

Jewish Identity under Foreign Rule: Daniel 2 as a Reconfiguration of Genesis 41

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This article explores the various ways in which Daniel 2 reconfigures Genesis 41. Though many scholars have noted similarities between these two texts, such observations have not generated significant advances in our understanding of Daniel 2.¹ John J. Collins lists some of the similarities between Daniel and Joseph, yet he downplays any significant relationship between the two texts.² Though I agree with Collins that Daniel “has its own new hero in a different situation,” I do not see why such a statement necessarily precludes reading Daniel 2 as an attempt

This article originated as a paper in a doctoral seminar with Carol Newsom, and I am grateful for her insightful questions and suggestions. Any errors are, of course, my own.

¹ Apart, perhaps, from considerations of genre. Both John J. Collins (*The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* [HSM 16; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977], 33) and Lawrence M. Wills (*The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* [Myth and Poetics; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995], 41–42) classify Daniel 2 as a “tale of contest” rather than a “tale of conflict.” Collins notes that, whereas the “tale of contest” is characterized by the triumph of a wise person over a number of court officials, the “tale of conflict” is a drama “of danger and deliverance” (ibid.). The threat, however, of losing life and property in Dan 2:5 certainly appears to be dangerous. Daniel’s solution likewise seems to be a deliverance from such danger. For a classification of Daniel 1–6 as “legends” and “didactic wisdom narratives,” see Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 87–88, 110–11.

² Collins denies that Daniel is a midrash, interpretation, or retelling of the Joseph story (*Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 39–40). See also idem, “The Sage in the Apocalyptic and Pseudepigraphic Literature,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 343–54, here 348.

to reconfigure the character of Joseph.³ Although C. L. Seow recognizes points of contact between Daniel 2 and Genesis 41, he neglects to draw any substantive conclusions from the similarities he observes.⁴ While Aaron Wildavsky recognizes the importance of the Joseph story for Daniel, he tends to stretch the boundaries of cogent exegesis.⁵

Robert K. Gnuse and C. G. Labonté provide two of the most detailed comparisons of Daniel 2 and Genesis 41.⁶ Similarities between the two narratives listed by Gnuse include observations of other commentators as well as his own.⁷ Yet many of the parallels he cites from other scholars concern not Daniel 2 but other chapters of the book,⁸ and two of the fifteen similarities noted by Gnuse also rely on material outside of Daniel 2. He cites Dan 4:8–9 to show that in each case the ruler “recognizes the ‘spirit of God’ in the hero,” and he refers to Dan 1:6 to demonstrate that Daniel receives a “new courtly name.”⁹ Another of his alleged similarities, that the “deity of the Jewish boy is recognized as *the true God*” unfairly renders Dan 2:47

³ Collins, *Daniel*, 39–40.

⁴ For a list of these similarities see C. L. Seow, *Daniel* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 34. Seow stresses that the purpose of Daniel 2 is to show not the comic triumph of a novice over his captors but the “triumph of divine wisdom and foreknowledge conveyed through a lowly exile, a faithful servant of God. The story illustrates the sovereignty of God, who humbles the mighty and exalts the lowly” (pp. 34–35).

⁵ Wildavsky sees a connection between the shift in Daniel from Hebrew to Aramaic and the emphasis in Genesis on Joseph’s “fluency in Egyptian.” He claims that the story of Daniel in the lion’s pit recalls the “false story that Joseph was torn apart by a wild beast. . . .” He also uses the Joseph story as the primary lens through which he understands the characters Esther, Solomon, David, and Moses, whom he calls the “anti-Joseph” (*Assimilation Versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator and the Politics of Religion in Biblical Israel* [New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1993], 127–28). He calls Daniel a “satire” of the Joseph narrative (p. 126).

⁶ Gnuse, “The Jewish Dream Interpreter in a Foreign Court: The Recurring Use of a Theme in Jewish Literature,” *JSP* 7 (1990): 29–53; Labonté, “Genèse 41 et Daniel 2: question d’origine,” in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (ed. A. S. van der Woude; BETL 106; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 271–84.

⁷ Gnuse lists the following similarities that others have observed: the form-critical similarities of the two dream accounts; the identity of the dream interpreter as a Jewish boy in a “hostile foreign court”; the hero being “entrusted with future responsibilities” after the dream report; and the contrast between the hero’s “gift of wisdom bestowed by God” and the “failure of human or pagan wisdom” (“Jewish Dream,” 38–40).

⁸ Gnuse lists the following similarities (“Jewish Dream,” 40): the imprisonment of Joseph and Daniel (Daniel 6); descriptions of each as “handsome” (Dan 1:4); each boy impressing foreigners with wisdom (cf. Dan 1:4, 20); the work of each youth, prior to interpreting the dream, in the “administration of assigned tasks” (cf. Dan 1:17–20); and the resistance of each youth to “the temptation of women or food” (Dan 1:8–16). (Utilizing Daniel 1 and 6 as evidence for parallels between the two narratives is odd given Gnuse’s stated objective of comparing Genesis 41 with Daniel 2 and 4.)

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

("your God is God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries").¹⁰ Regardless, Gnuse and I differ in the scope of our comparative work; he is interested in parallels between Genesis 41 and any aspect of Daniel, whereas I restrict my comparison to Daniel 2. More importantly, Gnuse does not acknowledge the consistent ways in which Daniel 2 contrasts the character of Daniel with Joseph. His lack of attention to such contrasts flattens the disparate ways in which Joseph and Daniel are characterized.¹¹

Labonté notes several commonalities between the portrayals of Joseph and Daniel in Genesis 41 and Daniel 2.¹² Following Philip R. Davies, he mentions seven specific similarities between these two chapters.¹³ Labonté adds two details to Davies's list: each tale begins with a temporal note, and in each story there is recognition of the divine presence with the hero.¹⁴ Like Gnuse, Labonté seeks comparisons beyond the scope of Daniel 2 and also exaggerates some of these comparisons.¹⁵ Neither Gnuse nor Labonté notes any of the substantive ways in which Daniel is portrayed differently from Joseph,¹⁶ and Labonté thus avers that Genesis 41 and Daniel 2 carry "the same message."¹⁷ The distinct perspective of each narrative is thereby muted. Nor is any sense conveyed of the manner in which the character of Daniel is presented as a reworked Joseph.

After noting multiple similarities between these two texts, I will identify particular patterns that emerge concerning how Daniel 2 reconfigures Genesis 41.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 48: "So it is possible to draw a general parallel that all three dream interpreters provide a stern and honest message, unlike the usual flattery of the diviners." Gnuse finds in both Genesis 41 and Daniel 2 the same primary message: "Cooperation with the lords of the land in which you live in order to bring divine blessing to all would be a meaningful message for the Diaspora" ("Jewish Dream," 31). Difficulties with such claims will be demonstrated below.

¹² Labonté notes that each character is a young Hebrew, is placed in a foreign environment, seeks to remain faithful to God, is associated with a priestly class and appointed to a government post following the interpretation of the dream; and each represents Israel and its difficulties integrating into a world with little respect for its faith ("Genèse 41 et Daniel 2," 271–73).

¹³ Labonté cites the following: the king has a dream; he is bothered by the dream; the wise courtiers cannot interpret the dream; a member of the court presents an "unknown" Hebrew captive; this "hero" has confidence that God will reveal the sense of the dream to him; the hero affirms that God has revealed the future to the king; and the hero succeeds and is promoted ("Genèse 41 et Daniel 2," 276–77). See Philip R. Davies, "Daniel. Chapter Two," *JTS* 27 (1976): 392–401.

