

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi SAAT
(Seminari Alkitab Asia Tenggara)

**A CANONICAL INTERTEXTUALITY STUDY OF WISDOM
IN DANIEL AND PROVERBS:
THE STUDY CASE OF DANIEL'S REFUSAL OF THE KING'S FOOD**



Tesis Ini Diserahkan kepada

Dewan Pengajar STT SAAT

Sebagai Salah Satu Syarat untuk Memperoleh Gelar

Magister Teologi

Oleh

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Malang, Jawa Timur
Desember 2024

ABSTRACT

Linda, 2024. *A Canonical Intertextuality Study of Wisdom in Daniel and Proverbs: The Study Case of Daniel's Refusal of the King's Food*. Thesis, Study Program: M.Th., Southeast Asia Bible Seminary, Supervisor: Aaron Chan Heng Yeong, Ph.D., pages xi, 139.

Key Words: Wisdom, Resistance, Refusal, King's Food

The reason Daniel refused the king's food has puzzled many scholars. Some commonly suggested reasons for his refusal include adherence to food laws, concerns about idolatry, and political issues. However, there are also objections to these explanations. This thesis aims to clarify the reasoning behind Daniel's actions by examining his wisdom, as the book of Daniel portrays him as a wise man and emphasizes the significance of wisdom throughout. To explore Daniel's wisdom and his resistance, this thesis will employ rhetorical criticism. His actions, marked by wisdom and defiance, are evident throughout the book of Daniel. While his wisdom underscores his character as a wise man, his resistance demonstrates his tactful refusal of the king's food. Daniel made a prudent decision when he chose not to defile himself by eating the king's provisions.

This thesis also provides evidence of the importance of wisdom in Daniel's life. He thought, spoke, and acted wisely, thereby showcasing his character as a wise individual. Due to the significance of wisdom, this thesis will examine the canonical intertextuality between the Book of Daniel and the Book of Proverbs. This study of intertextuality aims to enhance the interpretation of these texts and ultimately address the reason behind Daniel's refusal. Daniel's refusal can be linked to the advice found in Proverbs 23:1-3, which emphasizes caution when dining with a ruler—someone in a position of authority. These verses counsel carefulness in sharing a meal with a ruler due to potential hidden motives. The king utilized reciprocity as a basis for social and political relationships. Thus, this thesis posits that Daniel's refusal of the king's food was connected to the political implications behind it. The food provided by the ruler was deceptive, as the king harbored ulterior motives. Recognizing the political intentions of the Babylonian king, Daniel was aware of the situation and chose to refuse the king's food deliberately.

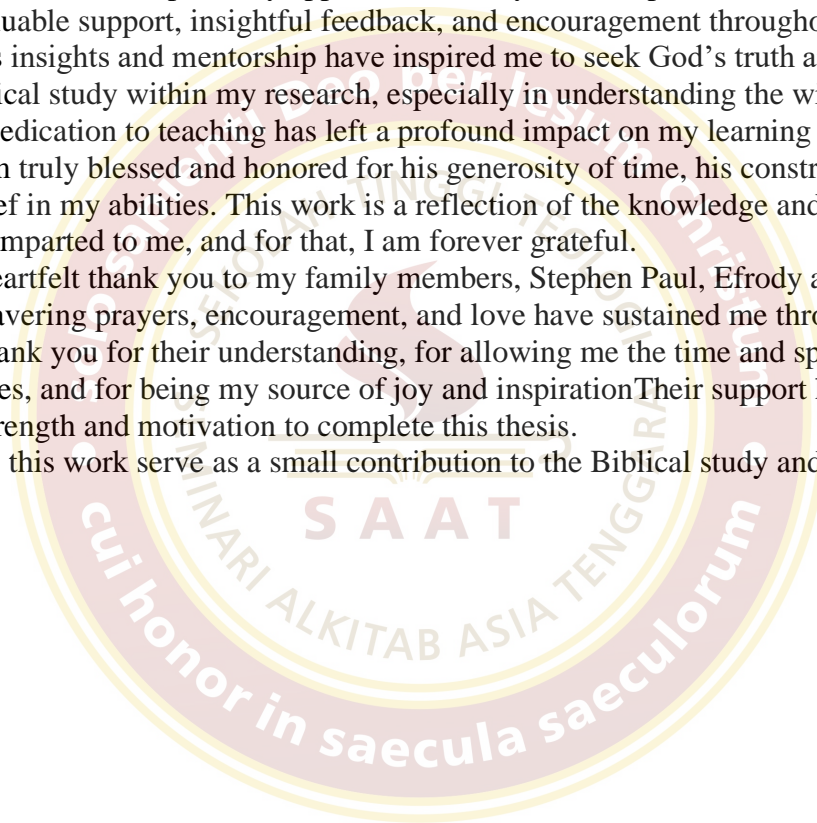
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to God for His guidance, wisdom, and strength throughout this thesis writing. Without His grace and help, this work would not have been possible.

