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**DREAMS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:
A SAMOAN CONTEXTUAL READING OF DANIEL 2**

A THESIS: PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF MALUA
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Bachelor of Divinity Degree

By

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to explore symbolic dreams in the Old Testament as represented by Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. Nebuchadnezzar's dream will be investigated first, focusing on the impact of dreams in the political, social and religious spheres of the Jewish people. The same will be done for the Samoan context with reference to the well known fa'asaga or dream oracle by Nafanua. This oracle and its interpretation will be investigated to explain how symbolic dreams affect all aspects of Samoan culture. The contextual findings form the basis of a contextualized interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

This is dedicated to;

my mother Avau To'o,

my wife Epenesa Tangatauli Tua

and

my son Marino Lolenese K. J Hans

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In this exploration the paper will provide an understanding of Nebuchadnezzar's dream that Samoans, especially CCCS members, will appreciate. Furthermore, a general understanding of Old Testament symbolic dreams will be made clear. In this regard, Samoans will seriously treat and analyze their own dreams for they are possible means of God's revelation.

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To my family, and especially my mother Avau To'e, thank you very much. Your never ending support from the beginning of my early school years up to this very day will never be forgotten. *Malo lava to Tapa'i and to Alofa.*

My appreciation also goes out to Reverend Makesi Lane Neemia for supervising this work and to Torise for the great help. I thank you for the constructive input and assistance during the writing of this paper.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife and special friend Eponesa, and my son, my little angel, Manno. Thank you very much for your love, support and great patience while I worked on this paper. To you both I dedicate this thesis.

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First of all, I would like to thank God for helping to make this dream come true. Without His guidance and wisdom, this work would not have been completed. I also express a special tribute to Reverend Elder Alama Atapana Moreli Alama IV, the chairman of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. Your encouragement and great contribution made the writing of this paper possible, and I am sincerely grateful. *Faafetai tele lava.*

I would also like to acknowledge with a thankful heart, each and everyone who offered their help and contributed in any way to the completion of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Dreams have always been a part of human experience and they appear to the dreamer in all sorts of forms. Some appear realistic, that is, they involve the real world that we live in, while others set the dreamer into an imaginary world. However, whether realistic or not, dreams affect people in different ways. They bring contentment and hope to people, while other dreams bring anguish and distress. Dreams appear to have a real impact on people even to the extent of changing a person's life, whether it is social, religious or political. In most cases, people claim that both God and His will are revealed to them through their dreams.¹ Unfortunately, a genuine revelation can not be easily substantiated, and people seem to use their supposed dream experience as justification of their new life style. From a perspective of a Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) member, these life changing experiences affect the CCCS more negatively than favorably. That is, members tend to interpret their dreams (visions) as a sign to change religious denominations, and dismissing most teachings by CCCS pastors.

As a person growing up within the CCCS, the bible plays an important part in early education, especially with regards to the spiritual and social aspects of life. Children are taught from a very young age about stories in the bible. These stories explain God's relationship with a special group of people, the Israelites,

¹ Sepulona Moananu, Interview with Author, 13.04.06, Apia, Samoa. Sepulona believed that God intervened in his life through a dream and inspired him to do all his work in great dedication and to the fullest. He is currently a member of the parliament of Samoa. Moananu was formerly a deacon of the CCCS. Similarly, Viliamu Mafo'e, Interview with Author, 13.06.06, Apia, Samoa. Rev. Mafo'e is a well known Charismatic church leader in Samoa. He is the pastor of a church called 'Worship Centre'. He was formerly a lay preacher for the Methodist church.

whom God calls "His people". This unique relationship remains intact because God constantly and continuously reveals His will to the people. The bible stories inform us that God reveals Himself and His will in so many ways. Dreams are one of the mediums through which God occasionally reveals Himself or His will to the Israelites.

Thus, given the current claims by people and my CCCS experience while growing up, my interest in dreams has arisen especially with regards to how dreams should be employed and utilized. In this way, it will help CCCS members to appreciate and value dreams. Not only the dreams in the Bible, but also personal dreams that may reveal God's will without totally dismissing what they have been taught within the CCCS.

This study also gives me an opportunity to fulfill my interest in reading and interpreting scriptures from my own Samoan context. Given the scope of the paper, exploring all the dreams in the Old Testament is not possible. Therefore, the focus of this work will be on symbolic dreams, specifically Nebuchadnezzar's symbolic dream in Daniel chapter 2.

In this paper, I will attempt three things. First, I will explore Nebuchadnezzar's symbolic dream in Daniel 2 and highlight its function(s), and the affect it has on the political, social and religious contexts of both the author and readers. The selection of Daniel 2 is due mainly to personal interest; the dream not only involves an Israelite and a non Israelite, but the story itself is set on foreign land which offers an international element. Secondly, I will delve into the Nafanua symbolic dream oracle and its interpretation in the arrival of

Christianity in Samoa. Finally, there will be a comparison of the biblical and Samoan contextual study, and hopefully an understanding of Nebuchadnezzar's symbolic dream will be further enlightened. In addition, a general understanding of symbolic dreams in the Old Testament may be achieved.

To accomplish the above, the paper is structured as follows. Chapter One gives a general view on dreams and will highlight what a symbolic dream is. It will also discuss dreams in the Ancient Near East before giving a general viewpoint of dreams in the Old Testament.

Chapter Two examines dreams in the Israelite context more closely through an exegetical and theological exploration of Daniel 2. In this exercise it is hoped that the function, the effect and influence of symbolic dreams will become apparent.

Chapter Three explores dreams in the Samoan context. That is, it will explore the famous legend of Nafanua and her symbolic dream oracle regarding a heavenly kingdom for Samoa. This chapter will also look at how this dream oracle was interpreted during the arrival of the first missionaries in Samoa. It is hoped that in the preceding discussion the function and effects of this symbolic dream, and its interpretation on the social, religious, and political context of the Samoan people will become apparent.

The analysis and comparison of the findings in Chapter Two and Chapter Three forms the core of Chapter Four. That is, Nebuchadnezzar's symbolic dream will be read in light of the Samoan contextual study. It is hoped that this

contextual reading will help Samoans (CCCS members) enrich their understanding of biblical dreams.

A conclusion will be drawn mainly from the findings of the comparison and analysis above.

A Dream is a natural phenomenon and is universally experienced by everyone. As witnessed in the Old Testament, dreams are common in the experience of the Israelites. In this chapter I will discuss dreams in general and dreams in relation to the Ancient Near East before looking into the Old Testament context. In light of this exploration, I believe, an understanding of dreams in Israel may be illuminated. As previously indicated, special attention will be on symbolic dreams and their interpretations.

It is not in the interest of this paper to be fully immersed in a detailed survey of the word and concept of dreams (especially its philosophical elements), for it has been well researched in existing literature. However, a general overview of dreams is still warranted to highlight how dreams are understood and perceived in the Old Testament, Ancient Near East and present context.

A. GENERAL BACKGROUND

1. A Definition

A dream is generally defined as "a series of thoughts, images, and sensations passing through one's mind when asleep."¹ Moreover, it is regarded

¹ Lawrence O. Richards (ed.), *Oxford in The Revell Bible Dictionary* (New York: Revell Press, 1907), 212.

CHAPTER ONE

DREAM: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

A Dream is a natural phenomenon and is universally experienced by everyone. As witnessed in the Old Testament, dreams are common in the experience of the Israelites. In this chapter, I will discuss dreams in general and dreams in relation to the Ancient Near East, before looking into the Old Testament context. In light of this exploration, I believe, an understanding of dreams in Israel may be illuminated. As previously indicated, special attention will be on symbolic dreams and their interpretations.

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A. GENERAL BACKGROUND

1. A Definition

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¹ Lawrence O. Richards (ed), *Dreams in The Revell Bible Dictionary* (New York: Wynwood Press, 1990), 238.

as "a mental activity."² This means that everyone has dreams of some sort and it is natural occurrence.

Furthermore, dreams are generally considered to be both on the spheres of unconsciousness and sub-consciousness. This is why some perceive dreams as belonging to another world, while others argue otherwise; "If any [dreams] are regarded to be 'supernatural', it must be owing to not the methods but to their messages."³ The problem is, some dreams do not make sense at all or simply convey no messages. However, with regards to those dreams that may be a real revelation, more emphasis should be given to them for "an insight into the divine truth."⁴

2. Kinds of Dreams

Dreams appear at different times and thus it can be perceived that there are different 'kinds' of dreams. There are the dreams that occur while sleeping, and those that occur while awake. Such dreams are given names, for example, a daydream. This kind of dream occurs when one is awake. Another kind of dream is a 'sweet dream'; this is a beautiful and pleasant dream that one experiences during his/ her sleep.⁵ Despite its natural occurrence, dreams are another way in which God communicates to his people. This communication process lifts dreams to a higher level that is beyond its nature.⁶

² Patrick Hanks, *The Collins Concise Dictionary of the English Language*, 94.

³ James Hastings D.D, et, al., *Dictionary of the Bible*, (Edinburgh : T&T Clark, 38 George Street, 1909), 196.