¹⁴ Labonté, "Genèse 41 et Daniel 2," 277. This latter point, although true, needs to be nuanced to bring out the differences in the two accounts.

¹⁵ See, e.g., his claim that, as with Joseph, Daniel's "beauty" (Dan 1:4) reflects the author's attempt to express God's continued presence with Daniel ("Genèse 41 et Daniel 2," 272).

¹⁶ Labonté does recognize that Daniel's task of interpretation is more difficult than that of Joseph and that the opposition between Daniel and the Babylonians is accented more sharply than that between Joseph and the Egyptian courtiers ("Genèse 41 et Daniel 2," 279).

¹⁷ Labonté, "Genèse 41 et Daniel 2," 280: "Ils portent aussi le même message."

Such patterns indicate a few of the distinct and pressing concerns of the author(s) of Daniel 2. Daniel 2 evinces an interest, for example, in the question of the relationship between Jews and a foreign empire. I will argue that, in its reworking of Genesis 41, Daniel 2 provides an ideal model for how Jews are to relate to, and function within, a foreign empire. In addition to discussing how the author adapts the Joseph material, I explore the likely effects of such a reconfiguration on the authorial reader/hearer of Daniel 2. I am thus interested in the diachronic influence of Genesis 41 on Daniel 2, and the intertextuality that would exist between these two texts for the authorial audience of Daniel 2.¹⁸

I. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN DANIEL 2 AND GENESIS 41

Eighteen specific similarities exist between the plot structures of Genesis 41 and Daniel 2. (1) Each narrative begins with the ruler of a nation who has a dream (חלם) (Gen 41:1; Dan 2:1).¹⁹ (2) The timing of each dream is associated with “two years.”²⁰ (3) Each dream results in the ruler’s spirit being troubled (ותפעם רוחו/ותתפעם רוחו) (Gen 41:8; Dan 2:1). (4) The ruler responds to the dream and his troubled spirit by calling for magicians (לְקַרְא לְחֹרְטָמִים/וּקְרָא . . . חֹרְטָמִי) and others

¹⁸ Benjamin D. Sommer defines “influence” as the way in which a text “evokes its antecedents, how one author is affected by another” (*A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* [Contraversions; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998], 6–7). He understands intertextuality to refer to the “manifold connections between a text . . . and other texts.” Such connections may exist “whether the authors of the texts knew each other or not.” This latter perspective allows for a greater focus on the effect of interactions between texts on a reader. Richard B. Hays and Joel B. Green define intertextuality as “the notion that every text embodies the interplay of other texts and so exists as a node within a larger literary and interpretive network” (“The Use of the Old Testament by New Testament Writers,” in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* [ed. Joel B. Green; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 222–38, esp. 228). Warren Carter defines an authorial audience as “a contextualized implied reader” that is reconstructed from the “interrelation between the text and the context in which the work was produced” (*Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001], 4–5).

¹⁹ A. Leo Oppenheim notes that dreams in the ancient Near East typically appear to kings or to priests (*The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East: With a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book* [Transactions of the American Philosophical Society n.s. 46; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956], 184). Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams (חלמות). John E. Goldingay suggests that the plural may refer to the “double dream in Genesis 41” (*Daniel* [WBC 30; Dallas: Word Books, 1988], 30).

²⁰ מקץ שנתים ימים (Gen 41:1); ובשנת שנים (Dan 2:1). That this similarity may not be a mere coincidence is suggested by the first line of the Greek version of Esther, which situates Mordecai’s dream in the “second year [ἔτους δευτέρου] of the reign of Artaxerxes.” The MT begins the story of Esther in the *third* year of the king’s reign (1:1). Might the problematic nature of setting Dan 2:1 in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (given that Daniel has yet to finish his training from ch. 1) be explained by influence from Genesis 41?

(Gen 41:8; Dan 2:2). (5) Those called before the king are incapable of providing what he desires (Gen 41:8c; Dan 2:10–11). (6) A new character is introduced who serves as an intermediary between the king and a potential dream interpreter.²¹ This potential dream interpreter functions in the narrative as a signal of hope that the ruler's dream may be interpreted (Gen 41:12–13; Dan 2:16). (7) The intermediary identifies the ethnicity of the potential dream interpreter.²² (8) The dream interpreter is brought before the ruler (Gen 41:14; Dan 2:25). (9) The ruler initiates dialogue by speaking to the interpreter regarding the interpreter's ability to interpret (פֶּשֶׁר/פֶּתֶר) dreams (Gen 41:15; Dan 2:26).²³ (10) The interpreter responds (וַיֹּעַן) with a twofold answer in which he downplays his own role in the interpretive process and highlights God's role as the one who is able to interpret dreams (Gen 41:16; Dan 2:27–30). (11) The content of the dream is described (Gen 41:17–24a; Dan 2:31–35).²⁴ (12) In each case the dream is a "symbolic" dream.²⁵ (13) The interpreter provides an interpretation of the dream (Gen 41:25–31; Dan 2:36–45a.). (14) The dream is interpreted to refer to future events (Gen 41:25, 28–31; Dan 2:39–45a).²⁶ (15) The interpreter emphasizes the certainty or trustworthiness of the interpretation (Gen 41:32; Dan 2:45c). (16) The ruler is pleased with the interpreter's response (Gen 41:37; Dan 2:46). (17) The ruler affirms the ability of the interpreter and acknowledges God's role in the interpretive process (Gen 41:39; Dan 2:47). (18) The ruler rewards the interpreter by giving him gifts and a promotion to rule over an entire (עַל כָּל) region (Gen 41:41; Dan 2:48).²⁷

²¹ The cupbearer and a "young Hebrew" (Gen 41:9–13); Arioch and Daniel (Dan 2:12–16).

²² Joseph is called a "young Hebrew" (נֶעֱר עִבְרִי) (41:12); Daniel is "a man from the exiles of Judah" (גִּבּוֹר מִן־בְּנֵי גִלְדָּה) (2:25).

²³ In Genesis the word is a verbal form; in Daniel it is a noun. In Biblical Hebrew, פֶּתֶר (as a noun and verb) occurs only in Genesis 40–41. Oppenheim notes that in the ancient Near Eastern court setting it would be the custom for the subject to speak only after being addressed by the king (*Interpretation*, 204).

²⁴ Oppenheim understands Gen 41:16 to reflect a customary wish by the interpreter that the dreams "might portend something favorable" for the dreamer (*Interpretation*, 204–5).

²⁵ Oppenheim distinguishes between a "message" dream in which a clear instruction is given from a deity and a "symbolic" dream, which, owing to its imagistic nature, requires interpretation (*Interpretation*, 197–217). He observes a significant difference between the dreams of Genesis 41 and Daniel 2: "The 'symbols' of [Joseph] are taken from life and express the hidden meaning of the message solely by their extraordinary actions, while those of [Daniel] are far more fantastic in their nature, and their setting is in a peculiar frame of reality" (p. 210).

²⁶ This similarity may be redundant since Oppenheim notes that all symbolic dreams refer to future events (*Interpretation*, 207). Carol Newsom has suggested in conversation that, while Nabonidus's dream, in which he sees Nebuchadnezzar standing on a chariot, may be an exception, it remains unclear when his dream occurs in relation to its telling.