I would like to express my appreciation to my thesis supervisor, Mr. Aaron Chan for his invaluable support, insightful feedback, and encouragement throughout this process. His insights and mentorship have inspired me to seek God's truth and explore deeper Biblical study within my research, especially in understanding the wisdom of the Bible. His dedication to teaching has left a profound impact on my learning and personal growth. I am truly blessed and honored for his generosity of time, his constructive advice, and his belief in my abilities. This work is a reflection of the knowledge and inspiration that he has imparted to me, and for that, I am forever grateful.

A heartfelt thank you to my family members, Stephen Paul, Efrody and Efreisya whose unwavering prayers, encouragement, and love have sustained me through this journey. Thank you for their understanding, for allowing me the time and space to focus on my studies, and for being my source of joy and inspiration. Their support has been a source of strength and motivation to complete this thesis.

May this work serve as a small contribution to the Biblical study and the glory of God



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research Problem

The question of why Daniel considered eating the King's food defiling, as described in Daniel 1:8-21, has puzzled many scholars. Scholars have proposed several common reasons for why Daniel considered it defiling. The commonly suggested reasons included dietary, political, and religious. Zdravko Stefanovic explained three common reasons in his commentary why Daniel and his friends decided to abstain from the royal food: dietary, political, and religious. The dietary restrictions stemmed from the Mosaic prohibition against consuming unclean animals, as well as the requirement that the blood of clean animals be properly drained before slaughter. The political aspect was rooted in the cultural significance of sharing a meal in biblical times, which symbolized forming an alliance or covenant with the person you were dining with. Lastly, the religious reason may have been the ancient belief that food and drink were offered as sacrifices to the gods before the meal.¹ This thesis will focus to three common reasons mentioned above

¹Zdravko Stefanovic, *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise* (Nampa: Pacific, 2007), 57–58.

because some scholars frequently discussed those common reasons of Daniel's refusal.

These are some scholars who put the above reasons to the question of why Daniel refused the king's food. R.H. Charles explained that Daniel's action of refusing the king's food is appealing to the dietary law (the law of clean and unclean meats). Daniel and his friends refused the king's food because of their loyalty to their observance of the law of their religion regarding clean and unclean meats.² Sung Jae Park stated the common reason that the food was offered to other gods. Park studied the Book of Daniel chapter 1 to understand the reason. After examining the connections between Daniel 1 and Genesis 1-2, and researching Mesopotamian religion, it was discovered that the offering of food to gods in Mesopotamian religion was the reason behind the refusal of the king's food and wine.³ While Joyce Baldwin argued his opinion that Daniel rejected the king's food because of the political reason. Baldwin suggested that Daniel's refusal of the king's food expresses his fear not so much of ritual defilement as of moral defilement. The subordinates will enter into a covenantal relationship with the king if they ate the king's provision. They should fulfill their duty to serve and fight for the king's interest. Further, Baldwin explained that Daniel rejected the dependence on the king because he wished to be free to fulfill his primary obligation to the God.⁴ Timothy Yap also argued the political reason, and he wrote in his writing that Daniel refused to eat from the king's table

²R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 19.

³Sung Jae Park, "Why Did Daniel and His Friends Refuse the King's Food and Wine" (thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2018), 127-39.

