

Week 26, Lecture 73,¹ Puzzling over Jeremiah, Daniel 9:1-3

Chapter 9, Remarks on Structure

Introduction	Puzzlement over Jeremiah's Prophecy
Prayer	A Prayer of Repentance
Conclusion	Gabriel's Help

Chapter 9, Remarks on Genre

The previous visions, chapters 7 & 8, involved the symbolic meaning of dreams Daniel could not interpret.

Review: Daniel 1-6 are **older folk tales** (perhaps from 250 B.C.) where Daniel is portrayed as an expert dream interpreter.

Daniel 7-12 contains **apocalyptic visions written later**, ca. 165 B.C. ([more exact date in Lecture 75](#))

Daniel is no longer an expert! Here he needs help interpreting his own dreams!

The 4 beasts from the sea in chapter 7; the ram & the he-goat of chapter 8.

In those chapters a celestial figure fills the role of **interpreting angel** (*angelus interpres*)

In chapter 9 the celestial messenger has a different role, **revealing angel** (*angelus revelator*)²

Unlike previous visions, this vision is a specific interpretation of a **previously written Biblical text** (Jeremiah)

The Prayer is an "Insert." The context would require a prayer for understanding.

Just as a later scribe would insert the "Song of the Three Young Men into the **Greek Version** of chapter 3

making chapter 3 in Greek Bibles (Catholic / Orthodox) 100 verses long (instead of 30)

so an earlier scribe inserted this **Hebrew** prayer of repentance between verses 3 & 21, which originally read:³

³ Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. [verses 4-20] ²¹ While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. ⁴

Sign on a Turkish Airliner

[Bodrum Airlines has rezerved the rites to prevent anyone who gets ticket by doing trickey from getting on the board.](#)

Misspellings and the syntax make it obvious that English is not the first language of the person who prepared this sign.

One might even suspect that it was composed in another language, and then translated word-for-word.

Hebrew of 9:1-3, 21-27

Reading these verses in Hebrew is a bit like reading the above sign on the airliner!

By contrast, the Hebrew of the prayer in 9:4-20 is pellucid!

Doing the author a favor. As a favor, one might rephrase the author of the airline sign:

Bodrum Airlines reserves the right to refuse service to anyone who obtains a ticket fraudulently.

Most biblical translations do the author of the beginning and end of Daniel 9 a favor.

They change what is often Hebrew gibberish into clear English.

Even ancient translators (Greek, Latin, Syriac) had trouble with these verses.

Hartmann and Di Lella argue that the chapter (except for the prayer) was originally Aramaic; later put into Hebrew.

Not all scholars agree with this solution; but everyone sees the problem that English Bibles hide.

¹ Lectures are numbered consecutively. Although this is this week's first lecture, its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

² Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 245.

³ Here is what I mean by "earlier" and "later:" **step 1**) Book of Daniel with short versions of chapters 3 and chapter 9; **step 2**) scribe expands chapter 9 with Hebrew prayer; **step 3**) later, another scribe expands chapter 3 with a Greek hymn.

⁴ RSV. All quotes are from the RSV unless specified otherwise.

Translation (RSV)

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became king over the realm of the Chaldeans --² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years which, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, **seventy years**.³ Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

Seventy Years. The reference is to two passages in Jeremiah.

Jer 25:11-12. This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon **seventy years**.¹² Then after **seventy years** are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.

Jer 20:10. For thus says the LORD: When **seventy years** are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

Original Context -- Jeremiah's Original Meaning

False prophets were assuring the people that the LORD would quickly save them.

Jeremiah wants them to know that the punishment is going to last **a long time** -- the original meaning of the **7 decades**.

Later authors (**after** Jeremiah but **before** Daniel, as scholars date the books) came up with **Various Interpretations**.

Zechariah 1:12. Then the angel of the LORD said, "O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these **seventy years**?"

2 Chron 36:20-23. He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia,²¹ to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its **sabbaths**. All the days that it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfil **seventy years**.²² Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:²³ "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, `The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.'"

Problem. From the Fall of Jerusalem (587) to the Edict of Cyrus (538) is much less than seventy years.

Of course, Jeremiah was not giving an exact date. He was prophesying about a "long" punishment.

2 Chronicles: 70 years worth of Sabbaths -- i.e., for the **past** "490 years" they have been violating the Sabbath.

So it will take 70 years of the land "resting" **every day** to make up for this.

But the Author of Daniel is not satisfied with any previous solution.