²⁷ Three gifts are given in Gen 41:42: a signet ring, garments of fine linen, and a gold chain. The placement of the latter gift upon Joseph's neck (רִבֵּד הַזֶּהָב עַל־צוּאוֹר) is noteworthy given the later parallel in Daniel (דִּידֶהָבָא עַל־צוּאוֹרָה) (Dan 5:7, 16, 29).

In addition to these specific similarities there is the more patent one of a Jew serving in the court of a foreign king. Parallels also exist between the assignment of characters in Genesis 41 and Daniel 2. In each narrative, the characters can be categorized into one of four groups: the ruler (Pharaoh/Nebuchadnezzar); the magicians and those who fail to interpret the dream; the interpreter of the dream (Joseph/Daniel); and the person who functions as an intermediary between the ruler and the interpreter (cupbearer/Arioch). The numerous specific similarities (lexical and thematic) between these two narratives suggest that Daniel 2 is a conscious reworking of Genesis 41.²⁸

II. DANIEL: A “NEW AND IMPROVED” JOSEPH

The multiple parallels between Daniel 2 and Genesis 41 make the differences between the two narratives all the more significant. Furthermore, the dissimilarities between Daniel 2 and Genesis 41 are consistent in nature, reflecting the existence of three distinct patterns. Each pattern depicts Daniel to be superior to Joseph. In particular, Daniel exceeds Joseph in regard to his ability as a dream interpreter, his piety, and the nature of his relationship to the foreign imperial power.

Dream Interpreter Par Excellence

A number of differences in the two narratives reveal Daniel to be a dream interpreter superior to Joseph. One of the ways that Daniel exceeds Joseph as a dream interpreter concerns the consistent manner in which the crisis of the narrative is intensified in Daniel 2. Though the dream causes the spirits of both Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar to be troubled (רוחו ותפעתם/רוחו ותפעתם רוחו), Nebuchadnezzar is the only one to lose sleep over the matter (ושנתו נהיתה עליו) (Gen 41:8; Dan 2:1).²⁹ In addition, Nebuchadnezzar himself later testifies to the fact that his spirit is troubled (ותפעתם רוחי) (2:3), a repetition in the first person that is absent from the Genesis account. Though each ruler calls magicians (חרטמים/חרטמי) to help interpret the dream, Nebuchadnezzar also summons enchanters (אשפים), sorcerers (כשפים), and Chaldeans (כשדים) (2:2).³⁰ The most significant manner in which

²⁸ In 1835, David Friedrich Strauss, relying primarily on similarities between Daniel 1 and Genesis 37–50, argued that the story of Daniel was modeled on that of Joseph (*The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* [trans. George Eliot; repr., Mifflintown, PA: Sigler, 2002], 85).

²⁹ For a translation of the phrase as “he was overcome by sleep,” see Goldingay, *Daniel*, 30; Shaul Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read: Dreams in the Hebrew Bible* (trans. Lenn J. Schramm; Monographs of the Hebrew Union College 25; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2001), 73. This particular rendering would comport more with those who explain the king’s demand to hear his dream as a result of his having forgotten it.

³⁰ Pharaoh also summons “all the wise men” (Gen 41:8).

the crisis is intensified in Daniel 2 concerns the specific requirement of Nebuchadnezzar and the stated consequences for failing to provide what he desires. Whereas Pharaoh tells the magicians and wise men his dream and seeks an interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar demands to be told not only the interpretation of his dream but the content of the dream as well (2:2). This demand (להגיד למלך חלמתיו) marks the sharpest departure from the plot of Genesis 41.

The narrative importance of Nebuchadnezzar's command to be told his dream is indicated by six references to this demand (Dan 2:2–9). The dialogue between Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans (2:2–9) simultaneously demonstrates the sheer impossibility of fulfilling the king's request as well as the king's refusal to withdraw his decree. The Chaldeans provide four specific reasons why they should not be expected to tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream. They first claim that "there is no one on earth" (לא-איתי אנש עלי-בשחא) who can accomplish such a task (2:10). Second, no king has ever made such a request to any magician, enchanter, or Chaldean (2:10). The repetition of כל in this statement underlines the seriousness of the Chaldeans' claim. Third, the matter is simply "too difficult" (יקירה) (2:11). Finally, the only ones capable of revealing the dream to the king are the gods (אלהיך) (2:11). Each of these remonstrations increases the stature of Daniel once he accomplishes that which the Chaldeans claimed was impossible.

During his dialogue with the Chaldeans, Nebuchadnezzar continually repeats his demand to be told the content of his dream.³¹ The Chaldeans indicate that they will give an interpretation once they have heard the dream's content (2:4).³² Nebuchadnezzar clarifies his demand to hear "the dream and its interpretation" (חלמא ופשרה) (2:5). The intensity of the king's demand is reflected in his insistence that his decree is *sure* (מלתא מני אודא) (2:5). More important for the fate of the Chaldeans is the consequence of losing their limbs and property if they fail to tell the king his dream (2:5). This threat no doubt explains some of the passion with which the Chaldeans subsequently argue before their king. Nebuchadnezzar also promises rewards if they do succeed in telling him "the dream and its interpretation" (חלמא ופשרה) (2:6). The king concludes his speech by reiterating his (and the narrator's) emphasis on knowing the dream as well as the interpretation: להן חלמא ופשרה החוני (2:6). The demand to know the dream as well as its interpretation continues to dominate this dialogue in the Chaldeans' subsequent response to the king. They repeat their prior request (חנינות) from 2:4 to hear the dream before

³¹ Reference is first made to the king's demand in 2:2.

³² Seow understands this response as an indication that the "Chaldeans are oblivious to the nature of the king's request" (*Daniel*, 38.) For him, the Chaldeans will not understand that the king wants to know both the dream and the interpretation until 2:10. Yet the Chaldeans' reiteration of their request in 2:7, after clearly hearing the king demand to know the dream as well as its interpretation, poses a problem for Seow's interpretation. I also fail to understand what in the text causes him to read 2:3 as a request to hear both the dream and its interpretation (*Daniel*, 38, 39).

they give their interpretation (2:7). The king's response focuses again on his demand to hear the dream (2:9a, 9b). The king's requirement to hear the content of the dream is thus repeated four times in his dialogue with the Chaldeans (2:5, 6, 9a, 9b).³³ This same demand is also the primary focus in the question the king later poses to Daniel (2:26).

The intensification of the crisis in Daniel 2, over against that in Genesis 41, highlights not only differences between Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh but also the arduous nature of the obstacles that Daniel (and God) must overcome in order to interpret the dream successfully. Whereas Joseph is depicted as successfully interpreting Pharaoh's dream, Daniel both accurately discerns the content of the king's dream and interprets it.³⁴ Moreover, the ramifications of failing to provide the dream and its interpretation would be much more severe for Daniel than for Joseph. No consequence is mentioned in Genesis 41 for failing to give Pharaoh the interpretation of his dream. For Daniel, however, and for the rest of the wise men in Babylon, providing the interpretation and the dream is a matter of life and death, of being dismembered and having their houses reduced to ruins (2:5).