⁴Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 23 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1978), 83.

because Daniel and his friends expressed their unwillingness to partner with Nebuchadnezzar in his rebellious cause.⁵ While John Collins suggested that Daniel's decision to avoid certain foods was an extension of Jewish purity laws, which were meant to differentiate the Jewish people from others.⁶ There are still many reasons from some scholars (sign of mourning, ascetic practice) but the author emphasizes the most common reasons about the dietary law, political issues, and religion (offering to gods), the same as John Goldingay.⁷

However, scholars also have some objections regarding the reason for Daniel's refusal to eat the food. D.J. Wiseman said that there is no indication that the king's food was offered to gods because it wouldn't explain the acceptability of the vegetarian portion that surely would have been offered as well.⁸ Michael Seufert objected to the food laws stating that there is no evidence that the content of the king's food violates

⁵Timothy Yap, "Food as Rebellion: The Function of the Motif of Food in the Book of Daniel," *Biblische Notizen* 198 (2023): 71.

⁶John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 24–38.

⁷John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary 30 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 18–19. Goldingay explained some reasons of Daniel's refusal in his commentary: Food was often offered to other gods, and specific food laws regulated meat and wine, particularly during festivals. Abstaining from these foods can signify mourning or penitence, which is especially relevant in the context of exile. Additionally, abstaining from meat and wine has been an ascetic practice among various groups. Accepting the king's provisions could imply dependence on him. According to the Mishnah, based on Leviticus 11:37-38, grain does not become unclean through contact with meat as long as it remains dry. Furthermore, pagan food and drink may symbolize the pagan uncleanness associated with exile.

⁸D.J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, Schweich Lectures on Biblical Archaeology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 85.

Pentateuchal regulation.⁹ Choon Leong Seow also argued that the food was not prohibited under the Torah's dietary law since wine is nowhere forbidden.¹⁰ David Freidenrich objected to the idea that the dietary laws had a segregate purpose, stating that Biblical dietary laws did not prevent Israelites from consuming the meat of permissible animals killed by non-Israelites.¹¹ Based on those objections, the reason why Daniel refused to eat the food offered by the king still causes confusion and debate today.

This thesis will examine the reason for Daniel's rejection of the king's food by focusing on Daniel's Wisdom. The Book of Daniel revealed his character as a wise man (Dan 1:4) and emphasized the significance of wisdom throughout. God gave wisdom to Daniel, resulting in intellectual ability, knowledge, and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning and understanding of visions and dreams of all kinds (Dan 1:17) and also Daniel 1:20 states that Daniel was ten times wiser than anyone in the royal court. This thesis will reveal the relationship between Daniel's decision to reject the king's food and his wisdom. Therefore, this thesis will analyze the intertextuality between Daniel's Wisdom and the book of Proverb as the main key to answering the problem of Daniel's refusal. The author suggests that Daniel's wisdom is connected to the book of Proverbs, which is considered wisdom literature focusing on teachings about wisdom. Additionally,

⁹Michael J. Seufert, "Refusing the King's Portion: A Reexamination of Daniel's Dietary Reaction," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 43, no. 4 (June 2019): 652, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089218821310>.

¹⁰Choon Leong Seow, *Daniel*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 25-26.

¹¹David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 22.

both the narrative of Daniel and the book of Proverbs share a common context that relates to the royal court. The book of Proverbs contains numerous wise teachings about the relationship between kings and his people. In the story of Daniel, he and the wise men referenced in Proverbs interacted closely with the kings at the royal court. In this thesis, the author states that a study of Daniel's wisdom, which aligns with the teachings of Proverbs, provides the best explanation for answering the reason why Daniel refused the king's food.

Research Objectives

This thesis will answer the reason why Daniel rejected the King's food based on the intertextuality study between the book of Daniel and the book of Proverbs. Daniel displayed his character as a wise man. He considered wisdom before deciding to refuse the king's food. He spoke with his wisdom speech, and he could determine his action based on his understanding. His thoughts, words and actions were related with the teachings of the book of Proverbs. Some aspects of his wisdom reflected the teaching found in Proverbs and this thesis will explore the relationship between Daniel's wisdom and wisdom teaching in the book of Proverbs.