⁴ James Hastings D.D, et, al., *Dictionary of the Bible*, 196.

⁵ George Arthur Buttrick, et, al., *Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1981) 868.

⁶ These dreams will be discussed further in a later section (Dreams in the Old Testament).

B. DREAMS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The Ancient Near East treats dreams seriously because they consider them as mediums to reveal messages from the supernatural realm. This is why Ancient Near Eastern nations put great significance upon interpreting and understanding dreams.

1. Egypt.

Egypt provides a lot of the existing information about dreams in the Ancient Near East. It was believed that one of the earliest mediums through which the Egyptians received communications from their gods was through dreams. The following selected examples highlight how important dreams were to the Egyptians.

The first evidence is in the Middle Kingdom letters written to the dead.⁷

For instance, there is a New Kingdom temple inscription from the Karnak that seems similar to some narratives of the Old Testament. The narrative begins with the appearance of the statue of Ptah to Merneptah in his sleep and extended his sword to him, commanding him to be courageous against the Libyan foe. The message revealed to Merneptah was through a dream, whereby the dream was the medium of communication between them.⁸

Another example explains how the prince of Bachtan was sent by Pharaoh back to Egypt to cure his daughter after a dream vision.

Furthermore, a symbolic dream attained on a discovered inscription in the ruins of Napata, relates how the Pharaoh Miamun, in the year of his elevation to

⁷ John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, (Michigan: Grand Rapids, Baker Books House Company, 1997) 224.

⁸ John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, 225.

the throne of Egypt and Ethiopia, dreamed that he saw two serpents. One serpent was on his right and the other on his left. Awaking, he demanded that his wise men come and interpret his dream without delay. They reported to the Pharaoh that, "the south and the north will submit to you. The diadems of the two will shine on your head, and you will rule all over the land on its length and on its breadth."⁹

Various forms of divination are known to have been employed by the ancient Egyptians. Most of these methods¹⁰, including dreams were used only in the later periods of Egyptian history (from the Persian period onward). Their appearance in Egypt was for the most part a result of the Mesopotamian influence. This corresponded with the increasing political, cultural, and militant penetration of foreign powers in Egypt later in her history. Prior to the Persian period, the two major genres of divination in Egypt were *oracles* and *dream interpretation*. Examination of these phenomena, especially the latter, provides comprehensive and penetrating background material for a proper understanding of the biblical story of Joseph.¹¹

2. Mesopotamia.

Leo Oppenheim in his book, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 1956,¹² claims that the materials recorded in the Beatty Papyrus had Mesopotamian influence, although not much. In other words, it was originally an

⁹ Cunningham Geigie, *Hours with the Bible: vol. I*, (USA: New York, James Pott and Co., 1987) 462.

¹⁰ Astrology for instance.

¹¹ John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, 228.

¹² Leo Oppenheim cited in J. D. Douglas, et, al., *New Bible Dictionary: 2nd edition*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987) 290.

independent Egyptian text. However, others disagree and claim seeing a definite Mesopotamian tradition in that document along with some Egyptian adaptations. Whatever the case, it is certain that dream collections were common throughout the history of Mesopotamia.

Dreams were widely employed as a means of knowing the divine will.¹³ For instance, the Mesopotamians believed that their ghosts '*etemmu*' were described as sleeping in their graves or lying about unburied. It was said that a living being was possessed not only by his life force, but also by what the Mesopotamians likened to a windlike emanation, namely the *zaqiqu* (or *ziququ*). This spirit or ghost was imagined as a sexless phantom (and probably birdlike), able to flit about. As a result of this characteristic, the sexless phantom became associated with dreaming, because it could safely depart the body when one was asleep.

The contrast between *zaqiqu* and *etemmu* is worthy to be noted, on the one hand you have a 'free' and 'dream' soul, and on the other you have a "body spirit". However, *etemmu* is the closest to the ancient Mesopotamian equivalent of the modern concept of the word "dream".¹⁴ One also hears considerably more in ancient Mesopotamian literature about the *etemmu* than about the *zaqiqu*.

3. Babylon.

The Babylonians, like the Egyptian and Mesopotamians, believed that deity is revealed in a dream, declaring the will of heaven and predicting the future. In most cases, revelation is particularly addressed to the king, with ordinary

¹³ John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, 227.

¹⁴ Jo Ann Scurlock, "Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought", in Jack M. Sasson (ed), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East: vol. III & IV*, (Michigan: Hendrickson, 1995) 1892.

individuals on the rare occasion.¹⁵ An example is given by H. L. J Vanstiphout,¹⁶ who suggests that the hero's success in becoming a savior for his people was affirmed when receiving a symbolic message through a dream. The dream inspires him to be courageous and strong. In this case, the dream serves a genuine function in the political and religious context of the hero's society.

Furthermore, the Babylonian flood account¹⁷ provides another example of how Xisouthros,¹⁸ the hero, received all his instructions through a dream, from the god Kronos.¹⁹

C. DREAMS IN ISRAEL (OLD TESTAMENT)

With consideration to dreams in the Old Testament, the Israelites believed that significant dreams came from Yahweh who used them as a means of communicating to human beings. It should be noted that the prophets were also called "seers," probably because they often received the word of God through dreams or in visions. The emphasis in the Old Testament highlights the revealed word of God, not the mode of that revelation. For this reason, it is possible to infer that God gives the interpretation of dreams equal prominence to the dream itself. In addition, the Old Testament is also concerned with distinguishing real dreams, which are genuine revelations of God, from those that are false. Only

¹⁵ Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, (USA: New York, Prince Press, 2000) 241.

¹⁶ H. L. J Vanstiphout, *Reflections on the dream of Lugalbanda*, in Jack M. Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East: vol. III & IV*, 2053.

¹⁷ This account is similar to the one in Genesis 6-9.

¹⁸ The Greek rendering of the Sumerian Ziusudra.

¹⁹ Brian. B Schmidt, "Language, Writing and Literature", in Jack M. Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East: vol. III & IV*, 2055.

those dreams which lead the people into a faithful relationship with God are regarded as genuine revelations.²⁰

It is clear that the Hebrews practiced various means of divination. The divine will could be communicated through dreams. It was also suggested that ordinary prophecy gained more credibility from revelation by a dream. For example, Jacob's dream in Bethel (Gen. 28: 10-19); the dreams that Joseph interpreted for himself, his companions and for Pharaoh (Gen. 37: 5-10, 40, and 41); and so forth.²¹

The Hebrew word *h^alom* has been commonly used and translated in English as 'dream'. The word *h^alom* means *dream*, however it has a root word that translates - 'to see', and it is connected to what the receivers experienced when they see revelations of God, especially in dreams.²²

1. Dreams on a higher level.

Despite other sorts of dreams like the ordinary 'sweet dreams', there is another level that is beyond the nature of an ordinary dream. This involves two kinds of dreams recorded in the scripture. First, there are those consisting of ordinary dream phenomena in which the sleeper 'sees' a connected series of images which correspond with everyday life (Gen. 40: 9- 17; 41: 1-7). Secondly,

²⁰ David N. Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*: vol.2, 231.

²¹ Jean- Michael De Tarragon, *Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Canaan and Ancient Israel*, in Jack M. Sasson (ed), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*: vol. III & IV, (Michigan: Hendrickson, 1995) 2072.

²² John R. Kohlenberger III, et, al., *The Hebrew English Concordance: To the Old Testament*, (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998) 540 & 1692.

there are dreams which communicate to the sleeper a message from God (Gen. 20: 3- 7; 1 Ki. 3: 5- 15; Mt. 1: 20- 24).²³

The dreams reported in the bible may also be classified in two sections. The first category being *Simple dreams* in which announcements are delivered in plain and simple language. Such dreams do not require an interpreter, (Gen 20: 3, 6-7; 31: 10- 13, 24 etc). The second category is *Symbolic dreams*, where interpretations are mainly determined by professional interpreters only (Gen 37: 5- 10; 40: 5ff; 41: 1ff, and including Daniel 2). In this situation, dream receivers may face difficulties through their struggles to understand symbols and signs given in the dream. Only through divine assistance, can an interpretation be expressed to dreamers.²⁴

The Old Testament recognizes only one source of dreams: all dreams proceed from God, and His assistance is sought in interpreting them.²⁵ Dreams are one of the legitimate channels in which God reveals His will to individuals (Job 33: 15- 16 etc), to kings (1 Sam. 28: 6), and to prophets (Num. 12: 20; Joel 2: 28ff).²⁶

2. Dreams as the Voice of God in the night.

The frequency and significance of dreams mentioned in the Scripture seems to stem from their import as divine revelation to a particular individual. All

²³ J. D Douglas, et, al., *New Bible Dictionary: 2nd Edition*, 289.

²⁴ George Arthur Buttrick, et, al., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, 868.

²⁵ George Arthur Buttrick, et, al., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, 868.

