

THE THEOLOGICAL AND EXEGETICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LEVITICUS AS INTERTEXT IN DANIEL 9

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Daniel 9 is renowned for the textual and theological problems it raises for interpreters, and for the diverse readings it generates. Yet Dan 9 also presents a fascinating tapestry of inner-biblical quotations and allusions. Within this matrix, however, the voice of Leviticus has not been fully appreciated. Nonetheless, Levitical terminology and thought forms pervade the chapter and perform a significant function. The combined force of these parallels suggests the raison d'être for Daniel's prayer, elucidates the mediated response and suggests a theological coherence to the chapter as a whole. Thus, this article argues that intertextual sensitivity to the array of Leviticus connections made can constrain exegesis of Dan 9, while at the same time generating new insights into its theological perspective.

KEYWORDS: *Daniel 9, Leviticus, Intertextuality, Day of Atonement, Jubilee*

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 9 is an intriguing text in an intriguing book. On the one hand, the chapter contains a prayer that has been described as “a liturgical gem in form and expression.”¹ Yet, on the other hand, the chapter’s final verses contain some of the most notorious interpretative cruxes in the Old Testament, earning them Montgomery’s oft-quoted label, “The dismal swamp of O.T. criticism.”²

1. James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1927), 361.

2. *Ibid.*, 400.

However, problems with Dan 9 are not limited to its denouement. The textual integrity of the chapter has been seriously challenged on a number of fronts. Hartman and Di Lella, continuing a long tradition,³ appeal to supposed redactional seams (9:4a, 20), the superior quality of the Hebrew, and a unique-to-Daniel use of הָיָה to argue that the prayer of 9:4b–19 is an obvious interpolation.⁴ Their conclusion finds support from Sibley Towner who suggests that a prayer of confession is a “peculiar” outworking of a perceived need for illumination.⁵ More recently, John Collins argues that the revelation imparted to Daniel neither responds to nor addresses the issues raised in the prayer.⁶ Collins also finds a flat contradiction between the contingency of Daniel’s “Deuteronomic” prayer and the typically deterministic outlook of apocalyptic literature.⁷ With all things considered, Daniel’s entreaty in 9:4b–19 seems out of place and obviously secondary.⁸

As a result, the prayer of Dan 9 has not always received a detailed examination. An extreme example is found in Charles Wright’s commentary, which virtually ignores vv. 4–19 in its otherwise detailed treatment of the chapter.⁹ Yet, regardless of compositional history the prayer is part of the received text. Balentine’s approach is therefore preferable. “Chapter 9 now includes this important text [Daniel’s prayer], and the narrative sequence therefore requires that one read through it

3. E.g., von Gall wrote in 1895: “Das Gebet 9, 4–20 ist ein Schössling aus fremden Boden” (August Freiherrn von Gall, *Die Einheitlichkeit des Buches Daniel* [Giessen: Ricker, 1895], 126).

4. