on cognitive linguistics to analyse the text of Daniel 6, such an approach has not been used by biblical scholars before. Secondly, most scholars identify the main characters of the narrative as either *Daniel* or Darius or his officials. This article however, shows that the story known as 'Daniel in the lion's den', rather should be known as: 'God and the lions'. Contrary to popular belief, Daniel 6 is not just a story about *Daniel*, but also a

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1.For a better distinction between the Book of Daniel and the character, *Daniel* in italics will be used when referring to the character. Daniel without italics will be used in reference to the Book of Daniel or the stories of Daniel 1–6.

narrative about the God of Israel. Thirdly, although Daniel 6 can be treated as an individual story, this article uniquely treats it as part of a larger narrative that stretches from Daniel 1–6. This larger narrative can be described as either a 'clash of deities or a deity war' (De Bruyn 2013b:623–641; 2014:1–7). This article postulates that Daniel 6 is a story about the God of Israel clashing with Darius and the gods of the Meden and the Persian Empire. Not only does the author of Daniel 6 demonstrate to his readers that the God of Israel can operate outside the land of Israel, but he also shows that the Israelite God is the supreme ruler of all kingdoms and other god spaces. It is true that other methods could be used to indicate God's capability to act outside Israel, as Towner (1984:20–29) suggests, but up until recent research Daniel 1–6 is interpreted as stories about *Daniel* and *his* friends maintaining their faith, with God acting on their behalf. However, this article treats Daniel 1–6 as narratives about the God of Israel. In addition, this article treats these subordinate stories as events that can be linked together into a larger and more primary narrative about the God of Israel as the main character. In the different events in Daniel 1–6 the author utilises *Daniel* and his friends, the lion's den, the different temples, cities and locations as 'spatial markers' to construct the reality of the God of Israel's supremacy and omnipresence. It is thus postulated that the author deliberately placed the events of the different Daniel stories in a specific order to create a larger narrative. This different nuance in approaching the text is only possible because of cognitive linguistics.

No scholar has recently approached Daniel from the vantage point of cognitive linguistics, thus no new developments in the field of linguistics, such as the 'creating' properties of languages, have been considered. Research on Daniel 6 can be summarised as follow:

- Different themes such as: God who acts on faithfulness; loyalty to God; God's deliverance of the faithful and the acknowledgement of God by the Gentiles; protection of the faithful; faith in the face of persecution (Calvin 1852:325–348; Arnold & Beyer 1999:429; Steinmann 2008:299–305).
- Conflict between the Israelite religion and foreign religions (Rendtorff 2011:387–389).
- Broad overviews analysing the Book of Daniel verse by verse (Aalders 1962; Collins 1993:237–281; Farrar 1979:351–432).
- Historical problems – possible settings for Daniel 5 and 6 at the time of the fall of the Babylonian Empire and the link with when the book was written in the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes; succession of kings (Anderson 1984:51–70; Miller 1994; La Cocque 1998:1085–1107; Pace 2008:13–14, 159–194).
- The structure and two languages (Hebrew and Aramaic) of the Book of Daniel as well as its apocalyptic nature (Hartman & Di Lella 1978; Redditt 1999:4–5, 13; Witte 2012:643–668).
- The interpretation of Daniel 1–6 as court tales of contest with the main characters as *Daniel*, the friends of *Daniel* and

the wise men of Babylon; conflict between an exemplary *Daniel* and his rivals at court (Towner 1984:20–69).
- The cultic motifs found in the Book of Daniel (Vogel 2010).
- The Book of Daniel as a theophany of Jesus Christ (Crossley 2002:601–621).

Other issues in the study of Daniel are: 'the son of man' in chapter 7; the textual form of the book; the genre; social setting; the history of interpretation and the theology and ethics of the book; Daniel written as a book for Jews in the diaspora (Rendtorff 2011:387–389).