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dreams in antiquity were not considered as divine, but with few exceptions, ordinary dreams and nightmares play no part in the plot of biblical narratives. These narratives repeatedly mention dreams as the common means of 'inquiring of the Lord' (a technical term for seeking an oracle). This increased the possibility that the dream seeking method is the 'method of inquiring', especially as no method is specified, and particularly when the word of the Lord comes by night (1 Sam. 3. esp. v. 15; 2 Sam. 7: 4, 17).²⁷

At times, divine messages receive indirect mention when the context or situation involved the medium of the dream. The text sometimes mentions such revelatory encounters without using the word dream. Perhaps there are many 'inquiring of the Lord' that actually refer to dreams without mentioning or acknowledging the word dream. For instance, the word of the Lord comes at night to Nathan (2 Sam. 7: 4, 17 particularly 1 Chron. 17: 3, 15) and to Gideon (Jud. 6: 25; 7: 9). Isaiah says, "My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you", (Is. 26: 9 NRSV). Even Zechariah 1: 8 (NRSV) he says, "In the night I saw....." Night is the expected time to hear the voice of the Lord. Even so, the OT also sets the precedent for daytime visions accompanied by deep sleep (Gen 15: 12), and the NT follows (Acts 10: 10; 22: 17).²⁸

²⁷ Leland Ryken, et, al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, (Inter Varsity Press, 1998) 217.

²⁸ Leland Ryken, et, al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 217.

D. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the preceding overview, dream experiences are universally acknowledged. They are events revealed during the states of sub-consciousness and unconsciousness.

In looking at the Ancient Near Eastern contexts, dreams are treated with more seriousness. Especially because the people accept and believe that their gods or deities reveal themselves and their will through dreams. Such a belief made dreams and their interpretations an important part of the peoples life especially concerning their relationship with the gods. Failure to comprehend what the deities willed was believed to bring disastrous consequences. Similarly, blessings came upon those who understood and successfully fulfilled what the deities wanted. This is why Ancient Near Eastern people have notebooks of dreams, symbols and their interpretations, in order to fully comprehend every dream.

A similar scenario exists in the Old Testament. The Israelites dream experiences (especially symbolic dreams) and their understanding and interpretation plays an important part in how they encounter life. In other words, (symbolic) dreams relay the course of life God expects them to fulfill.

In all, dreams come to anyone. A dream is a medium that God uses to reveal his will to humans. Therefore, humans must be able to understand the dream with its interpretation in order to fulfill what has been revealed.

In the following chapter, we will further see how dreams and their interpretations bear great significance not only to the pagan people but also to the Israelites.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, dreams in Israel were discussed in a general way. The discussion continues in this chapter but with a detailed and closer examination of dreams. As already indicated, the scope of this paper does not allow an overall discussion of dreams in the Old Testament. Therefore, this chapter will focus only on the symbolic dream in Daniel 2. Daniel 2, although a dream by a foreigner, reflects how the Israelites understood dreams.

Attempted in this chapter will be an exegetical and theological interpretation of Daniel 2. Through this exercise it is hoped that the function and impact of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the life of the Israelites will become apparent.

A brief overview of the Book of Daniel will be endeavored before examining the text thoroughly. This will illuminate the historical context of the book to further assist in the exegesis that follows.

A. THE BOOK OF DANIEL: CHAPTER TWO OVERVIEW

The book of Daniel is divided into two parts: the first twelve chapters (Daniel 1-12) are

DREAMS IN ISRAEL: DANIEL 2

Introduction

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¹ Lawrence, *Book of Daniel: Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction*, 305. According to Baskin, the Book of Daniel can be divided into two parts in Hebrew, and three in the Greek (and modern Catholic) Bible. However, for this study, the Book of Daniel refers only to the first twelve chapters as in the Hebrew Scriptures and Protestant Bible.

² Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", *Reader's Guide to the Bible*, 20.

³ G. Ernest Wright, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophecy Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 292.

A. THE BOOK OF DANIEL: AN OVERVIEW¹

The book of Daniel is divided into two basic sections. Chapters 1-6 are variously called "*court tales*, the *Diaspora novellas/ stories* and even divided more specifically into *contest stories* and *conflict stories*."² Chapters 7-12 present four symbolic visions. In these visions, Daniel sees the succession of the four kingdoms that the Jews occupied. That is, from the time of the Babylonian conquest of Judea, until God's establishment of His own kingdom for them.

Even though these two sections have their own individual genre, the book is widely accepted as an apocalyptic writing. With regards to Chapter 2, it shares "both story narrative and apocalyptic [and] may be viewed as a model of the entire book."³

1. Historical Background

The independent Jewish Kingdom originally existed as a confederation of different tribes before the formation of the monarchy. Even though Saul was the first anointed king over Israel the most notable and significant monarch existed in the person of David. In fact, David managed to unite all the tribes under his reign from 1020 to 922 BCE. However, this united kingdom did not last long. The northern kingdom broke away and lasted until the Assyrian conquest in 722

¹ Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction*, 506. According to Boadt, the Book of Daniel can be divided into two parts in Hebrew, and three in the Greek (and modern Catholic) Bible. However for this study, the Book of Daniel refers only to the first twelve chapters as in the Hebrew Scriptures and Protestant bibles.

² Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", Leander E. Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996) 20.

³ C. Hassel Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 292.

BCE. Not long after, the Babylonians totally destroyed Jerusalem in 587/586 BCE and deported the cream of the Southern Kingdom. Fortunately for the exiled Israelites, King Cyrus of Persia around 539 BCE "conquered Babylon and soon thereafter began to allow the Jewish people to return to their Palestinian land."⁴

The next kingdom to rule the world after the Persians was Alexander the Great and the Macedonians. Apparently, "the era of the Hellenistic rule that is of greatest interest for the study of the Book of Daniel is the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175- 164 BCE)."⁵

Antiochus IV Epiphanes was interested in the strengthening of the military presence in Jerusalem. This military stronghold later brought havoc to the Jewish people, as the Maccabees became openly defiant in their desire to control Jerusalem. However, the Maccabeans were not the only group to show resistance towards Antiochus IV Epiphanes policies, "the book of Daniel represents other forms of political and religious resistance during the same time."⁶

2. Political, Social and Religious Changes in Judea

The Hellenism period affected not only Jerusalem and the Jewish countryside, but all of Palestine. There were many Greek cities founded in both

⁴ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 23-24.

⁵ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 24.

⁶ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 25. Other groups include the conservative Jews such as the Hasideans.

the east and west of Palestine during the Ptolemaic and Seleucid periods.⁷ But in the times of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a number of changes in the Jewish community were set up against their culture and religion. This was the main reason for the Jewish Maccabean revolt.⁸ The revolt started when a Syrian envoy ordered Matthias⁹ to offer sacrifice on a pagan altar (for a pagan god).¹⁰ Moreover, the interest of Antiochus in the treasury of the temple was controversial. His interest "reflected that the financial crisis of the Seleucids had become severe."¹¹

At the time of the Jewish Maccabean revolt, the Romans were also in an upheaval. They humiliated Antiochus IV in Egypt by relinquishing all his Egyptian conquests. In return for his humiliation, he captured Jerusalem through his official Apollonius. He then made Jerusalem a *katoikia*.¹² Apollonius as Antiochus' governor in Jerusalem started to persecute the faithful Jews. He did this not only for their resistance to give up the temple's financial contribution to a foreign ruler, but also to eliminate the existence of such rebellious people.¹³ In light of these developments, Antiochus IV Epiphanes endorsed to make the temple of Yahweh as home for Baal Shamem/Zeus.¹⁴ Moreover, Antiochus

⁷ Helmut Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age: vol. one*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 209.

⁸ Helmut Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age: vol. one*, 211. This revolt is also recorded in the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees.

⁹ He was both a priest and a leader at the temple.

¹⁰ Leon J. Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House 1986) 357.

¹¹ Helmut Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age: vol. one*, 212.

¹² A city where soldiers, veterans and colonists made their citizenry.

¹³ Helmut Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age: vol. one*, 211. Also see Joyce Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction And Commentary*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978) 37.

¹⁴ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 25.

"forced the Jewish faithful who remained to participate in this pagan cult."¹⁵ This was a reflection of the political and the religious reorganization through the decrees of Antiochus, which legitimized the new cult and outlawed the practice of the Jewish religion in Jerusalem and Judea.¹⁶

The various persecutions upon the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes caused a series of wars between them. During this time there was inevitably no peace for the people of God. It is widely considered that the author of the book of Daniel lived during these persecutions, and his purpose was to encourage his people to maintain their faith, for their God is sovereign among all kingdoms.

B. DANIEL 2: EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

The following discussion concentrates on the dream and its interpretation which J. J. Collins claims to be a political oracle.¹⁷ The dream and interpretation report highlights how the Israelite nation stands in light of world history. In other words, this political oracle explains the succession of four major players in world politics. These four powers influenced and affected the existence of God's people in the time of the author of the book of Daniel. Political oracles "were common in the Hellenistic age and were concerned with the rise and fall of kingdoms,"¹⁸

¹⁵ Helmut Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*: vol. one, 212.

¹⁶ Helmut Koester, *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*: vol. one, 213.

¹⁷ John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to the Apocalyptic Literature*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999) 23.

¹⁸ E.g., the Sibylline Oracles, Egyptian Potter's Oracle, Persian Bahman Yasht and Oracle of Hystaspes, Babylonian Dynasty Prophecy.

1. Exegesis

a. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

³¹ "You were looking, O king, and lo! there was a great statue. This statue was huge, its brilliance extraordinary; it was standing before you, and its appearance was frightening. ³² The head of that statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were all broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Holy Bible: NRSV version)

The reference to the size of the statue is not very clear, however it is stated as being 'a great statue.' A comparative picture may be drawn when considering the image Nebuchadnezzar, later built as reported in chapter 3. The image then was probably ninety feet tall (3:1). The statue in its physical appearance frightened Nebuchadnezzar, but "this certainly is understandable, for the huge image would have stood like a dazzling colossus before the king."¹⁹

The words *you were looking, and lo or behold* are common amongst prophetic writings, especially in many dream or vision reports of prophets (Amos 4: 7; 7: 2; Zech 1: 8.)²⁰ In short, an apparition or spirit (ghost) demanded the attention of the king by its striking presence. It was not to be ignored, indeed, it was frightening. It was believed that the presence of Nebuchadnezzar and his mighty army brought fear to the lives of the people, because they would crush anything and anyone that opposed them.

¹⁹ Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary, Daniel: vol. 18*, (USA: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994) 75.

²⁰ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 53.

This statue was considered to be "a multi-metallic image of four metals plus silicon (sand or clay)."²¹ Even though some scholars claim a declining value of the metals, the strength of these metals did not differ greatly. Stephen R. Miller similarly attests that "the various metals suggest a combination of costliness and strength."²² In the same way, John E. Goldingay claims that the different metals are portrayed as "majestic and precious ... strong and hard."²³ However there is a notable feature which John E. Goldingay states as 'bizarre'.²⁴ This feature appears in the mixture of iron and clay at the feet of the statue, and can be seen as a weakness of the statue.

b. Interpretation

³⁶ "This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. ³⁷ You, O king, the king of kings—to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the might, and the glory, ³⁸ into whose hand he has given human beings, wherever they live, the wild animals of the field, and the birds of the air, and whom he has established as ruler over them all—you are the head of gold. ³⁹ After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over the whole earth. ⁴⁰ And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron; just as iron crushes and smashes everything, it shall crush and shatter all these. ⁴¹ As you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the strength of iron shall be in it, as you saw the iron mixed with the clay. ⁴² As the toes of the feet were part iron and part clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ As you saw the iron mixed with clay, so will they mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever; ⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from

²¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible: vol. 3, Proverbs- Malachi*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982) 539.

²² Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary, Daniel: vol. 18*, 91.

²³ John E. Goldingay, *Word Biblical Commentary, Daniel*, (Texas: Word Books Publishers, 1989) 57.

²⁴ John E. Goldingay, *Word Biblical Commentary, Daniel*, 57.

the mountain not by hands, and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. The great God has informed the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation trustworthy." (Holy Bible: NRSV version)

In Daniel's interpretation of the dream, a notable point is what the king has said to be a strange colossal statue. A statue revealing various parts of the human body (head, chest, arms, belly, hips, legs, feet), and made up of different metals.²⁵ The dream is significant here because it provides a history of the world through four successive gentile empires. During the final phase of the fourth empire, all the earthly dominions will be destroyed, and the kingdom of God that will endure forever will be established.²⁶

Daniel begins his interpretation by reaffirming the source of true power. Given Daniel's context, this is perceived as a very bold statement, even for a religious legend. But Daniel shows confidence in his God by claiming that Nebuchadnezzar's power and authority is God given. This implies that the Babylonian gods are actually "given authority only by the permission of the God of Daniel and his friends."²⁷

Moreover, this show of courage by Daniel in revealing the dream asserts the ultimate control of God over humans. In other words, no one rules forever, even the most powerful kings and kingdoms like Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire. Only the almighty God, "has all the authority upon everyone not for just a period of time."²⁸

²⁵ Louis F. Hartman, et. al, *The Anchor Bible: The Book of Daniel*, (New York, Doubleday, 1978) 146.

²⁶ Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary, Daniel: vol. 18*, 75.

²⁷ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 54.

²⁸ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 54.

i. Significance of Metals

Gold and silver are very significant in the everyday life of people, especially the wealthy. This is because these precious metals are "the means of trade, accumulation and wealth."²⁹ Likewise, a commoner values iron and clay because they are useful materials for daily living, whether they are for plows or bowls. The value of iron and clay to commoners can thus be compared to the value of gold to the wealthy.

In addition, gold and silver are not only valuable metals which obtain their own monetary units, but are also used as "decoration for religious idols or temple vessels (Is. 31:7; 40:9)."³⁰ Silver, during the reign of Darius was used as a medium of taxation. This usage of silver served as a trying time for many Jews especially "when they were forced to trade their agricultural produce with the state coin (see Nehemiah 5)."³¹

Conversely, the head made of gold was hardly a sign of admiration during the exile. In fact, it was a sign of "Near Eastern empire's greedy intentions to host precious metals."³² Thus, gold portrays a negative sign for the oppressed. That is, gold was not a sign for anything good, but of greed and destruction which left them in great oppression. In contrast, the current leaders of Babylon viewed gold as the sign of power and wealth. In fact nations strived for wealth and power in order to develop a good life for the people.

²⁹ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 54.

³⁰ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 54.

³¹ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 54.

³² Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflection", 54.

ii. The Four Kingdoms: A View of History

In Daniel's interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar was initially addressed in the usual majestic manner, but eventually he was informed of the truth. Daniel declared that he owed all his territory and authority over man and beast to the God of heaven who had given him these honors, and made him the head of gold.

In Daniel's interpretation two major aspects were attributed to the king, firstly, Nebuchadnezzar was identified with the gold, the most precious of the metals, and secondly, he was seen to rule over the whole inhabited world.³³

The head of gold is explicitly identified with Nebuchadnezzar himself, "it obviously stands for the Babylon kingdom and its outstanding monarch."³⁴ As in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, "God put Nebuchadnezzar at the top; He made him the first great world ruler, and there has been no one like him since then."³⁵ All of this made Nebuchadnezzar and the whole of the Babylonian empire the golden part of the statue, according to God's will. Only after the time of Nebuchadnezzar will the deterioration set in, when the gold will be replaced by the silver and the silver by bronze.³⁶

Identification of the three successive kingdoms presents different proposals. J. J. Collins³⁷ suggests that the four kingdom schema follows a common tradition which existed at the time of the book's composition. Such traditions see the four kingdom schema as Assyrians, Medes, Persians and the Macedonians. This

³³ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, 93.

³⁴ Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1965) 45.

³⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible: Vol. III, Proverbs- Malachi*, 539.

³⁶ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, 93.

³⁷ John J. Collins *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature: 2nd Edition*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 92-98.

tradition was later modified by Babylonian scribes identifying the first kingdom as Babylon with the rest of the kingdoms as those above.³⁸ In light of this interpretation, the rock that shattered the statue must be a Jewish addition.³⁹

iii. The Rock

In the king's dream, a rock not cut by human hands was evidently hurled by some force at the statue, striking it on its feet and breaking the iron and clay into pieces. The destruction was then extended to the whole statue.⁴⁰ "All of the statue or image had been pulverized and turned into dust which the wind easily blew away."⁴¹ The rock or stone grew into a huge mountain and it filled the whole earth.⁴² The mountain probably stands for Zion, and the dream represents the imminent restoration of the Jewish people to their home, which will soon become the centre of the earth.⁴³

Daniel concludes his interpretation of the dream by telling Nebuchadnezzar that the great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. He also emphasizes the certainty of the fulfillment of this revelation.

C. SUMMARY

The above exercise highlights some important historical and theological truths about Nebuchadnezzar's symbolic dream.

³⁸ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 95. The traditional interpretation claims that the four kingdoms are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

³⁹ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 95.

⁴⁰ Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary*, 91.

⁴¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible*, 539.

⁴² Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, 92.

⁴³ P. R. Davis, *Daniel: Old Testament Guides*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 48.

- a. The dream and interpretation is a political oracle which was originally political propaganda for the Babylonians who wanted to return to their glory days during Nebuchadnezzar's reign. However it is now re-presented by the author of Daniel to include the eschatological kingdom where God's rule will be established.
- b. The succession of the four kingdoms represents tyranny, cruelty and oppression from the Israelite perspective. Moreover, the fact that they were symbolically described as precious metals underline their military and political power.
- c. With regards to (b) above, the significance of the last kingdom is now being illuminated. The last kingdom is not man made but divinely created. Therefore, even though the successive kingdoms are perceived as powerful in both military and political arenas, they have no chance against the last kingdom.
- d. The political dream oracle did not advocate a military reaction to these successive foreign kingdoms, but it suggests "a life-style for those who work in a Gentile setting: only by devotion to their own God can they hope to succeed."⁴⁴ God's given wisdom to Daniel serves as a means to overcome certain trying circumstances it also results in Daniel's promotion within Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.