Daniel's skill as an interpreter over that of Joseph is indicated also by the confidence he expresses in his ability to provide an interpretation. On two separate occasions he promises to make known the interpretation (2:16, 24). Joseph makes no such promise.³⁵ Moreover, Daniel is the one who initiates going before the king (2:14, 16, 24)—this again in contrast to Joseph, who is called up out of prison (41:14).³⁶ Lastly, and alluded to above, whereas Pharaoh informs Joseph of the content of the dream (41:17–24), Daniel is the one to reveal the dream's content to Nebuchadnezzar (2:31–35).

Piety

The second manner in which Daniel is presented as superior to Joseph is in regard to piety. A noteworthy element in the Daniel narrative that is absent from Genesis 41 is the prayer of Daniel (2:17–23). His prayer is all the more striking given the fact that not once, throughout Genesis 37–50, is Joseph ever portrayed as one who prays. His lack of prayer makes him an anomaly among the ancestors, each of whom is described as communicating in some manner with God.³⁷ Joseph

³³ Despite this focus on the dream and its interpretation, reference is made only to the "interpretation" and not to the "dream" in 2:16, 24, and 25.

³⁴ Seow considers the king's demand to know the dream and its interpretation to be a possible reference to the Joseph story: "Perhaps the narrator wants to show that Daniel was even more gifted than Joseph" (*Daniel*, 38).

³⁵ Joseph does say that God will give Pharaoh an answer אֶת־שְׁלוֹם (41:16).

³⁶ In 4QDan^a, לך appears only once. The word is duplicated in the MT. See Collins, *Daniel*, 3.

³⁷ Some type of communication with God is experienced by Abraham (Gen 12:1–3, 7, 8; 15:1–21; 17:1–22; 18:23–33; 21:12–13; 22:1–2), Isaac (25:21; 26:2–5, 24–25), Jacob (28:12–16; 31:3; 32:9–12, 24–30; 35:1, 9–12), Rebekah (25:23), and Hagar (16:8–12; 21:17–18).

speaks of God but never *to* or *with* God.³⁸ Whereas Joseph claims that God is the source of his interpretation (Gen 41:16), Daniel's prayer demonstrates such a belief. It is, moreover, Daniel's consistent practice of prayer that results in his persecution in ch. 6.³⁹ His habit of praying regularly is underscored by the twofold claim that thrice daily he would fall on his face, pray, and give thanks, and that this activity was customary (כל־קבל דִּיהוּא עבד מִן־קדמת דְּנָה) (6:11).

The content of the prayer (2:17–23) extols certain virtues of Daniel. Crediting God with giving “wisdom to the wise” (חכמתא לחכימין) (2:21) and thanking God for giving himself wisdom (חכמתא) (2:23) are claims for Daniel's own level of wisdom. One can likewise infer, based on 2:21c, that Daniel is a person of “understanding” (בִּינָה). Although wisdom (חכמה) and power (גבורה) belong to God (2:20), they have each been given to Daniel (2:23). This *inclusio* in the prayer draws attention to both God *and* Daniel as bearers of wisdom and might.⁴⁰

Acknowledging God as the source of his interpretation *in the first dream that he interprets* also reveals Daniel to be more “humble” than Joseph. In Genesis 37–50 Joseph is presented as maturing in humility as the narrative progresses. In Joseph's first two dreams, no mention is made of God's role in the interpretive process. Moreover, these early dreams of Joseph point to his clear exaltation over his kin. In the second pair of dreams, those of the baker and cupbearer, Joseph does mention God, albeit briefly and in an interrogative form: הֲלוֹא לֵאלֹהִים פִּתְרָנִים (“Do not interpretations belong to God?”) (40:8). In the third pair of dreams, Joseph is more emphatic about God's role in the interpretive process: בִּלְעָדִי אֱלֹהִים יַעֲנֵה (“It is not in me; God will answer”) (41:16; cf. 41:25, 28). In contrast, Daniel is portrayed from the outset as one who points to God as the source of his “interpretive” gift. Furthermore, Daniel's own dismissal of any unique interpretative ability on his part is more straightforward than that of Joseph: “this mystery has not been revealed to me because of *any wisdom* that I have more than *any other* living being” (2:30).⁴¹

³⁸ At least not in the canonical text. The *Testament of Joseph* has Joseph praying to God that he will be rescued from Potiphar's wife (4:4; 7:5); “I prayed a whole day and a whole night” (8:1); “[I] sang praise in the house of darkness” (8:5). These imaginative additions supply what is recognized as an odd absence in the biblical text. The Greek version of Esther contains similar types of pietistic embellishments. On the ways in which different genres might influence different types of prayer, see Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); Judith H. Newman, *Praying by the Book: The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (SBLEJL 14; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999).

³⁹ I recognize that chs. 2 and 6 originated in different contexts and circulated apart from one another and may have been brought together only at a later date. Notwithstanding this concession, the effect on the reader of the final form of the text would nonetheless still be one in which Daniel's habit of praying presents him in a superior light to Joseph.

⁴⁰ Because of their similarities, Collins sees the prayer and the doxologies in 3:33; 4:31–32; and 6:27–28 as redactional elements: “The doxology in 2:20–23 stands apart from the others because of its greater emphasis on the theme of revelation and may have been added at a later stage” (*Daniel*, 35).

⁴¹ One might attribute differences (here and elsewhere) between Genesis 41 and Daniel 2

The response of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar following the interpretation of their dream is also telling. Although both rulers affirm the interpreter and God, there is a marked difference in the quality of these affirmations. Pharaoh does acknowledge that God is the one who has revealed both the interpretation and the pragmatic proposal to Joseph. Yet such recognition serves merely as a prelude to praising Joseph as one who has more discernment and wisdom than anyone else (41:39). Conversely, Nebuchadnezzar confesses that Daniel's God is "god of gods and lord of kings" (אלה אלהין ומלכין) (2:47). Prefacing this declaration with מִן־קֶשֶׁט ("truly") emphasizes the assurance with which Nebuchadnezzar makes this confession. The king's description of God as one who reveals mysteries (גִּלְיָה רִזִּין) comports with Daniel's own previous characterization of God (גִּלְיָה רִזִּיא/גִּלְיָה רִזִּין) (2:28, 29). Thus, Nebuchadnezzar's "confession" espouses an appropriate theology given the broader literary context of Daniel. The king has been converted to Daniel's perception of God.⁴²

Perhaps most significant, however, is the manner in which the king's confession inverts the syntactical relationship between God and the interpreter.⁴³ Nebuchadnezzar's confession is a *result* of Daniel's being able to reveal this mystery (2:47). Whereas God functions in Pharaoh's statement as a reason for the greatness of Joseph, in Nebuchadnezzar's confession it is Daniel who serves as the reason for a belief in the greatness of God (Gen 41:39; Dan 2:47). In other words, God's role elevates the status of Joseph in Pharaoh's eyes, while Daniel elevates the status of God in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar.

Relating to (and Resisting) the Imperial Empire

A third area in which Joseph surpasses Daniel concerns the relationship between the interpreter and the imperial order. A number of alternatives exist for

to a difference in literary genre (Genesis 41, and the broader Joseph narrative, as "wisdom," and Daniel 2 as a "diaspora tale"). The presence of sapiential motifs in each text suggests, however, that their respective genres are not fundamentally divergent. On wisdom elements in the Joseph narrative, see Gerhard von Rad, "The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom," in idem, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh/London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 292–300; repr. in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (ed. James L. Crenshaw; Library of Biblical Studies; New York: Ktav, 1976), 439–47. For a classification of Daniel 1–6 as "didactic wisdom narratives," see Rendtorff, *Old Testament*, 110–11. On wisdom motifs in Daniel 1–6, see Richard A. Horsley, "The Politics of Cultural Production in Second Temple Judea: Historical Context and Political-Religious Relations of the Scribes Who Produced 1 Enoch, Sirach, and Daniel," in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism* (ed. Benjamin G. Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills; SBLSymS 35; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 123–45, esp. 141–44.