Pieter Venter (2006:993–1004) wrote about 'space' in Daniel 1, but he did not explore the constructing properties of language as exploited by the author of the Daniel texts to construct certain 'reality-spaces' based on human experience, as proposed by Merleau-Ponty (2005:335–342). The sovereignty of the God of Israel is stressed by some scholars (Crossley 2002:601–621; Towner 1984:20–69; Willis 2010; Witte 2012:643–668). None of these scholars, however, connects this theme to any aspect of cognitive linguistics or explores the theme as a reality constructed by the author in utilising spatial markers. This article takes the new developments in the study of languages into consideration. Therefore, although this article will also emphasise the sovereignty of God and his ability to act in foreign god spaces, it will do so uniquely from the vantage point of cognitive linguistics.

Orientation
Body and space

In the field of cognitive linguistics four basic ideas can be identified as useful for the exegetical process of studying texts such as Daniel 6. These ideas can be summarised as follows (De Bruyn 2012:456–470; Haspelmath 1997; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; Merleau-Ponty 2005; Zlatev 2007).

- The human mind produces words as reflections of concepts. As concepts words embody human culture and world views.
- As humans interact with the world around them they use their bodies as a metaphorical framework to make sense of their experience of the world.
- In making sense of their world, humans create 'spaces' to order their environment. These spaces may be physical spaces such as a room or more abstract such as different situations and realities. However, both physical and abstract spaces are experienced as real by human cognition.
- Language is not merely a reflection or representation of realities; reality is also constructed by language. Language can thus create realities which are in turn experienced as spaces by the human cognition.

Linguists such as Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003) are of the opinion that all human behaviour is located in space and constructed from it. Through these experienced

structural 'spaces' specific phenomena can be categorised or described, for example 'below' the ground, 'on top' of a building, 'inside' a cave, 'outside a house', 'under' a table, et cetera. Some environments, such as those of the church or temple, are even experienced and treated as *holy* or *sacred spaces*. By cognitively constructing such spaces we sometimes instinctively use our bodies to describe these spaces in an abstract sense. Three examples follow: The eye of a needle is the space where a thread is put through. The space where a cave is entered is called the mouth of the cave. A Universal Serial Bus (USB) extension is often described as a male-female cable. This means that we as humans give meaning to the spaces we live in through our bodies (Venter 2006:993–1004).

The creative properties of language can be explained by two examples:

- Laws: these are nothing less than word-constructed framesets creating realities within which humans function daily.[2]
- Liturgical phrases: uttering words in specific circumstances creates new realities.[3]

Based on these aspects of cognitive linguistics, this article postulates that the author of Daniel 6 utilises spatial body concepts to construct the reality of the omnipresence of the God of Israel.

Identifying spaces

'Embodied space' is the location in which human experience and consciousness materialise. These embodied spaces can take the form of many different entities (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003:2). There are thus different ways in which spaces can be created by employing language and where these spaces can be identified in texts.

Spatial markers are indications of embodied spaces within a text. These spatial markers can be summarised as follow: 'the human body' as a vessel of the 'self'; 'body-space', which centres around the human body; 'gendered spaces'; 'inscribed spaces'; 'contested spaces'; 'trans-national space' (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003:1–37); 'trajector'; 'landmark'; 'frame of reference'; 'region'; 'path'; 'direction' and 'motion' (Zlatev 2007:318–350).

Against the world view of the Ancient Near East, aspects of these spatial markers will be combined with sacred

space. Sacred spaces are the materialisation of the religious paradigm of the human mind. The creation of sacred spaces is the result of people's interaction with their environment on a religious level (Murphy 2002:35–39).

Sacred spaces may therefore appear to overlap with other embodied spaces. Buildings are an example of this. It is only through religious paradigms that a building such as a temple or church is experienced as sacred and therefore treated differently to an office building. In the Old Testament the temple was treated differently for it was the house of YHWH (cf. Ps 5:7–8; 79:1 & Hab 2:20). Mount Zion was not just experienced as a landmark, but as the Holy Mountain of God (Ps 48).