⁴⁴ John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to the Apocalyptic Literature*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999) 53.

D. MESSAGE AND THEOLOGY

Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation imply a theology of history. That is, it presents a world history where God's hand controls every event⁴⁵ and where world history proclaims the sovereignty of the God of Israel over the whole universe. Even though Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom were given by God together with its entire splendor, its purpose is now clear; God uses them as his instrument to fulfill his will and judgment upon his people.

Furthermore, considering the historical context of the 2nd century BCE, the dream provides a political oracle for the exiled people of God. The present persecutions are not permanent and all that is happening has been witnessed by God. Fortunately for the people of God, God has decided to intervene and His kingdom will prevail. His people will soon enjoy the peace and prosperity of the new order that God will bring through His new kingdom.

The dream oracle therefore encourages the faithful to persevere, to continue to live under foreign rule and at the same time remain faithful to their faith. For continued faith in their God will enable them to survive the difficult and trying times. This is further emphasized by John J. Collins:

... the oracle is not revolutionary but it encourages patience rather than rebellion. It proposes a view of the world in which the Jews continue in the service of Gentile kings, because they knew that gentile power would not last forever. It seems that the objective is not to entertain but to convey a religious and in part political message.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ D. S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic*, (London: SCM Press, 1992) 135. Russell claim that the two main messages apparent from apocalyptic writings are (i) *God is in control*, and (ii) *The Kingdom will come*.

⁴⁶ John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to the Apocalyptic Literature*, 53.

CHAPTER THREE

"TALI I LAGI SE AO O LOU MALO": A SAMOAN PERSPECTIVE OF DREAMS

Introduction

The main focus of this chapter will be on the symbolic dream oracle by Nafanua¹ which was eventually interpreted and fulfilled in the arrival of Christianity. In this exercise, a general understanding of dreams in the Samoan context becomes apparent.

A. NAFANUA: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Nafanua was the daughter of Saveasi'uleo (the eel) who married his niece named Tilafaiga the twin sister of Taema.² Tilafaiga gave birth to a clot of blood which she hid under a stone pavement.³ The blood clot grew into a baby girl and was named Nafanua (hidden on the land). Nafanua grew into a fine young lady and her life was so sacred to her parents because she had features of a human being together with features of a *aitu fafine* (goddess).⁴

Nafanua grew up in a world of warfare and full of confrontations between districts and even families. Nafanua became a threat to all her enemies, mainly

¹ Nafanua is commonly known to be a (war) goddess and a prophetess. It is in this respect that Nafanua's utterance is commonly referred to as a prophecy. However, some *matais* (chiefs) and Samoan people argued that it is a *fa'alepo* (dream). This study takes the latter as its point of departure realizing Nafanua's oracle as a dream oracle or a prophetic dream oracle.

² Tilafaiga and Taema were siamese twins whom Samoan traditions attribute the origin of tattooing in Samoa.

³ Agafili Laau Tuitolova'a, Interview with Author, 23: 08: 2006, Apia, Samoa.

⁴ Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004) 1.

because no one could defeat her. Her strength and skills rapidly drew many supporters and was favored by almost everyone. But her fighting skills did not make her a dictator or a cruel leader. She loved and honored her supporters and all her families especially the people of Samoa; she was an admirable person. She became the main ruling person in the country and everyone sought her out for help.⁵

Every war she fought or through the presence of her army, she became victorious and as mentioned before, she collected all the spoils of war including the chiefly titles (especially the most important ones). Through these conquests she gathered the highest ranked or kingly *matai* (chief) titles of Samoa. These wars were called the *Taua o papa and ao* (wars for high rank chiefly titles).⁶ Therefore, in her list of titles, she collected all the *papa* (*ao e fa* or four titles/ four heads).⁷ The four *papa* or titles were Gatoa'itele, Vaetamasoalii, Tuia'ana and Tuiatua.⁸ According to tradition, "the Tuiaana and Tuiatua titles belonged to families."⁹ The other two titles [Vae]Tamasoalii and Gatoaitele were bestowed by Safata and Tuamasaga respectively.¹⁰

⁵ Iosua Toafa et, al., *Tala o le Vavau*, (Apia: Wesleyan Productions, 1963) 46.

⁶ Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962*, 1.

⁷ *Papa* is also referred to as *ao*. *Ao* title according to Meleisea, "is one which stands at the top of a large 'family tree' or genealogy as the senior title ... not all famous old titles ... are *ao*." Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 32.

⁸ Farao Falana'ipupu, Interview with Author, 15: 06: 2006, Samoa College, Samoa. Also see Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, (Apia: University of the South Pacific, 1987) 32.

⁹ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 32. However, these titles were later taken by groups of orators. Therefore, the Tuiaana was then bestowed by chiefs of Leulumoega and Tuiatua by chiefs of Lufilufi.

¹⁰ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 32. Salamasina became the first person to be officially bestowed all these four kingly titles. That is, she was the first queen of Samoa and known to be the *tafa'ifa*. *Tafa'ifa* refers to a person who holds all four kingly titles of Samoa. Ever since Salamasina, the four titles were never held by a single person until Malietoa. The separation of these titles is believed to

Nafanua in possession of these four titles qualifies her as the queen of Samoa since these four titles represent the rulers (kings or leaders) of Samoa. However she did not bestow these *papa* upon her and was not seen as a queen. She was known as a great war goddess. People all around Samoa afterwards began to approach her requesting a high title or even *papa* or *ao* for them. Since receiving a *papa* or *ao* brings honor and respect for any family.¹¹ Nafanua according to tradition, accept most of these requests and eventually giving away all of these high chiefly or kingly titles.

B. "TALI I LAGI SE AO O LOU MALO": NAFANUA'S DREAM ORACLE

Malietao¹² Fitisemanu the son of Malietao Muagututi'a came to Nafanua later requesting a *papa* or *ao* to honor his family, but "Malietao found out that his rivals had taken all the titles."¹³ Apparently, Nafanua had already foreseen this event and her *fa'alepo* (dream) prompted her to relay to Malietao the famous oracle.

The oracle was:

*Talofa e, ua e tuai mai, ua toe o i'u o malo. A e sau ia ina alu, tali i lagi se ao o lou malo.*¹⁴

[How sorry I am for you are late, there are only lesser titles left. But come, wait for a title of your kingdom from heaven.]

be the cause of so many differences between districts which resulted in wars. The supporters of each title have their own agendas in terms of *malo* and land boundaries.

¹¹ Fiso Tesimale Su'a, Interview with Author, 01: 05: 2006, Apia, Samoa,

¹² During this period the Malietao title has become a paramount chiefly title. The title originated from the war between the Samoans and Tongans which ended Tongan rule in Samoa.

¹³ Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962*, 1.

¹⁴ Farao Falana'ipupu, Interview with Author, 15: 06: 2006, Samoa College, Samoa. The thrust of the oracle is underlined.

This oracle was Nafanua's *fa'alepo* which became the dream of the Malietoa family for many generations.¹⁵ Malietoa Fitisemanu did not witness the fulfillment of this dream oracle. However, the dream oracle lived which gave great hope for the Malietoa family.¹⁶

Tradition never portrayed this oracle from Nafanua as just a merely utterance to soothe Malietoa. Similarly, Malietoa and the Malietoa family (*Aiga Sa Malietoa*)¹⁷ seriously accepted the oracle and at the same time waited patiently for its fulfillment. Nafanua as stated already was a goddess and was highly respected by the Samoan people probably because of her dualistic nature. That is, she was known to be part human and part spirit. Moreover, her victories and generosity to all that were oppressed really soars her popularity and respectability. Therefore, questioning or even doubting the genuineness of her oracle may invite consequences that are not favorable to Malietoa and his family.

C. THE ARRIVAL OF THE "LOTU"¹⁸: AN INTERPRETATION OF NAFANUA'S DREAM ORACLE

In the year 1830, missionary John Williams¹⁹ and others brought the Gospel to Samoa. History records that they arrived at Sapapalii in the island of Savaii (residential place of Malietoa).²⁰ The mission strategy to head straight to

¹⁵ Rev. Elder Alama Atapana Moreli Alama IV, Interview with Author, 18: 06: 2006, Apia, Samoa.

¹⁶ Rev. Elder Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i: O le Tala Faasolopito O le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*, 17.

¹⁷ *Aiga Sa Malietoa* literally means 'members belonging to the Malietoa clan or family'. That is, people who have blood ties to the Malietoa title.

¹⁸ The Samoan word *Lotu* is the translation of the religion brought by the white men (missionaries).

¹⁹ John Williams and his crew were under the supervision of the London Missionary Society (LMS).

²⁰ Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962*, 2.

Sapapalii was intentionally based on experienced with other Polynesian island missions. That is, for the conversion to be effective, the king or paramount chief or chiefs must be converted first. Once that is achieved, their followers will follow suit.