He wants to **apply it to his own day**, many hundred years after the Exile (i.e., ca. 165 B.C.)

The remark about "sabbaths" might have encouraged him to multiply each year by 7 to get 70 weeks (of years)

Remark by Collins: "Evidently if a number does not appear to be exact, it is not rejected, but reinterpreted."⁵

Week 26, Lecture 74. Daniel's Prayer, Daniel 9:4-20

Daniel's Prayer, Part 1. verses 4-14

I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and terrible God, who keepeth covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,⁵ we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from thy commandments and ordinances;⁶ we have not listened to thy servants the prophets, who spoke in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.⁷ To thee, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us confusion of face, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of

⁵ John J. Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees*, Old Testament Message: A Biblical-Theological Commentary (Michael Glazier, 1981), 94; In 1993 Collins, with his wife, Adele Yarbro Collins, co-authored wrote a full-length scholarly commentary on Daniel in the Hermeneia Series by Fortress Press.

Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those that are near and those that are far away, in all the lands to which thou hast driven them, because of the treachery which they have committed against thee. ⁸ To us, O Lord, belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. ⁹ To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness; because we have rebelled against him, ¹⁰ and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by following his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. ¹¹ All Israel has transgressed thy law and turned aside, refusing to obey thy voice. And the curse and oath which are written in the law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. ¹² He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done the like of what has been done against Jerusalem. ¹³ As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us, yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and giving heed to thy truth. ¹⁴ Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us; for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works which he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice.

Signs of Insertion

Excellent Hebrew Style. Beautiful Hebrew! -- in contrast with the rest of the chapter.

Theme of the prayer does not fit the context.

In the rest of the chapter, Daniel is praying for **understanding**. But the prayer is a prayer of repentance.

Stylistic marks at the beginning and end.

Finally, whoever inserted the prayer saw fit to add his own introduction (vs. 4a) and conclusion (vs. 20) to it. His introduction is a rather harmless repetition of vs. 3; but his conclusion is not merely an unnecessary duplication of vs. 21; it is such an obvious **anacoluthon** that the reader cannot fail to recognize the prayer as a later insertion.⁶

An "**anacoluthon**" is a sentence that starts, but does not finish

[from the Greek word *akoluthēō*, "to follow"] The sentence starts, but does not "follow through."

I have changed the semicolon of the RSV to Di Lella's **dash** (see section **below**), to make this more clear.

Daniel's Prayer, Part 2. verses 15-20

And now, O Lord our God, who didst bring thy people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and **hast made thee a name**, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. ¹⁶ O Lord, according to all thy righteous acts, let thy anger and thy wrath turn away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy hill; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people have become a byword among all who are round about us. ¹⁷ Now therefore, O our God, hearken to the prayer of thy servant and to his supplications, and for thy own sake, O Lord, cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate. ¹⁸ O my God, incline thy ear and hear; open thy eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name; for we do not present our supplications before thee on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of thy great mercy. ¹⁹ O LORD, hear; O LORD, forgive; O LORD, give heed and act; delay not, for thy own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are **called by thy name**." ²⁰ While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God --

Excursus: on the "**Name**" of God

God's name is dishonored, blasphemed, when his people suffer.

The pagan's say: "Ha ha! Your God cannot help you!"

God's name is honored, blessed, when God's people are blessed.

The pagans say: "What a great God they have! What wonderful blessings!"

This idea is behind the phrase in the Lord's Prayer: "**Hallowed be thy name.**"

This is not a pious wish that **people** honor God's name. It is a prayer for **God** to honor his own name.

"We are in trouble! Do your saving God thing! Give us blessings so great that everyone will praise your name!"

This is why one scholar as referred to the Lord's Prayer as "a pushy Jewish prayer."

⁶ Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 246.

Main Problem with Prayer: It's theology is Deuteronomistic! [God rewards the good; punishes the evil]

Deuteronomistic theology pervades:

- the book of Deuteronomy,
- the prophecy of Jeremiah,
- the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings)

According to this theology, the Exile is not a failure of God to keep the covenant

It does not reveal the inability of God to protect his people.

Rather the suffering is the direct act of God to punish his sinful people.

Apocalyptic Theology. God's holy people are suffering because the wicked are in control of the world.

All of this has been "decreed" by God's mysterious plan.

The limit of the suffering has already been set by divine decree. God's faithful people need only to persevere.

Even those who suffer death will not be forgotten; God will raise them from the dead.

This apocalyptic theology, present elsewhere in Daniel, is noticeably absent in this prayer attributed to him.