Spatial-hermeneutical frameset

In the Ancient Near Eastern world view, cities and mountains could sometimes be viewed as more than just geographical landmarks. Sometimes they were viewed as the sacred spaces of the gods. The same applied regarding temples, altars and those statues that served as images of the gods. Even people such as priests or kings were viewed as special for they were experienced as extensions or vessels of the gods' authority and power (Cunningham 2013:31–53; Murphy 2002:35–49; Walton 2006:212, 278). These sacred spaces were the cognitive manifestation of peoples' religious experiences of the interaction between heaven and earth. Sacred spaces were experienced as part of the personal space of specific deities.

The cosmos itself was also experienced in terms of different spaces (see Figure 1), and broadly speaking was divided into the unseen world of the gods and other supernatural forces and the physical world. The unseen world was again divided into the heavens above and the underworld below. The heavens were experienced as the dwelling places of the gods whilst the underworld was associated with the dead. In terms of space and the Ancient Near Eastern world view, the heavens above could be described as god space. The earth below was experienced as the living space of humans, and could therefore be described as human or earth space. Sacred
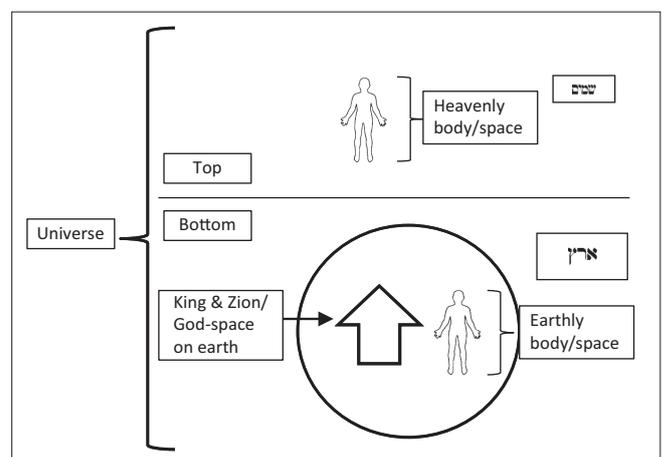
FIGURE 1: The ancient worldview depicted in terms of body-spaces.

spaces formed a type of connection point between the unseen world and the physical world. They were also experienced as extensions of the deities' god-spaces on earth (Figure 1). Sacred spaces also indicated that specific locations, regions or territories were under the protection and authority of specific deities (Figure 1). In this regard deities were viewed as the patrons of specific cities whilst temples were not only the earthly homes of the gods, they were also experienced as the public face of a deity's presence (Schneider 2013:54–83). This article concerns itself only with the spaces of heaven and earth.[4]

Since specific regions, cities or territories were under the protection of specific gods – in wartime people called upon their gods for protection. It was believed that the people with the strongest gods would win the war. When a war was lost, it was believed that the gods were not strong enough to protect their people (De Bruyn 2014:3–4). 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.

The religion of both the kingdoms of Judah and northern Israel reflect this ancient world view. As a nation, Israel was viewed as the sacred property of YHWH, also known as Elohim[5] (Ex 19:5–6; Dt 14:2). In Israel the presence of YHWH manifests in different ways. Mount Zion was experienced as the throne of God whilst Jerusalem was viewed his Holy City (Ps 48). The temple in Jerusalem was revered as the house of YHWH and the centre of creation (Ps 29; Sweeney 2013:151–173). The Davidic king himself was regarded as an earthly extension of YHWH's heavenly god space (Ps 2; 45; 110; De Bruyn 2012:456–470). The Arameans assumed that the God of Israel's authority was confined to the mountains and not the plains (1 Ki 20:23) and later the Assyrian king told Hezekiah not to trust in YHWH for he could not protect his city of Samaria (Is 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; Is 40; Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:515–516).

It is possible that the author of Daniel 1–6 wrote these stories to answer the doubt people could have had about the power, capability and authority of the God of Israel. This possibility is investigated form the vantage point of cognitive linguistics. For this investigation a spatial-hermeneutical frameset is used. The focus of this article is on Daniel 6.

Applying a body-space frameset

As with the stories in Daniel 1–5, the author of Daniel 6 creates the reality of the omnipresence of the God of Israel by utilising spatial markers such as sacred space and contested space.

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4. Normally the Sheol would be under the earth. This article focuses on heaven and earth.