⁴² The "conversion" of a foreign and oppressive ruler is a motif that 2 Macc 9:12–17 applies, albeit much more comprehensively, to Antiochus IV.

⁴³ Nebuchadnezzar's confession is an important motif in Daniel, appearing also in chs. 4 and 5. Bel and the Dragon (41) also concludes with a confession of the king.

how a minority group such as the Jews might relate to a foreign imperial power under which they live. At the opposite ends of this spectrum are full assimilation and total rejection. Between these two extremes exists a wide range involving varying degrees of accommodation, integration, withdrawal, segregation, and resistance. I contend that Daniel 2, as well as Daniel 1–6, provides an alternative example to that of Joseph for how a Jew might relate to, and function within, a foreign imperial power. Considering Joseph to be an unfortunate example of extreme assimilation, the author of Daniel 2 offers Daniel as a model of “moderate resistance.”⁴⁴ There are certainly some ways in which Daniel’s relationship with the empire is presented as similar to that of Joseph. Each, for instance, is accommodated to the imperial culture by receiving a foreign name (Gen 41:45; Dan 1:7). Notwithstanding a few similarities, a pattern emerges in which Daniel is consistently portrayed, in contrast to the assimilation of Joseph, as one who resists the claims of empire.

The dream interpretations provided by Daniel and Joseph aptly illustrate their disparate relationships toward the empire. Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream and the subsequent advice he provides assist in the survival and growth of Pharaoh’s empire. Pharaoh is warned about a potential catastrophe, and he is provided with practical advice concerning how to avoid the impending crisis. There is nothing in Joseph’s interpretation that in any way challenges the right of Pharaoh to rule. His skills are used to further the ends of Pharaoh’s empire.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Daniel’s interpretation declares the future collapse of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom. Daniel makes clear to the Babylonian king that his kingdom is coming to an end and that there is nothing the Babylonian king can do about it. God has disclosed “what will happen at the end of days” (מה די להוא באחרית יומיא) (2:28).⁴⁶

The promotions each interpreter receives following the successful dream interpretations also demonstrate a distinct difference in terms of relationship with imperial power. Although Daniel is given “many great gifts,” these do not seem as grand as the Pharaoh’s signet ring, garments of “fine linen,” and a “gold chain” (Gen

⁴⁴ I am not suggesting that Genesis 41 and Daniel 2 emerged from an identical social group or era, but rather that Daniel 2 sees in Genesis 41 a relevant issue given the former’s specific social context.

⁴⁵ It is thus necessary to provide a caveat to Walter Brueggemann, who claims that Genesis 41 offers a “refutation of the wisdom and technique of the empire. It is a challenge to the epistemology of Pharaoh. Egyptian ways of knowing are called into question. Knowledge is power. And now imperial knowledge has failed” (*Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* [Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982], 326). Although Joseph’s wisdom trumps that of the Egyptians, the chapter ends with him being fully absorbed into the life of imperial Egypt. Thus, Joseph’s “knowledge” no longer stands apart from the empire but is now a part of it and is given in service to it.

⁴⁶ Both Theodotion and the Old Greek further emphasize Nebuchadnezzar’s inability to determine future events by intensifying this promise to read: “what *must* happen . . .” (ὃ δεῖ γενέσθαι).

41:42; Dan 2:48).⁴⁷ Following his promotion, Joseph proceeds to enter fully into the administrative life of imperial Egypt (41:46–49, 53–57). Although Daniel is promoted to rule over all of the province of Babylon and is prefect over all the wise men of Babylon, his status does not appear to be as high-ranking as Joseph, who is given authority over all the land of Egypt and is second only to Pharaoh (41:45). Joseph also receives both an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife (41:45). Daniel is given a new name but takes no foreign wife. Though the lack of any reference to Daniel being married may be due to his status as a eunuch, it is more likely attributable to the consistent attempt to portray him as resisting certain aspects of the imperial empire.

In any event, in his newfound status Joseph exceeds Daniel. Yet the author of Daniel 2 would most likely understand Joseph's promotion as a decline. Such a view was expressed by Philo, who comments on Joseph's promotion: "But that one at any rate even climbs upon the second chariot, becoming arrogant by a fluctuating mind and vain conceit" (*Somn.* 2.6.46). Philo's comment is not without merit. There are clear hints in the Genesis text that Joseph consistently sought to advance his professional status. First are the dreams Joseph has regarding his family bowing down to him (Gen 37:5–11). Referring to these dreams Philo notes: "Also displayed is the element of vain opinion, upon which he mounts as upon a chariot on account of his levity, being puffed up and lifted up, raising *himself* for the destruction of equality" (*Somn.* 2.2.16).⁴⁸ Second is Joseph's explicit request to be remembered by the cupbearer so as not to remain in prison (Gen 40:14–15). Third is the way that Joseph's suggestion to Pharaoh could be read as a submission of his own résumé (41:33–36).⁴⁹

Regardless, Joseph's process of cultural and religious assimilation is virtually complete.⁵⁰ When Joseph's brothers come to Egypt for food, Joseph interacts with them more as an Egyptian ruler than as a fellow Hebrew, much less as kin. In contrast to Joseph, Daniel consistently identifies more with his fellow Jews than with the Babylonians during his trials in Babylon. Even after his own promotion, Daniel's concern is to secure appointments for his colleagues (2:49). Whereas Joseph repeatedly assimilates to the Egyptian regime, the first act attributed to Daniel, that of refusing the king's diet, is emblematic of his consistent action of resisting the empire (1:8–17).

⁴⁷ Daniel will later receive a gold chain (5:7, 16, 29). See n. 27 above.

⁴⁸ Cf. Philo, *Somn.* 2.12.78–80. Translations of Philo are my own.

⁴⁹ The self-referential nature of Joseph's recommendation is suggested by the repetition of "discerning and wise" (בִּנְיָן וְחִכְמָה) in Gen 41:33, 39. Brueggemann understands Joseph's actions more sympathetically: "Joseph's concrete proposal is without guile. There is no hint that Joseph refers to himself" (*Genesis*, 332).

⁵⁰ Wildavsky probably goes too far in reading Joseph's shaving prior to appearing before Pharaoh (41:14) as an expression of assimilation. He claims that it was a common practice for Egyptians to shave their faces and also their heads: "Only foreigners and people of inferior ranks are pictured wearing beards" (*Assimilation*, 119).

A fundamental way in which Daniel resists the claims of empire is by stressing Nebuchadnezzar's status as subordinate to God.⁵¹ Daniel declares to Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom (מלכו), power (חסן), might (תקף) and glory (יקר) have been given to him by the God of heaven (2:37). Daniel thus describes the relationship between Nebuchadnezzar and God as that of a vassal and lord, in which the former is dependent for his sovereignty upon the latter. Daniel declares Nebuchadnezzar to be contingent and not absolute. The dependency of the Babylonian king is reinforced with Daniel's prediction of the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (2:44–45).⁵² Furthermore, in Daniel's prayer the subordinate status of Nebuchadnezzar to God is implied in the description of God as one who "deposes kings and establishes kings" (מהעדה מלכין ומהקים מלכין) (2:21).