The people of Sapapalii, in fact the whole of Samoa were all in complete surprise when they saw the boat and its crew. The Samoans thought that the white people were from the sky therefore, they called them *pa-pa-lagi* or *palagi* it literally means *the skies exploded and out came white people*.²¹

The Samoans through Malietoa easily accepted the arrival of the white men with their new religion. This is due to the fact that Malietoa and his family still remembers the oracle by Nafanua. Therefore, to Malietoa and his descendants, this is the kingdom they have been waiting for according to the oracle. Malietoa had no reservations in accepting Christianity since he firmly believed in the oracle which has been a tradition within his family for generations. For Malietoa, the *malo* or kingdom has now arrived and it comes from heaven.

When John Williams and company arrived in Samoa, Malietoa Vaiinupo was engaged in a war with the district of Aana to avenge the assassination of Tamafaiga²², one of his kinsmen. In this war Malietoa was not only victorious, but was able to collect all the four titles called *papa*. Malietoa Vaiinupo then was made *tafaifa*, the sole ruler of Samoa. However, Samoa was still unsettled with

²¹ Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962*, 2 and Rev. Elder Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega O le Alofa Lavea'i: O le Tala Faasolopito O le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*, 18.

²² Tamafaiga as recorded by John Williams in his journal was filled with the devil's spirit. And that he "had the power to inflict disease and death." Cited by Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Samoa*, 56. Moreover, the death of Tamafaiga was interpreted by Fauea and John Williams as a divine intervention. Since, Tamafaiga was seen as an obstacle for their mission because he was known to be an evil man and fearsome war hero.

lots of districts waging war against each other. The main purpose of these wars was to extend boundaries and supporters of each kingdom.

A decade later, Malietoa Vaiinupo in his *mavaega* or 'dying wish' renounced the *papa*, the four titles on which his power had rested so that – or he hoped – the title of *tafaifa*, the supreme title, the headship of the *malo*,²³ would die with him.²⁴ That is, for Malietoa, no one man should hold all the four titles or become a supreme leader.

Malietoa's main wish is for Samoa to be led by the Christian God. Worldly power and titles are no longer paramount but must be subservient to the one true God introduced by the missionaries. His distribution of the *tafaifa* back to their respective districts was a symbolic act to fulfill his dying wish. Fortunately, for the LMS, this symbolic act enhanced the spread of the *lotu* because all the heads of the respective districts are LMS converters. The *lotu* was quickly spread throughout Samoa and Samoa immediately became a Christian nation.²⁵

D. SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CHANGES: THE IMPACT OF "LOTU"

The impact of Christianity was immediate in the life of Samoans, especially because the LMS organization and that of the Samoan society shared similar structures. Chiefs that supported Malietoa quickly followed suit. Apparently, the Samoan chiefly system centers all of their social, religious and ceremonial affairs

²³ *Malo* refers to the strong or winning party.

²⁴ G.S. Parsonson, *The Conversion of Polynesia*, (Dunedin: University of Otago, 1984) 23.

²⁵ The arrival of the Methodist and Roman Catholic missions affect the political scene but not the Christian Religion. That is, Samoans accept Christianity wholeheartedly; the problem only lies on their choice of denomination.

around the *matai*, that's why when the *matai* accepts the new religion all the family members follow.²⁶

The missionaries whether Europeans or islanders were regarded with the highest of respects. They were treated and looked after well by Malietoa and the Samoan people. Malietoa even gave them share of his dignitaries.²⁷ They now have equal or even higher status than him and his fellow *matais*. This high respect was evident when Malietoa presented them a *fale* (house) as a gift for the missionaries. The *fale* or house "was the center for both religious and social associations, be it for worship, social gatherings, and so forth."²⁸

Everyone, under Malietoa's leadership, was enthusiastic in learning about this new religion. The *fale* becomes the first gathering place for those who are interested in learning and hearing the Good News about Jesus Christ. This was the establishment of the first Samoan congregation. Even though the Samoans lived in their own culture and customs they are now subject to the teachings of this new religion. In other words,

the conversion process created religious and social changes. That is, all traditional beliefs, customary values and certain cultural practices were to be reshaped to meet Christian moral standards, while others were dismantled, rejected and abolished.²⁹

Samoans were also made to discard all their gods in place of this new God brought by the white men. The practice of polytheism now gives way to

²⁶ Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga The Household of Life, A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa* (Erlangen: Erlanger Verl. Fur Mission und Okumene, 2000) 86.

²⁷ Agafili Laau Tuitolova'a, Interview with Author, 23: 08: 2006, Apia, Samoa.

²⁸ Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga The Household of Life, A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*, 87.

²⁹ Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga The Household of Life, A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*, 86.

worshipping only one God, Jehovah. In the old Samoa, people worship many and different gods. It spans from plants, animals, fish and even stones and rocks.³⁰ The missionaries placed emphasis on the observation of the Ten Commandments, especially of the first law, which speaks about honoring the one and only God.

The power of the white man and especially their God found recognition in almost every aspect of Samoan life. As Ama'amalele Tofaeono records,

The intercessions to and dependency on the ancestral Gods were replaced by confidence in the power of the newly arrived God. The traditional understanding of the power of fertility and reliance on a sufficient supply of local products was frequently replaced by the supply of local products was frequently replaced by the supply of foreign goods.³¹

Samoans became convinced that the God from the "other world", the heaven or the far place, was majestic, rich and powerful.

The missionaries and teachers of the Bible have a high status within the community. In fact, as already mentioned, Malietoa has given them a status higher than the *matais*. In this respect, all honorific gifts and presents given to Malietoa are also directed to the missionaries.

Furthermore, Malietoa seized this opportunity, the acceptance of the *Lotu*, as an advantage to further demonstrate his authority and status.³² That is, when people saw this relationship with the missionaries, they will respect him more not

³⁰ For further reading on old Samoa religion and gods see George Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago And Long Before*, (Suva: University of the South Pacific (reprinted), 1989) 16-77.

³¹ Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga The Household of Life, A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*, 90.

³² Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962*, 6.

only through the *tafaifa* title but with his now accumulated wealth from the white men.³³ The Samoan people had high expectations of this new development in the religious and political aspects of their history. They see the ascendancy of Vaiinupo and the arrival of the Gospel "as the remedy to reduce hostility and warfare in Samoa."³⁴

Moreover, Malietoa saw the fulfillment of Nafanua's dream oracle as a blessing for him especially in the political arena. Not only has this relationship solidified his status as the supreme leader (*tafaifa*) but also served as a check for his rival peers. In other words, the new relationship between Malietoa and the white LMS missionaries is perceived by Malietoa's rivals as further strengthening Malietoa's stronghold over the Samoan people. That is, through his now accumulated wealth of foreign material goods but especially the gifts of European warfare goods.³⁵ In other words, "the primary interests were drastically shifted to a confidence in the mighty power of foreign weapons."³⁶

E. SUMMARY

The foregoing discussion highlights some important points concerning Samoans perceptions of dreams.

³³ Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962*, 6.

³⁴ Samoans included the day when the Gospel arrived in Samoa as one of the most important days in its history. The *Lotu* now has its *taeao* (very important day). Orators always refer to this *taeao* as the day when bloodshed in Samoa ceases. Orators imply that before Christianity Samoans under the four heads or titles (*tafaifa*) live in hostility and war. For further reading see Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga The Household of Life, A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*, 81-82.

³⁵ This perception of Malietoa led his rival peers to request the Wesleyan Missions to send them bible teachers. Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962*, 8.

³⁶ Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga The Household of Life, A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*, 90.

1. The acceptance of the dream oracle by Malietoa reflects the general treatment of dreams by Samoan people. Samoans treat every oracle from a chief or someone known to possess supernatural powers with utmost respect. Since doubting or failure to accept an oracle may impose a curse upon the receiver and/or member of his or her family.
2. The individual kingly titles (*papa* or *ao*) that form the *tafaifa* represent times of hostilities within the Samoan people. Since each individual high chief and his supporters have different interests and they would only stop until they acquire what they want. Sadly, people and their properties were affected during these selfish endeavors and obviously the defeated party will be oppressed.
3. Nafanua's dream oracle and especially its interpretation have a major impact on the lives of Malietoa and the Samoan people. Malietoa's acceptance of the *Lotu* affects all facets of Samoan life. The *matai* who was the head of every family and social gatherings become secondary to the missionaries and bible teachers. Also, the social and moral lives of the Samoans are now subject to the teachings and expectations of this new religion.
4. Samoans perceived the God of the missionaries as superior and powerful especially when compared to their traditional gods. To them, this distinction is clearly reflected in the material goods brought by the missionaries and especially the warfare equipments.

5. The designation of the arrival of the Gospel as a special day or *taeao* in the history of Samoa highlights the acceptance of Christianity as the most important event in the lives of Samoans. Actually this *taeao* marks the end of the dark period where district and family wars dominate. In other words, the days under the individual *papa* and *ao*, and even the *tafaifa* portray days in darkness. That's why Malietoa in his 'dying wish' desires for Samoa to disregard the *tafaifa* or the supreme ruler and let the Christian God reign over the Samoan people.
6. Furthermore, Malietoa and the Samoans now see life under Christianity as more free and peaceful compared to their history so far.