5. In the text of Daniel 6 the Jewish deity is named Elohim.

Daniel 6 as part of a larger narrative

In this article it is postulated that Daniel 1–6 does neither simply relate stories about young men facing persecution because of their faithfulness to the God of Israel, nor are these chapters merely stories about the protection of the faithful. Protection is indeed a major theme in these stories, but instead of interpreting protection simply as an act of the God of Israel on behalf of the faithful – as most scholars do – this article postulates that the author uses the theme of protection to indicate the capability of the God of Israel to act outside the land of Israel. Furthermore, in terms of a body-spatial framework, it could be argued that in each of these stories in Daniel 1–6 protection is the consequence of the Israelite God being victorious after he was challenged by foreign powers outside the land of Israel. Or protection is the means by which the author demonstrates the victory of the God of Israel when challenged by foreign powers. In this way the stories in Daniel 1–6 may be seen as stories about the God of Israel as the main character. In addition the different stories in Daniel 1–6 can be linked together as events in a larger, more dominant narrative that can be described as a clash of deities or a deity war. Daniel 6 forms the conclusion to this larger narrative in which the author utilises different forms of sacred space and contesting space to create the omnipresence of the God of Israel.

The larger narrative can be described as follows:

- In Daniel 1 the god space of the God of Israel is invaded by the Babylonian king and his god who is probably the Babylonian high god Marduk. However, what starts as an invasion of the God of Israel's god space is turned around into an invasion of Marduk's own god space. The clash between the God of Israel and Marduk leads to the downfall of Marduk and the Babylonian Empire.
- In Daniel 2 it is indicated that the God of Israel is not bound by the specific god spaces. The God of Israel is the ruler of all empires.
- In Daniel 3 it is shown that the God of Israel cannot only act within Marduk's god space, but, in addition, defeat him by protecting the faithful from the fire.
- In Daniel 4 Marduk cannot stop the God of Israel from humiliating his king.
- In the previous events the author shows that Marduk's king and his god space belongs to the God of Israel. Now the denouement in the larger narrative is found in Daniel 5. The God of Israel ultimately defeats Marduk and shows his superiority by giving the Babylonian Empire to the Medes, the Persians and their gods.
- The chosen narrative culminates with the author showing his readers (by the events in Daniel 6) that not only does the Babylonian Empire belong to the god space of Israel's God, but to the Median and Persian Empire as well.

We should take into account the world view of the Ancient Near Eastern people. People believed that after the conquest of Jerusalem, God's space was invaded and his temple was defiled. He was supposed to be a defeated deity with no

power and authority. In the minds of the people his territory now belonged to Marduk. The Israelite God was thus not supposed to be able to act inside Marduk's god space, much less to defeat him. However, again it must be said, by carefully employing the events in Daniel 1–6 and linking them together, the author creates the omnipresence of God by showing his capability to act inside the god spaces of other deities. In each chapter the author shows how the presence of the God of Israel manifests through different spatial markers in order to create his omnipresence.

To emphasise the omnipresence of Israel's God further there may be a hint to a planned type of circle motive in the larger narrative. The larger narrative starts with the mentioning of the city of Israel's God, Jerusalem. The Judean captives and temple treasures are taken away from Jerusalem to Babylon. In chapter 6 Jerusalem is mentioned again. *Daniel* opens his window towards Jerusalem and prays towards the city. This may be interpreted as a movement back to Jerusalem. The Medes and the Persians allowed the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem. In this way the author establishes the God of Israel's presence through time and space – from Jerusalem through the Babylonian Empire, through the Medes and Persian Empire and back to Jerusalem again. It is from this that the title of the article is derived. This possible circle motive will be investigated in more detail later in the article.

Elohim and the lions

The events of Daniel 5 flow naturally into a new Medes and Persian environment. In the past the events in Daniel 5–6 were linked to Cyrus, who conquered the Babylonian Empire in 539 BCE. Darius the Mede was either linked to king Darius I of Persia or to one of Cyrus's generals (Collins 1993:256–265; Steinmann 2008:299–305). For the purpose of this article the succession of kings is not important for it focuses on the narrative. Writing from the vantage point of a much later Hellenistic-Maccabean environment the author utilises basic events from the past and from tradition to comment on the authority and power of the God of Israel.

After the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonian Empire, the god space of Marduk, now belongs to the gods of the Medes and Persians in the minds of the people. Within the new Medes and Persian environments the power and authority of the God of Israel again could be questioned. Was it really the God of Israel who gave the Babylonian Empire to the new rulers, or could it be that the Medes and Persian gods were stronger than the God of Israel? Just as in Daniel 1–5 the author now utilises spatial markers to show that the God of Israel is not just present in the god space of the Medes and Persian gods, but also that he can act within their god space without being stopped.

There is no mention whatsoever of Medes and Persian gods in the narrative, except for a type of deification of king Darius himself. The term god space is thus still applicable.

The Medes and Persian god space is set up by the following markers:

- the kingdom of Darius
- king Darius
- the law of Medes and Persia
- the lion's den.

Just as in Daniel 1 and in contrast to Daniel 3, the events in Daniel 6 indicate that the God of Israel also has spatial markers in the narrative. As early as chapter 1 *Daniel* is established as a vessel of Elohim, the God of Israel (De Bruyn 2014:1–7). As a vessel of the God of Israel, the author utilises *Daniel* as a platform for God to act from inside the god space of other deities. The only other marker that is mentioned is the city of Elohim, Jerusalem. By mentioning Jerusalem, the author indicates that it is the same God who was challenged in Daniel 1 who is now also being challenged within the Medes and Persian environment.

Verses 1–4 form an introduction to the events of Daniel 6. With these verses the author gives contexts to the narrative. *Daniel* is given a high place of authority in the government of king Darius. Due to *Daniel's* hard-working nature, king Darius wants to elevate him even higher in the Medes and Persian government.

However, not all government officials are impressed by *Daniel's* faultless hard work. A plot against him is set into motion (Dn 6:5–10). As with the events in Daniel 1 and 3, the complot focuses on *Daniel's* religion. A group of officials go to king Darius with a proposal that for 30 days no one in the kingdom should make a request or prayer to any man or god, except to king Darius himself. Darius makes the proposal into a law in Media and Persia. With this law a new reality and god space is created within which the king himself is set up as a deified image and all other gods are subordinated to the king's authority. In this newly-found Meden and Persian god space it becomes a capital crime to honour other deities. Against the world view of the Ancient Near Eastern people it would have been expected that foreign deities would not have the authority and power within the god space of the Medes and Persian Empire. Furthermore, in this newly created reality, honouring other deities or making requests to them would mean that the authority of the Medes and Persian Empire and their gods – which in this narrative are embodied in the image of king Darius – would not be recognised.

This new god space or reality, not only challenged the faithful like *Daniel,* but also challenged the authority of the God of Israel himself in two ways. Firstly, Elohim's worshippers are forbidden to recognise his authority and to honour him. Elohim is thus deprived of his honour and authority. Secondly, Elohim's vessel in the form of *Daniel* (the faithful) is confronted with a situation where it can be defiled and killed. Even though it was Elohim who gave the Babylonian Empire to the Medes and Persians, his authority within the new god space is not accepted. Two realities are thus placed in contrast to each other: the reality of Elohim's

authority and presence within foreign god spaces, and the reality of the supreme authority of Darius. However, as with the event in Daniel 1, the author again utilises *Daniel* as a platform from and through which Elohim acts within the Medes and Persian god space. Therefore, when *Daniel* hears about the new decree (Dn 6:11) he decides perform his normal routine to worship the God of Israel. By doing this the author shows that *Daniel* and his God, challenges the reality of a deified king Darius. The challenge to Darius does not come from outside the Medes and Persian god space, but from within. To make things more interesting the challenge came from a deity that was supposed to be a subordinate and degraded deity. With this challenge, tension builds up in the narrative. Would Elohim be capable of following through with his challenge to the authority of the Medes and Persian god space?