In its claim for God's sovereignty over against that of any king (2:21), Daniel's own prayer (2:20–23) can be read as an act of resistance against Nebuchadnezzar. In addition, Daniel contrasts the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom (2:40, 44) with the kingdom of God, which shall never be destroyed (2:44).⁵³ God's kingdom will crush "all of the other kingdoms, and bring them to an end" including that of Nebuchadnezzar (2:44).⁵⁴ The מלכו ("kingdom") functions as a poignant symbolic tool with which Daniel can address fundamental concerns such as who is truly sovereign and who is truly in control.⁵⁵

Daniel's resistance to the ruling empire continues in the additional court tales, wherein harsh judgments are consistently brought against the ruling kings.⁵⁶ Daniel issues a judgment against Nebuchadnezzar for failing to recognize that it is the Most High who is "sovereign over human dominion and that he gives it to whomsoever he wishes" (4:22 [Eng. 4:17]). Here is an elaboration of Daniel's previous claim that God is the one who has given Nebuchadnezzar his position as king (2:37–38). Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom will be returned to him only when he recognizes that "heaven is sovereign" (4:23 [Eng. 4:26]). Daniel even challenges the king to atone for his sins by almsgiving and for his iniquities by being merciful to

⁵¹ Daniel's opening line to the king in 2:27 can be read as a type of resistance in that he agrees here with the Chaldeans and their protest against the unfair demand of the king.

⁵² Considering this prognostication of destruction, I disagree with Collins, who considers Daniel's identification of Nebuchadnezzar as the head of gold to be a statement of flattery (*Apocalyptic Vision*, 10).

⁵³ The issue of resistance to the imperial power is one motif that provides a strong link between the dream's content and interpretation (2:31–45) and the preceding narrative (2:1–30).

⁵⁴ In Daniel 7 God's kingdom is again shown to be superior to the kingdoms of the earth. In contrast to earthly kingdoms, God's kingdom is "an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey it" (7:27). Gnuse suggests that the very use of a "visual-symbolic" dream is intended to "criticize the high view of kingship prevalent in the ancient world" ("Jewish Dream Interpreter," 32).

⁵⁵ I thank Carol A. Newsom for this insight.

⁵⁶ Chapter 3, though not involving Daniel, depicts an act of resistance against the empire by three Jews who refuse to worship the god of Nebuchadnezzar and the statue he set up (3:12, 18).

the poor (4:24). The voice from heaven (4:29 [Eng. 4:25]) confirms Daniel's judgment, namely, that Nebuchadnezzar needs to recognize that it is the Most High who is "sovereign over human dominion," and that God gives it to whomsoever God wishes. Daniel issues a judgment against Belshazzar for exalting himself against (לע) the God of heaven (5:23). The death of Belshazzar that very night confirms the accuracy of Daniel's judgment (5:30). Daniel's refusal to accept the gifts and presents of the king can also be construed as an act of resistance against imperial claims (5:17). The refrain regarding Nebuchadnezzar needing to learn that it is the Most High God who is "sovereign over the human realm and that he is the one who appoints whomsoever he wishes over it" is repeated for the benefit of Belshazzar (5:21).

In each of these three settings, Daniel makes clear to the king that the latter's power and rule are a gift from, and therefore subordinate to, God Most High.⁵⁷ Accordingly, the king is obliged to recognize his true status before and beneath God and to treat God Most High appropriately. The arrogance evidenced by Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar exemplifies the very antithesis of such proper treatment. Depicted repeatedly is Daniel's resistance to the Babylonian empire, in contrast to the assimilating practices of Joseph.⁵⁸

III. RECONFIGURING JOSEPH INTO A NEW AND IMPROVED DANIEL

In his ability to interpret dreams, his piety, and his resistance to foreign imperial rule, Daniel is consistently presented as a "new and improved" version of Joseph. How might one explain the need or desire for the author to present Daniel in such a light? Here I shift my attention from the author's reconfiguration of the Joseph narrative to explore the potential meaning and effect such a reconfiguration may have had on Jewish hearers and readers of Daniel 2.⁵⁹ To answer this question,

⁵⁷ In this regard, Josephus's comment on Daniel is puzzling: "... and while the prophets would foretell ill events, and on this account were displeasing to the kings and the populace, Daniel was to them a prophet of good things [ἀγαθῶν], so that by using words of a good omen in his predictions, he gained the favor of everyone" (*Ant.* 10.11.7 §268). Louis H. Feldman aptly comments that Josephus "seems to have conveniently forgotten Daniel's prophecy of evil tidings for Belshazzar" (*Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* [Hellenistic Culture and Society 27; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998], 637 n. 19). This (skewed) portrait of Daniel may be due to what Feldman claims is Josephus's embarrassment over details such as Daniel's disobedience to the king's law (p. 631).

⁵⁸ Wildavsky treats Daniel 1–6 as "a polemic against Joseph's surrender to foreign ways by indicating, in the person of Daniel, what Joseph ought to have done" (*Assimilation*, 127).

⁵⁹ See Brian K. Blount, *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), viii; he prefers to speak of the "potential" meaning of a text: "Texts do not have 'meaning.' Instead, they have 'meaning potential.'"

I will briefly sketch the contours of an intertextual conversation within which the actions of Joseph and Daniel might have been understood by Jews in the Second Temple period. This period is an apt context within which to situate and understand Daniel 2, given our inability, on the one hand, to fix a precise *terminus a quo* for Daniel and our ability, on the other hand, to set a *terminus ad quem*. We cannot say with certainty when the court tales originated.⁶⁰ Yet we do know when they were being heard or read. The earliest known reference to Daniel is 1 Macc 2:60. Additional references to Daniel occur in Josephus, Philo, the Qumran scrolls, and the NT. How would the literary character of Daniel be understood, particularly vis-à-vis Joseph, in the Second Temple period?⁶¹ What effect(s) would Daniel 2 have on a Jewish audience familiar with the Joseph narrative in Genesis?⁶²

Jews Living under a Foreign Empire: A Typology of Texts

Jewish texts during the Second Temple period evince a wide spectrum of attitudes toward foreign rulers and toward what constituted an appropriate relationship with foreign (read: Gentile) culture. Such concern was no doubt a reflection of the precariousness that characterized the changing relationships between Jews and their foreign rulers. The diversity of views evident in these texts reveals a lively intra-Jewish debate concerning the proper relationship to foreign empires. On one end of the spectrum is 1 Maccabees, which enjoins rejection of foreign culture and empire. Jews who join foreigners are depicted as negatively as the foreigners themselves. “Sons of lawlessness [παράνομοι] came out from Israel and misled [ἀνέπεισαν] many, saying, ‘Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many evil things have found us’” (1 Macc 1:11). These υἱοὶ παράνομοι were authorized by the king to “observe the ordinances [ποιῆσαι τὰ δικαιώματα] of the Gentiles,” which included build-

⁶⁰ Collins argues that Daniel 1–6 was composed earlier than 7–12 and that, while the latter is related to the persecution of Antiochus IV, the former is composed in a setting in which there is a “kinder” relationship between Jewish subjects and their foreign monarchs. “The *Sitz im Leben* . . . implied is not religious persecution but the hazards of the Jewish minority who sought to succeed in the gentile world” (*Daniel*, 33). For a similar perspective, see Collins, *Apocalyptic Vision*, 8–11.