This thesis will relate Daniel's wisdom to the book of Proverbs because the intertextuality due to the significance of wisdom. The author believes that understanding wisdom in Proverbs will enrich our knowledge about wisdom concepts. Therefore, this thesis will do a study of intertextuality between Daniel and the book of Proverbs for answering the reason behind Daniel's refusal of the king's food.

Finally, this thesis will contribute to give understanding the significance of wisdom and reveal the ethical values and virtues as the implications for believers. Understanding about ethical and value will be helpful to encourage the ideal behaviours for the readers. The narrative of the book of Daniel will give understanding about the ethical and virtues that would be the good role model to inspire many people following Daniel's example.

Research Limitation

The main focus of this research is on Daniel as the agent of refusal. This thesis will observe Daniel's characteristics and identity as the main concern to answer the reason, therefore this thesis did not explain controversies regarding the language, date, authenticity, nature, unity, and authorship of the book of Daniel but focus on the repeated wisdom and resistance action throughout the book of Daniel to answer the rationale reason why he refused the king's food.

The second focus is about the topic wisdom in the book of Daniel. This thesis does not drive a wedge between mantic and traditional wisdom. Traditional wisdom and mantic wisdom come from God. Hence, the author will be concerned with the wisdom concept in the whole book of Daniel to answer the rationale reason and avoid a sharp distinction between mantic and traditional wisdom. Mantic wisdom means wisdom that is granted from God to interpret dream and visions. While traditional wisdom means wisdom based on human experience, empiricism or rationalism. Many scholars consider Daniel's wisdom as mantic wisdom because of pure divine revelation while Proverbs is

traditional wisdom, therefore the traditional form criticism tends to separate Daniel's wisdom from Proverb's traditional Israelite wisdom. This thesis will discuss more on this issue in the methodological section below.

The third limitation is Daniel as the protagonist in the book of Daniel. This thesis did not discuss the narrative of Daniel's friends. Daniel did the refusal of the king's food by himself; therefore, the focus of this thesis is about Daniel.

Research Methodology

This thesis used two methods to establish a link between Daniel's refusal and his wisdom. The first method is rhetorical criticism, which was employed to analyze Daniel's wisdom and resistance action. This method scrutinized the words used, the author's techniques, and how they would influence the intended audience. Gordon Wenham explained in his book that rhetorical criticism attempts to answer two types of questions, the message of the book and the intended readership.¹² The primary question is about the type of work being analyzed, how each section or work logically leads into the next, and how each part contributes to the argument of the whole. The second question focuses on the implied readers, their points of view, attitudes, and assumptions, as well as how the book shed of Daniel addresses the audience's concerns. Wenham's analysis will be used to clarify the rhetorical criticism of the book of Daniel. The primary goal is to investigate

¹²Gordon Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading the Old Testament Ethically* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 18.

Daniel's wisdom and resistance throughout the book, highlighting his rejection of the King's food. The reason for utilizing this technique is the writer can evaluate and interpret Daniel's wisdom and resistance and sketch his ethical behavior and values through the repeated behavior in Daniel's life.

In the second method, the author explores Daniel's wisdom throughout the book of Daniel and draws connections with the book of Proverbs using canonical intertextuality. The book of Daniel and the book of Proverbs seemed opposing viewpoints to be related to each other. The Book of Daniel recorded his actions, his prophecies and his visions but the book of Proverbs discussed wisdom teaching that teach the meaning of life and how to live. There have been objections to the way genres are identified and classified because of comparing the book of Daniel and his wisdom with the Book of Proverbs is not possible. This issue arose because, in the beginning, form criticism focused on identifying certain characteristics and assigning texts to their respective genres. Hermann Gunkel was concerned with form criticism and believed that genres are pure. He established certain criteria for identifying genres as texts, such as the mood, the thought, the text, the linguistic form, and the setting. He applied this form to literature, which is believed to be oral in tradition. It meant Gunkel maintained particular genre is associated with specific group and that this kept the genre pure.¹³ This particular approach is centered on identifying shared characteristics such as form, content, and style. However, this approach has a weakness in that it only takes similarities into

¹³Armin Siedleki, "The Literature of Ancient Israel by Hermann Gunkel," in *Relating to The Text Interdisciplinary and Form-Critical Insights on The Bible*, ed. Timothy J. Sandoval and Carleen Mandolfo (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 30.

account and not differences. But this thesis will explain the possibility of intertextuality between the book of Daniel and the book of Proverbs with a detailed discussion in the next chapter.