The author narrates that *Daniel,* when he hears about the new decree, goes to his room and opens his window towards Jerusalem (Dn 6:11). Jerusalem was experienced as the city of the God of Israel. Praying towards Jerusalem could mean that *Daniel* cognitively extended himself to Elohim. In Tobit 3:8 Raguel's daughter prays at the window whilst her face is turned to God. In 1 Kings 8:35 Solomon requested God to listen to the prayers of the people when praying towards Jerusalem. The Mishnah prescribes that if one prays one must do so with one's face turned towards the Holy of Holies that is in Jerusalem. In the narrative in Daniel 6 it could be an allusion to believe that Elohim was confined to Jerusalem and that he could not be worshipped outside his god space (cf. Ps 137). However, it could also be that within the larger narrative in Daniel 1–6, the mention made of Jerusalem in Chapters 1 and 6 form a kind of circle motif emphasising the reality of the omnipresence of the God of Israel. As mentioned above, after Jerusalem was invaded, there was a movement away from Jerusalem and now at the end of the larger narrative in Daniel 1–6 there is a movement back to Jerusalem. In chapter 5 the space outside the king's banquet hall and the banquet hall itself is bridged by Elohim's handwriting on the wall. Within a spatial body framework it could be argued that by letting *Daniel* look towards Jerusalem, the author is connecting the original god space of Elohim and the Medes and Persian god space. By connecting *Daniel* to the city of Elohim, the author makes it possible for the God of Israel to manifest himself through *Daniel* as he did in Daniel 1. Having *Daniel* look towards Jerusalem, is thus a way for the author to make the presence of Elohim concrete within the god space of the Medes and Persian Empire. This is a direct challenge to the authority of king Darius. Thus, on a cognitive level, it is not so much a case of *Daniel* extending himself to Jerusalem in a belief that God is only present there; it is in reality *Daniel* who becomes an extension of the presence of the God of Jerusalem inside the god space of the Medes and Persian Empire. In the larger narrative in Daniel 1–6, it was indicated that Israel's God could act outside his original god space. By having *Daniel* look towards Jerusalem in the conclusion of the larger narrative, the author indicates that the God of Israel is not confined to one god space at a time. The God of Israel does not move from god space to god space. He was in Jerusalem in Daniel 1 and at the same time he showed that he was present in Babylon. However, he is also present in the Medes and Persian Empire, but simultaneously he is still present in Jerusalem. He was and still is present in Jerusalem and at the same time he is present wherever there are believers. In this way the author establishes the reality of Elohim being present through space and time. Elohim is omnipresent. For the author it means that if Elohim could act outside Jerusalem, he could also act within the god space of the Medes and Persian Empire. The author concludes his larger narrative in Daniel 1–6 with the events around the lion's den.

As one would expect, the threat to the Medes and Persian god space is immediately dealt with (Dn 6:12–14). When Darius's officials heard about *Daniel's* subversive behaviour, they instantly informed the king. In verses 15–16 the author shows how feeble Darius's attempt to be a god really is. Darius himself becomes entrapped in the laws of his empire. According to the narrative, Darius could not change his own laws. Even though Darius may be the embodiment of a god, he does not have the power to rescue or to protect *Daniel* within his own god space. With this the author comments on the limitations of other 'so called' deities. In contrast to the limitations of other deities, the author goes on to re-emphasise that the God of Israel, has no limitations.

The tension in the smaller narrative in Daniel 6 now reaches its height. Darius proclaims that *Daniel* should be put to death by throwing him into a lion's den (Dn 6:17). On a cognitive level the lion's den could be described as 'punishment space' or 'execution space'. It is a place where people are sent as punishment for offences against the Medes and Persian god space. Daniel 6:18 describes how the lion's den is inscribed as part of the authority space of Darius. A stone was placed at the opening of the den and sealed with the signet ring of the king. Even though the lion's den is part of Darius's domain, not even he can save *Daniel*. Darius even says that perhaps *Daniel's* God could save him. With these words Darius admits that there are limitations to his power, and that possibly there may be a god strong enough to rescue *Daniel.* Now the God of Israel is challenged to show his strength and authority in rescuing his spatial vessel. In this way the lion's den also becomes what can be described as 'contested space'. The events in and around the lion's den are thus a contest between the reality of Elohim's omnipresence and authority and the authority of the Medes and Persian Empire.