A. COMPARISON

The most obvious similarity points to the way both contexts treat dreams and what dreams convey. In the Book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar's discomfort and anxiety increases when he is unable to comprehend his dream and its meaning. This corresponds with the Ancient Near East belief of dreams having 'evil powers'.

One of the reasons why ancient peoples were so anxious to have their dreams interpreted was not only to know what they meant but also to use that knowledge to conduct appropriate rituals to do away with the evil powers that produced the dream.¹

Likewise in the Samoan context, dream oracles or oracles in general are revered and treated with utmost respect, especially those oracles from people

¹ James F. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections", New Jerusalem Bible, Vol VII Leander E. Keck and others (eds) (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 312

CHAPTER FOUR

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM: A SAMOAN CONTEXTUAL READING

Introduction

In this chapter the Samoan contextual findings in Chapter Three will be drawn upon in the reading of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. In achieving this, a comparison will be made between the two dream oracles. This will be followed by a reading of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in light of the aforementioned comparison. The aim of this chapter is to enlighten the understanding of Nebuchadnezzar's dream from a Samoan perspective.

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¹ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections", *New Interpreters Bible* vol VII Leander E. Keck and others (eds) (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 219

who possessed supernatural powers. Failure to deal with dream oracles in the respectful and correct manner often incurred adverse circumstances.

Secondly, Nebuchadnezzar's dream conveys world history, which is filled with political and religious (theological) connotations. Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream a succession of four kingdoms in a symbolic statue composed of a mixture of precious metals. The strengths and might of the successive kingdoms are reflected in the quality of the respective metals. However, they were useless compared to the power explicitly showed by the rock, which was divinely created. The statue, the composition of the four kingdoms, was shattered and crushed by the rock, a symbolic fate of the worldly kingdoms when the Kingdom of God is finally established on earth.

The Nafanua dream oracle conveys a similar picture. Successive clans or kingdoms under individual *papa* or *ao* dominated the history of Samoa before the *Lotu*. That is, Samoan early history is mostly concentrated on the reign of these individual *papa* and their cultural and political endeavors.²

Samoa has only four *papa* or kingly titles. They are designated with their own kingdom within the Samoa islands and are equal in status. Their power to influence Samoans once depended upon their achievements in war. That is, if they were victorious there were given the *malo*, but, if conquered they were called the weak side or *vaivai*, and they become subjects of the victorious. The *vaivai* side was oppressed and was expected to serve and support the *malo*. The *malo*, on the other hand, had had every right to strip the *papa* from the losing

² Agafili Laau Tuitolovaa, Interview with author, Apia, 23.08.06.

side as a sign of victory. When a single person held all the four *papa*, he or she was called the *tafaifa*, or supreme ruler.³

However, whether or not the four titles were controlled by four different individuals, or by the *tafaifa*, there was still no peace in Samoa. This was often the inevitable result of an oppressed people who could not contain their discontentment. The arrival of Christianity changed all this. In light of Nafanua's oracle, the people readily accepted the *Lotu* as the fulfillment of that oracle. For that reason, the *Lotu* affected all facets of Samoan life.

Another point of comparison is the impact of the divine kingdom in world history, as represented by the rock, proved effective and brutal. The four successive kingdoms although potent and powerful could not withstand the striking blow of the rock. They were shattered and crushed to pieces, this clearly demonstrated the power of God's kingdom, a kingdom that reigns supreme over all powers in the worldly kingdom.

The same effect was seen in Samoa when the *Lotu* arrived. All political, social and religious hierarchy, including the four kingly titles were superseded by the Gospel. In other words, Samoan culture and customs were now subject to the teachings and expectations of the Gospel. The Gospel was now the supreme authority over the land.

Finally, Nebuchadnezzar's dream oracle promotes perseverance and maintains hope for the (implied) readers under foreign rule. That is, life under foreign kingdoms is evidently coming to an end. Without a doubt, God's rule will

³ Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900- 1962*, 1.

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³ Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, *Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962*, 1.

be established and all the faithful Jews will be vindicated. The same goes with the expectation associated with Nafanua's dream oracle. The wars and bloodshed, suffering and oppression came to an end when the heavenly kingdom arrived.

B. A SAMOAN UNDERSTANDING OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream a single statue represented the succession of kingdoms. The parts of the statue's body deteriorated according to their values. That is, from gold, silver, bronze, iron, to the mixture of iron and clay at the feet. Interestingly, the rock that represents the kingdom of God is not compared to any metal described above in terms of value and importance. The kingdom of God is originally portrayed as lowly and humble, compared to the portrayal of other kingdoms. However, according to Dan 2:34, this humble kingdom crushes the whole statue into pieces. Thus, humbleness and lowliness, God established his kingdom.

This can be understood in light of the arrival of Christianity to Samoa. The British missionaries brought the Gospel in a humble way, this is reflected in the name of their vessel, *Messenger of Peace*. Furthermore, the Gospel's arrival had humble beginnings, but its impact on the Samoan people and their culture proved effective and commanding.

1. The Four Kingdoms: The *Tafaifa*

The bulk of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and interpretation describes the four successive precious metals, a symbolic representation of successive worldly kingdoms. These four kingdoms were portrayed as powerful and wealthy. Unfortunately for the Israelites of the 2nd century BCE, they also represent suffering and oppression, especially in the political and religious aspects of their lives.

In light of the Samoan context, the individual *papa* or *ao* and the *tafaifa* can shed some light in understanding this part of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Most Samoans, like in any other society, strive for power and authority. The four kingly titles (*Tuiaana*, *Tuiatua*, *Vaetamasoaalii* and *Gatoaitale*) are symbols of power and authority both culturally and politically. However, this has caused many confrontations between families and districts in the country. Even in the case when one has become the sole holder of the four titles (*tafaifa*), the relationship shared by the people of Samoa remained the same. That is, there were still differences between clans and districts, and even families constantly resorted to war to resolve their disputes. In other words, oppression and suffering was still a reality to many Samoans.

Although there are different metals stated in the dream, the fact is, they are all part of a single statue. This implies a strong connection between the successive kingdoms. They are in fact all pagan rulers who oppressed the faithful people of God. This same picture is seen in the *tafaifa*. As already discussed, the *tafaifa* represents four different kingdoms within the Samoa islands. However, even

though they shared some cultural links, they were mostly connected through the spoils of war. In this respect, individual kingly titles (especially from a *vaivai* perspective) represented suffering and oppression.

2. The Rock: The *Lotu*

The rock according to the interpretation of the dream represents a heavenly kingdom. This kingdom proves too powerful for all the other worldly kingdoms. However, the Jewish expectations of this kingdom brings them liberation from foreign rule. It also brings them peace and prosperity. In this kingdom everyone, especially the oppressors are subject to the Jews, for they are to be the leaders of this kingdom. In other words, the political, social and religious aspects of the life of Israel and those neighboring nations will be totally transformed.

Nafanua's *faalepo* or prophetic dream oracle states, "*tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*", which means *wait for title of your kingdom from heaven*.⁴ It was a prediction of a kingdom from heaven that will be established in Samoa. As already highlighted in Chapter Three, this was fulfilled when the LMS missionaries arrived with the Gospel, the story about God's kingdom.

Malietao's acceptance of the *Lotu* brought significant changes in the life of all Samoans. In fact, all facets of Samoan life whether political, social or religious was transformed by the *Lotu*. The exclusive supremacy of the *tafaifa* was now replaced by the *Lotu*. The *matai*'s status as a lawmaker and head of all social gatherings within a family or village was now subject to the missionaries and bible teachers. In addition, all social aspects of Samoan culture are shaped to

⁴ Farao Falana'ipupu, Interview with the author, Apia, Samoa, 15: 06: 2006.

meet Christian standards. Similarly, old religious beliefs were rejected and abolished in place of the Christian God.

Malietao's insistence in his "dying wish" to do away with the *tafaifa* further highlights the huge impact of the *Lotu* in the Samoan society. Malietao during his lifetime witnessed a lot of suffering and bloodshed under these titles. He also observed the positive influence the new religion had on his people, and thus wished for Samoa to remain faithful to their new God.

C. THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

1. God is in control

Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful leader during this period of world history. In fact he created an empire that dominated the known world at the time. Judah was overthrown by the Babylonians and the cream of the nation was taken captive. His reign brought fear and terror to people around the world. However, despite Nebuchadnezzar's power and might, God reveals through a dream that He is the sovereign ruler of all heaven and earth.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream interpretation reveals not only a political message, but also a theological one. Originally, the four kingdom schema of Nebuchadnezzar's dream portrays the unique standing he and his kingdom have over the nations of the world. As represented by gold, Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon's might and splendor are matchless compared to other successive kingdoms. The dream and interpretation reaffirms this. However, the addition of the fifth kingdom provides a theological outlook of the dream and interpretation.

A divinely created rock symbolizes the heavenly kingdom that would eventually overcome all secular kingdoms. This heavenly kingdom signifies how the God of Israel controls history. That is, within world history the hand of God directs and fulfills everything according to his will. The rise and fall of kings and kingdoms are attributed to the will of God.