⁶¹ Shane Kirkpatrick similarly asks how the tales in Daniel 1–6 could have functioned “for second-century Judeans” (*Competing for Honor: A Social-Scientific Reading of Daniel 1–6* [Biblical Interpretation Series 74; Leiden: Brill, 2005], 28). He seeks to answer this question by analyzing the role of “honor as a core value” in Daniel 1–6, and how this sociocultural cue would have influenced readers.

⁶² M. H. Abrams describes such an interest as an example of “pragmatic theories” of literary criticism, those that attend to the effects of a text upon its audience (“Orientation of Critical Theories,” in idem, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1953], 3–29, esp. 11–16).

ing a gymnasium in Jerusalem “according to the custom [νόμιμα] of the Gentiles,” removing the marks of circumcision, and abandoning (ἀφίστημι) “the holy covenant” (1 Macc 1:13–15a). The author’s evaluation of such assimilation is quite clear: “They were yoked [ἐξευγίσθησαν] to the Gentiles and sold to do evil” (1 Macc 1:15b). Similar activity is described following the king’s decree: “Even many from Israel acquiesced to his worship [λατρεία] and sacrificed to idols and profaned [ἐβεβήλωσαν] the Sabbath” (1 Macc 1:43).⁶³ Despite condemning such assimilation, 1 Maccabees acknowledges diverse Jewish responses to foreign culture.⁶⁴

If 1 Maccabees occupies one end of the spectrum, the depiction of Joseph in Genesis 37–50 lies at the opposite extreme. As was noted above, Joseph is presented as an archetypal assimilationist. His goals become inseparably (and literally) wed to those of Pharaoh’s empire. Joseph became Egyptian, and Egypt’s success could not be separated from his own. The characterization of Moses offers a stark contrast to that of Joseph. Though Moses is offered every opportunity of cultural advancement afforded to and accepted by Joseph, he chooses to reject the foreign empire and culture of the Egyptians. The first act ascribed to Moses, that of killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew (Exod 2:11–12), highlights the tension of imperial assimilation. Moses’ first choice concerns whether his loyalty lies with “his people . . . his kinsfolk” (1:11) or with the Egyptians. His act of murder leaves little room for ambiguity. Moses’ subsequent struggle against Pharaoh for the freedom of his people is foreshadowed by and encapsulated in his murder of the Egyptian. The exodus narrative begins with acts of imperial resistance. Two Hebrew women, Shiphrah and Puah, directly disobey Pharaoh’s orders, choosing to save the sons of Hebrew women rather than kill them (Exod 1:15–22). The tension of competing loyalties is present at the outset of the book of Exodus. The acts of the Hebrew midwives, like that of Moses, reflect a cultural identification with their own people over and against that of the Egyptian empire. In terms of relation to foreign rule, Moses is the antitype of Joseph.

It takes little imagination to envision how an advocate of the view of 1 Maccabees would judge Joseph’s behavior. Fortunately we need not speculate, since we know how some Jews did evaluate Joseph. Philo, far from espousing the extreme views one finds in 1 Maccabees, nonetheless has strong reservations concerning

⁶³ That other Second Temple Jews perceived assimilation to foreign culture to be a danger is evident in the description of Jason’s hellenizing program (2 Macc 4:7–20), and Josephus’s description of the letters and decrees of Antiochus III concerning Jewish rights (*Ant.* 12.3.3 §§138–53).

⁶⁴ Menahem Stern traces these different views to geographic locations, arguing that urban areas produced more “Hellenizers” and rural areas more “conservatives” (“The Period of the Second Temple,” in *A History of the Jewish People* [ed. H. H. Ben-Sasson; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976], 183–238, esp. 196–97).

Joseph's behavior. Notwithstanding the important differences between 1 Maccabees and Philo regarding date, milieu, and sociocultural context, these texts remain valuable dialogue partners because of their shared concern for a proper relationship to a foreign empire. Significantly, much of Philo's critique of Joseph centers on the latter's assimilation to the Egyptian empire. Joseph's promotion by Pharaoh is "more obscure and ridiculous than defeat and dishonor" (*Somn.* 2.6.43). Philo associated Joseph's promotion with a life of unrestrained luxury:

And, not least, even his name testifies to his life's plan and zealous pursuit; for "Joseph," interpreted, means "addition." And vain opinion always adds the spurious to the legitimate, the foreign to one's own, the lie to truth, the superfluous to sufficiency, daintiness to living, and vanity to life. (*Somn.* 2.6.47)

Philo concludes a lengthy critique of excessive indulgence in food, clothing, housing, and drink by noting: "Therefore the holy word rightly named the enemy of humility and the friend of conceit as 'Addition'" (*Somn.* 2.9.63–64).

Further evidence of a tradition associating Joseph with luxury comes from the *Testament of Joseph*, which credits Joseph with declaring, "For those seven years I fasted, and yet seemed to the Egyptians like someone who was living luxuriously" (3:4).⁶⁵ Joseph acknowledges a perception that his life with Potiphar was characterized by spending time "in royal chambers feast[ing] on delicacies with excess" (9:2–3).⁶⁶ It is difficult to avoid the impression that the *Testament of Joseph* offers an apologia for the types of criticisms of Joseph one finds in Philo. The divergent attitudes toward Joseph in Philo and the *Testament of Joseph* reflect disparate Jewish understandings of what a proper relationship with a foreign imperial power entails.

Joseph and Aseneth addresses concerns related to the potentially disturbing religious implications of Joseph's assimilation to Egyptian culture. This retelling of the Joseph story provides an apology for Joseph's marriage to the daughter of an Egyptian priest. It is not Joseph but his wife Aseneth who is depicted as abandoning her religion and adopting a new one. Her "conversion," described primarily in terms of her abandonment of the worship of Egyptian gods, is the most pervasive motif in *Joseph and Aseneth*.⁶⁷ Depicting God as the one who chose (ἐκλέγω) Aseneth to be Joseph's wife absolves Joseph of the responsibility of marrying a foreigner (21:4). Jacob's blessing of Aseneth and her marriage to Joseph further legitimate his union (22:8–9).

⁶⁵ H. C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *OTP* 1:820.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 821.

⁶⁷ See, e.g., 2:3–4; 3:6; 9:2; 10:12–13; 11:8–9, 16; 12:5; 13:11; 19:5; 21:13; 27:10. References are to Christoph Burchard, *Joseph und Aseneth* (PVTG 5; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 76–78, 88, 122, 134–36, 146, 150, 156–58, 170, 242–44, 264, 318–20. Translations are my own. In response to her abandonment of Egyptian gods, Aseneth's family hated (μισέω) her, claiming "Aseneth is not our daughter because she destroyed [ἀπώλεσεν] our gods" (11:5). Aseneth later notes that this act of destroying their gods caused her father and mother to disown (ἀρνέομαι) her (12:12).