Thesis Outline

This thesis argues that Daniel's refusal can be understood through his wise actions at the royal court. Each chapter will discuss various aspects related to this thesis statement.

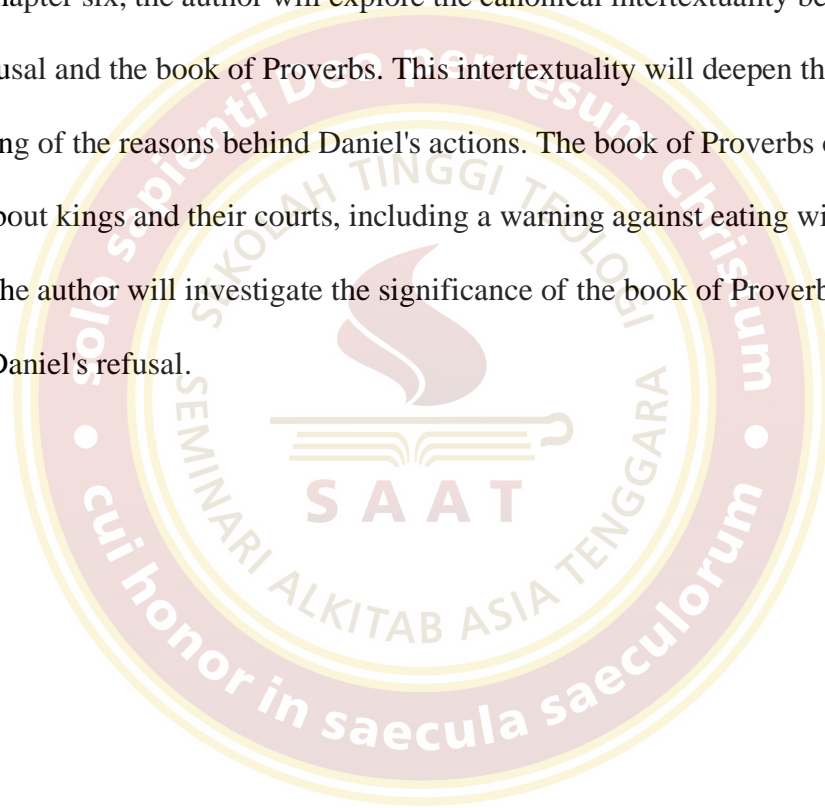
In chapter two, the author will outline the problem of Daniel's wisdom which are the problem about different in genre between Daniel's narrative and the book of Proverbs as wisdom literature, the problem about determining wisdom characteristic, and problem about mantic wisdom in the book of Daniel. Answering the problems, this thesis will explore the methodologies as the solution to solve the problems that existed.

In chapter three this thesis will explain the reasons behind Daniel's refusal. This thesis will explore the common reason of Daniel's refusal and scholar's objection toward the reasons. And finally, the author will focus on the political issues that influenced Daniel's rejection of the king's food.

In chapter four, this thesis will examine Daniel's wise actions at the royal court, as he consistently displayed wisdom throughout the book of Daniel. His wisdom served as the foundation for his refusal of the king's food, leading him to carefully consider the motives behind the provision of this food.

In chapter five, the author will argue that Daniel's resistance also sheds light on the true reasons for his refusal of the king's food. Daniel's decision was not made lightly; he set his heart not to defile the king food because of the influence of the foreign imperial power. Daniel showed his resistance action repeatedly throughout the book of Daniel and this thesis will explore the repeated resistance action to emphasize his non-violent resistance as the mark of Daniel's wisdom.

In chapter six, the author will explore the canonical intertextuality between Daniel's refusal and the book of Proverbs. This intertextuality will deepen the understanding of the reasons behind Daniel's actions. The book of Proverbs offers teachings about kings and their courts, including a warning against eating with a ruler. Therefore, the author will investigate the significance of the book of Proverbs in the context of Daniel's refusal.



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