Malietao shares a similar standing to that of Nebuchadnezzar although on a much lesser scale. His acceptance of the *Lotu* as the interpretation of Nafanua's oracle really convinced Malietao that the God of the missionaries is the one and supreme God. In other words, when God decides to do something, no human being can stop Him. Therefore, His purpose of establishing his kingdom on earth shows that he can do whatever he wants and no one can stop Him. Furthermore, His sovereignty controls everyone, Jew or Gentile or even Samoan alike. Theologically, the dream conveys an encouraging message for the persecuted and oppressed Jewish people. All that is happening in the history of Israel and the world is controlled by God.

2. Dreams: a medium of Gods revelation

There is no doubt that God reveals His messages in dreams. It does not matter whether the recipient(s) are Jews or Gentiles. Nebuchadnezzar's dream affirms this but the interpretation and understanding of dreams lies with God. Only through genuine commitment to God is a person able to receive an understanding of God's will.

Genuine interpretation and understanding of dreams depend on its fulfillment during the course of time. That is, true and false interpretations are considered only in light of its fulfillment in due course. In the dream in Daniel 2, the interpretation was realized through history and similarly in the Samoan context. This is a further affirmation of God revealing in and through dreams.

3. God's Kingdom: Hope, Peace and Prosperity

For the loyal and faithful Jews, the establishment of the heavenly kingdom not only symbolizes peace and prosperity, but it also brings hope to the oppressed. The prolonged suffering is nearing its end, and the new kingdom will transform everything. In fact, world politics will be turned upside down. The Jewish people will become heirs of the new kingdom and are leaders, while the foreign oppressors become their subjects.

Samoan society underwent a similar transformation. All its political, social and religious commitments and responsibilities were transformed to meet the requirements and obligations of the *Lotu*. Samoans accepted, with optimism, these changes for they believed it would bring prosperity and peace. That is, material wealth would be increased and wars would come to an end.

D. SUMMARY

In the exercise above, the Nebuchadnezzar dream and that of Nafanua share a lot of similarities as well as some differences. This comparison made the contextual reading of Nebuchadnezzar's dream possible and meaningful. The

similarities in the treatment and effects of dreams, in both contexts, sets the stage for a meaningful reading.

Furthermore, the similarity of the four successive metals or kingdoms can be further understood by a Samoan in light of the four kingly titles, united under the *tafaifa* title. Even though the reference to the *tafaifa* is on a much smaller scale, the function and effects share a lot of similarities.

Also, the rock which was interpreted as the heavenly kingdom shares common aspects with the new religion or *Lotu* brought by the LMS missionaries. The impact of the Gospel to the Samoans was immediate and effective. All cultural practices that did not meet the moral values and standards of the Gospel are eliminated or transformed.

Lastly, the message and theological implications of the biblical dream can be easily understood by a Samoan, because they are also implicit and explicitly portrayed in the Nafanua oracle and its later interpretation by Malietoa. That is, the establishment of God's kingdom reaffirms the sovereignty of God over the whole world. This was clearly revealed through God's setting and disposing of world kings and kingdoms. Similarly, the *tafaifa* are all God's design and under God's overall plan for the people of Samoa. However, their part in Samoa's history has now ceased or been minimized, for God's kingdom now reigns supreme.

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to explore symbolic dreams in the Old Testament. However, it was narrowed down to the specific dream oracle of Nebuchadnezzar due to scope limitation. The exegesis of the biblical dream was explored in light of its historical setting (2nd century BCE). This exploration was then compared with the Samoan contextual study of Nafanua's *faalepo*. This comparison forms the basis of the contextual reading and understanding of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The study demonstrates the universality of dreams in the Ancient Near East, Israel and Samoa. In fact, symbolic dreams are common experiences universally. The brief survey in the beginning reaffirms this fact. Moreover, the serious treatment of symbolic dreams is also common since all contexts discussed in this paper (Ancient Near East, Israel and Samoa) share this interest. This commonality is due mainly to the fact that in the above contexts, all believed the deities communicated through dreams. Failure to understand and grasp the will of the deities brought upon the people or recipients of dreams, curses and distressing ordeals.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream as explained by Daniel was a statue made up of different metals. In fact, the metals (gold, silver, bronze and iron) seemed to decline in value from the head down to the feet. These precious metals were interpreted as worldly kingdoms that rule the world successively. However at the end, a rock, symbolic of a fifth kingdom smashed and shattered the statue. The interpretation sees these four kingdoms as Babylon, Mede, Persia and Greece.

These kingdoms have a significant impact on the lives of the people of God, especially as they all, at some time in history, ruled over Israel. The rock was seen as the heavenly kingdom which in the end overcomes all other kingdoms. This kingdom eventually grows into a huge mountain which filled the earth.

Even though it portrays worldly kingdoms, the dream's main purpose was to inform the pagan king and also the faithful Jews that all these powerful and wealthy kingdoms are under God's sovereign control. They were also enlightened of the nearing end of their reign and the inheritance of God's kingdom by His people. This dream relays a message of hope for the oppressed and persecuted people of God under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and at the same time promotes the new kingdom as peaceful and free.

This exegetical interpretation and understanding of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was enhanced by our Samoan contextual reading. The analysis and exploration of the Nafanua dream oracle produced exciting parallels to those of Nebuchadnezzar's oracle. These similarities enable us to further enlighten our understanding of the biblical symbolic dream. An example is the *tafaifa* title which resembles the four successive kingdoms and the nature of these kingdoms. The *tafaifa* symbolizes oppression and suffering from the perspective of the defeated or *vaivai* side. The arrival of the *Lotu* marks the immediate and dramatic transformation of Samoa under the rule of the individual kingdoms and also the *tafaifa*. The new religion reshaped the political, social and religious life of the people of Samoa. Fortunately for Samoa, these transformations have been more positive than negative. It is no wonder that Malietoa wished Samoans

to do away with the *tafaifa*, so they could solely worship the one and true God brought by the missionaries.

Overall, the message and theology for the faithful Jews under persecution and oppression is also apparent in our Samoan discussion. The events of history are under God's sovereign control. People must persevere and work under foreign rule with the assurance that God's kingdom is at hand. When this kingdom arrives, it will come with the authority to liberate. Therefore, all who remain steadfast and faithful will inherit this kingdom. For Samoans, this kingdom has been realized in the arrival of the *Lotu*. Wars and bloodshed have ceased, and peace and freedom is a reality.

This study is but one of the many attempts to read the bible from a specific context. I believe in this attempt the understanding of the biblical dream has been enhanced by this specific reading. Not only will Samoans be comfortable and confident in this kind of approach, but their understanding of symbolic dreams will also have been improved. In this respect, they will be able to assess their supposedly symbolic dreams in light of this discussion, and draw genuine interpretations and conclusions that resemble the will of God. This will not lead them to dismiss CCCS teachings for they will now have a good foundation of interpreting and understanding the will of God from their own unique context.

Samueli

the eel (Nafanua's father)

Safu

another district in the Samoa

Tamamua

district in Samoa

Nafanua

Nafanua's mother

GLOSSARY

<i>Aana</i>	-	District responsible for Tamafaiga's death
<i>Aiga Sa Malietoa</i>	-	Malietoa Family
<i>aitu fafine</i>	-	goddess
<i>ao</i>	-	head (same as papa)
<i>fa'alepo</i>	-	dream or a goal
<i>Fale</i>	-	house
<i>Gatoa'itele</i>	-	one of the four kingdoms
<i>Lotu</i>	-	religion (Christianity)
<i>Malietoa Fitiseanu</i>	-	the one who received Nafanua's oracle
<i>Malietoa Muagututi'a</i>	-	father of Malietoa Fitiseanu
<i>Matai</i>	-	chief
<i>mavaega</i>	-	dying wish
<i>malo</i>	-	winning side
<i>Nafanua</i>	-	goddess and a great warrior
<i>papa</i>	-	head or kingdom
<i>pa- pa- lagi or palagi</i>	-	the skies exploded (white men or European)
<i>Sapapalii</i>	-	village of the Malietoa family
<i>Savaii</i>	-	the biggest island in Samoa
<i>Saveasi'uleo</i>	-	the eel (Nafanua's father)
<i>Safata</i>	-	another district in the Samoa
<i>Tuamasaga</i>	-	district in Samoa
<i>Tilafaiga</i>	-	Nafanua's mother

- Taema* - Tilafaiga's Siamese twin sister
- Tali i lagi se ao o lou malo* - wait for a title of your kingdom from heaven
- Tuia'ana* - kingly title of the kingdom of A'ana
- Tuiatua* - kingly title for the kingdom of Atua
- Tamafaiga* - Malietoa Vaiinupo's kinsman
- Tafaifa* - supreme ruler (one who holds all four kingly titles)
- taeao* - special day
- Gatoaitele* - kingly title originated from the kingdom of Tuamasaga
- Vaetamasoalii* - kingly title originated from the kingdom of Safata

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