Week 26, Lecture 75. Gabriel's Revelation to Daniel, Daniel 9:21-27

Gabriel Appears, verses 21-23

while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. ²² He came and he said to me, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding. ²³ At the beginning of your supplications a word went forth, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the word and understand the vision."

"Revealing Angel"

For the visions of chapters 7 and 8, Daniel needed an "interpreting angel."

Here he needs a "revealing angel" to understand the meaning not of a dream, but of Jeremiah's prophecy.

Verse 21, "in swift flight." The Hebrew is ambiguous. It could also be rendered, "utterly tired out."

Also: the translator is giving Daniel's Hebrew a lot of "help." I'll spare us the gory details.

They hit me in the face after the beautiful, flawless Hebrew of the prayer.

I was relieved when I read the commentaries by Hebrew experts. They have a similar experience.

The ambiguity of "in swift flight" / "utterly tired out" is just the tip of the iceberg!

Part 2, Gabriel's Revelation, 24-27

"Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. ²⁵ Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one [a Messiah], a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. ²⁶ And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one [a Messiah] shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war; desolations are decreed. ²⁷ And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

V. 24, Seventy Weeks "of years." Phrase is not in the text. The RSV translator has supplied it to help the reader out. KJV, NRSV, NAB, NABRE, NET all say simply "seventy weeks"

The ancient Greek translations & the Latin Vulgate read simply "seventy weeks" [See the NETS & the Douay Bible]

The context will demand this meaning, but the phrase "of years" is implicit, not explicit.

"Are Decreed." This is a "divine passive." God is the one who has pronounced the decree.

Time perspective

The "word" to restore & rebuild Jerusalem would be the Edict of Cyrus, 538 B.C.

Note that the first **7 weeks** + **62 weeks** get relatively short shrift.

The author of Daniel wants to get to the final "**one week**" which pertains to his own time

This time is about 165 B.C. or approximately 400 years **after** the "story-line time" of the book of Daniel.

7 Weeks, first "anointed one." Possibly this refers to Cyrus the Persian.

Second Isaiah, during the Exile, uses it of Cyrus the Persian

Isaiah 45:1. Thus says the LORD to his anointed [OR: to his Messiah], to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and ungird the loins of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed:

62 Weeks [of years] would be **434 Years**

It is to the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls under Nehemiah, despite the opposition of his hostile neighbors, that our author is referring. During the long interval between the time of Joshua ben Jozadak and that of Antiochus IV Epiphanes there may well have been other times of "distress" for Jerusalem. But it is doubtful if our author knew any more about this very obscure phase of Jerusalem's history than modern historians do. **In any case, the 434 years allotted here for this period is much too long;** as reckoned even from the earliest possible date for "the coming of an anointed leader" in 538 B.C. to the next mentioned event, when "an anointed one" was "cut down" in 171 B.C. . . . , the period would amount to only **367 years.**⁷

An Anointed One [a Messiah] who is "cut off"

Before the Exile, the word "messiah" referred to the reigning king, and to the high priest.

After the Exile, the Jews were not allowed to have an anointed king.

The word "messiah" comes to mean **exclusively** the high priest.

Some began to entertain hopes of a future "idealized" kingly Messiah, but this is not a theme of Daniel.

This refers to murder of the high-priest Onias in 171 B.C.⁸

Main Concern, the final "Week" [i.e., final 7 years]

The "**half a week**" would be 3 1/2 years.

Using the Inaccurate Prophecy to Date Daniel

Actually, the desecration of the Temple lasted only a few days more than three full years, . . . Therefore, our author's prediction that the desecration of the Temple would end three and a half years after it had begun **was not a propheta post eventum** [prophecy after the event, PJM], **but a genuine prediction**, which slightly overshot its mark. By observing the progress that the Maccabean forces were making in their war against the Syrian armies, our author could foresee that Judas Maccabeus would soon gain control of the Temple area in Jerusalem. Apparently, he expected this to take place in the spring of 163 B.C., **but actually** Judas gained the Temple area and was able to have the Temple purified of its profanation somewhat **sooner** than he had expected. The conclusion can therefore be drawn that our author wrote chapter 9 sometime after Epiphanes had profaned the Temple of Jerusalem in 167 B.C., and in fact sometime after he had humbled King Artaxias of Armenia in 166 B.C.⁹

But it would have been **before the spring of 163**, the time inaccurately predicted.

I'll say more on this later, when we do chapter 12.

⁷ Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 251–252.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 253–254.