Overnight, the contest between Elohim and the Medes and Persian authority is concluded in a victory for the God of Israel (Dn 6:19–25). *Daniel* is rescued from death. Elohim had the mouths of the lions shut by his angelic agent, and other deities could not prevent him from doing so. Hereby the author shows that the God of Israel not only has the power to act within a foreign god space, but that he indeed is stronger than the Medes and Persian authorities. Just as with the fiery furnace in Daniel 3, the lion's den becomes a spatial

marker for the authority of the God of Israel proclaiming his presence and his supremacy over all god spaces. Again it is not so much the fact that *Daniel* is rescued that is important, but rather the fact that Elohim has the ability to protect. Thus protection is once more the means to victory. In addition it shows Elohim's capability to act and to be present in a foreign environment. God is not only in Jerusalem but also in the lion's den in a foreign god space. With these events the author also shows that it were not the Medes and Persian gods who conquered Babylon, but that it indeed was the God of Israel who gave it to them (Dn 5). Now the conspirators of the plot to get rid of *Daniel* are put to death (Dn 6:25). They themselves are thrown to the lions and none of their gods are able to protect them, thus the supremacy of Elohim above other gods is emphasised.

Elohim's capability to act in foreign god spaces also leads to Darius's proclamation that no man may speak disrespectfully of the God of Israel. Elohim's victory over the lion leads to a foreign power publicly recognising his authority. Thus the reality of Elohim's omnipresence is proven to be real, whilst the reality of the power and authority of other gods is proven to be an illusion.

It is important to remember that the Book of Daniel was written and compiled at the time of the Jewish persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Murphy 2002:16–136, 52). The 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 self-deified Seleucid king. With his narratives the author wants to comment on the reality of the authority and divinity of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, by creating a contra reality namely the presence and authority of the God of Israel. In the author's contra reality the God of Israel is omnipresent and his presence materialises through the actions of the believer. However, although Elohim manifests through the actions of the believer, he is not confined to the believer. The author shows this by utilising *Daniel* as an instrument of the God of Israel by which he makes his presence known. The Jews can keep to their faith in the God of Israel for he is in control of the Seleucid Empire just as he was in control of the lion's den. Additionally, for all diaspora faithful it means that they should not be afraid of foreign environments for the God of Israel is with them everywhere. The God of Israel also uses the believer to make his presence known in the profane world.

This body-space analysis of Daniel 6 is in accordance with the apocalyptic nature of the Book of Daniel (Murphy 2002:126–152). Within an apocalyptic world view a distinction is made between the spiritual and natural worlds. These two worlds are in constant battle with each other. The hardships that God's people may experience is not because he is incapable of protecting them, but because of the cosmic battle between the forces of God and the forces of evil which extend to every aspect of human life. Within the apocalyptic genre

the author deliberately uses colours, numbers, past events, heavenly beings and other concepts to convey a message of hope. Within the larger narrative in Daniel 1–6 the author deliberately uses specific concepts and events to narrate a story about the omnipresence of the God of Israel in which the believers can trust and hope. Contra to what people may experience or believe, in reality the God of Israel is everywhere and manifests his presents as he wishes without being confined to god spaces as other deities are.

Conclusion

Applying a body-space frameset to the texts of Daniel 6 helps to read the text as a construction of concepts by which the presence of Elohim is created outside Jerusalem and Israel within non-Israelite environments. Furthermore, a spatial frameset shows that the story of Daniel 6 can be read as a conclusion to a lager narrative that stretches across Daniel 1–6. In this narrative the author utilises spatial concepts to establish the omnipresence of the God of Israel. In constructing this presence-of-God reality the author conveys a message of hope and trust in the authority of the God of Israel.

In this regard Daniel 6 is not just a story about the character *Daniel* who is persecuted for his faith, rather it is a story about the God of Israel who establishes his presence and his ability to act through and within space and time.

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