Joseph and Aseneth also highlights the exclusive nature of Joseph's own religious commitment. Joseph (at first) refuses to kiss Aseneth on the grounds that this "foreign woman" (γυναῖκα ἄλλοτρίαν) blesses dead and dumb idols, eats from their table bread of strangulation (ἀγχόνῃ), drinks from their libation a cup of ambush (ἐνέδρας), and anoints herself with ointment of destruction (8:5). The extent of Joseph's avoidance of Egyptian culture is evident when Aseneth's family sets a table before him "by itself [κατ' ἰδίαν] since Joseph did not eat with [συνήσθιε μετὰ] the Egyptians, for this was an abomination [βδέλυγμα] to him" (7:1). This description explicitly departs from the Genesis account, in which the Egyptians are portrayed as unable to eat with (συνεσθίω μετὰ) the Hebrews since "this is an abomination [βδέλυγμα] to the Egyptians" (Gen 43:32). The roles have been reversed, and Joseph is now cast as the one who eschews cultural assimilation. Moreover, the threefold description of Joseph as a "shepherd's son from the land of Canaan" (4:10; 6:2; 13:13) underscores his identity as a non-Egyptian.

Joseph's religious commitment, never in doubt, is evident in the appellations he receives. He is called "the Powerful One of God" (ὁ δυνατὸς τοῦ θεοῦ; 3:4; 4:7; 18:1, 2; 21:21), "son of God" (υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ; 6:3, 5), and the "firstborn son of God" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ πρωτότοκος; 21:4; 23:10).⁶⁸ Aseneth's father describes Joseph as a God-fearer (θεοσεβής) and claims that God's spirit is upon him and that the grace (χάρις) of the Lord is with him (4:7). Joseph also describes himself as a θεοσεβής (8:5; 21:1) and as one who "blesses with his mouth the living God" (8:5). The narrator confirms this description, calling Joseph meek, merciful, and one who fears (φοβέω) God (8:8). The function of these descriptions in *Joseph and Aseneth* is to allay worries that Joseph's marriage diminished his commitment to Ἰσραήλ.⁶⁹ *Joseph and Aseneth* demonstrates that some Jews in the Second Temple period were concerned that Joseph might be (mis)read as a model and apology for cultural assimilation.

Daniel 2 is one of the many voices offering a distinct perspective on the issue of Jews relating to their foreign environment.⁷⁰ The threat posed by assimilation to the empire is raised immediately at the outset of the book of Daniel. Young Hebrew men are brought into the service of the king. Emphasis is placed on the process of cultural assimilation that these men undergo. "They were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans" (1:4). Their diet, assigned by the king, is of "the royal rations of food and wine" (1:5). The purpose of their three-year education is so that they can be "stationed in the king's court" (1:5). Such descriptions

⁶⁸ This second reference (23:10) lacks the article.

⁶⁹ Cf. the description of Aseneth as someone who "had nothing in common with the Egyptian virgins but was in all things similar to the daughters of the Hebrews" (1:5).

⁷⁰ Horsley says that the wisdom of the *maskilim* in Daniel is "completely focused on imperial politics and its implications for political-religious life in Judea" ("Politics of Cultural Production," 142).

touch on the very issues that are prominent in 1 Maccabees. How will Daniel respond to such pressure toward assimilation? Daniel's very first act is one of "moderate" resistance to this religio-cultural assimilation.⁷¹ I say "resistance" because he chooses to maintain his own dietary traditions. I say "moderate" because, despite his rejection of the royal diet, Daniel nonetheless remains involved in the Babylonian court. He still submits himself to the training of the "Chaldeans" in language, literature, and education. Thus, Daniel offers a *via media* between the extremes witnessed in 1 Maccabees and Genesis 41. He embraces neither the assimilation modeled by Joseph nor the rejection practiced by the Maccabees.⁷²

IV. CONCLUSION

Daniel 2 offers one option among multiple alternatives of how one might interact with a foreign power. Esther provides a model in which the willingness to defy the imperial power is the most important aspect of resisting empire.⁷³ Explicit acts that demonstrate reliance on God are either assumed or unnecessary. Violence is accepted as a legitimate method for the defense and preservation of one's group, a stance with which advocates of 1 Maccabees would readily agree. In the book of Exodus, the Hebrew midwives Shiphras and Puah exemplify a type of civil disobedience in which lying for the purpose of protecting one's people from imperial murder is blessed and rewarded by God (Exod 1:15–21). Jeremiah, in a letter (ostensibly) addressed to the same social context as that alleged for the story of Daniel 1–6, advocates active participation with, and on behalf of, the imperial power.⁷⁴ The שלום of the exiles is to be found in the שלום of Babylon (Jer 29:7).

⁷¹ Wildavsky, *Assimilation*, 126: "They recognize that getting used to foreigners' food is a step toward accommodation to their values."

⁷² Accordingly, I find a significant absence of nuance in Wildavsky's depiction of Daniel's relationship to Babylon. In his effort to distance Daniel from Joseph, Wildavsky ends up with a Daniel much more "resistant" to the empire than the one we have in our text. His claim that Daniel rejects the "food, their clothing, their names" is correct concerning the food but is puzzling on the latter two points since there is every indication that Daniel receives the clothing offered to him (cf. 5:29). It is also quite clear that Daniel is given a Babylonian name (1:7; 2:26; 4:8, 9, 18, 19; 5:12; 10:1). Wildavsky could have strengthened his case by pointing out that Daniel himself never uses "Belteshazar" and that it is the king who uses the Babylonian name. However, in 4:19 the narrator refers to Daniel with his Babylonian name, suggesting (at minimum) some level of acceptance of his new name.

⁷³ One of the central issues for Esther is whether she will risk resisting the king's wishes in order to protect her people from oppression/death (4:13b–14 MT). "I will go to the king, though it is *against the law*; and if I perish, I perish" (4:16).

⁷⁴ I am not claiming that these texts arose from the same sociocultural milieu, but rather that the authors of the texts situate their respective narratives within the same setting, that of the Babylonian captivity.

Even intermarriage appears to be encouraged (Jer 29:6). Such instruction offers a (convenient?) theological defense for Joseph's assimilating tendencies.

Into this mix Daniel is offered as a model of "moderate resistance" to imperial power. It is quite understandable how the figure of Joseph could have held great appeal for those Jews who participated in various aspects of cultural assimilation. One can likewise understand how Daniel could have held great appeal for those who resisted such assimilation.⁷⁵ As an example of "moderate" resistance, Daniel offers a *via media* between the more radical extremes seen in Joseph, 1 Maccabees, Esther, and Qumran. Daniel imagines the possibility of a Diaspora Jew simultaneously resisting the empire and succeeding sociopolitically without resorting to assimilation (Joseph), withdrawal (Qumran), or violence (Esther, 1 Maccabees, Exodus).⁷⁶ The Second Temple period provides a sociocultural context in which Daniel's perspective on "moderate resistance" would have been a source of significant meaning for Jews seeking to determine how to relate to foreign imperial power.⁷⁷ The existence of such a variety of models for engaging an imperial regime reflects the presence of a lively dialogical process. It is in such a dialogue that readers and hearers (then and now) of Daniel 2 are invited to participate.

⁷⁵ Might the popularity of para-Danielic literature at Qumran and the corresponding dearth of material on Joseph bespeak a certain preference in the community for one over the other? 4Q372 frgs. 1 and 3 do contain an apocryphal story and speech of Joseph.

⁷⁶ Daniel's desire to save himself, his companions, and "the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (2:18) reflects an adherence to the principle displayed in Jer 29:7.

⁷⁷ Horsley sees in Daniel evidence of a "staunch resistance to the oppressive imperial forces" that is, at the same time, a "nonviolent resistance" ("Politics of Cultural Production," 143).

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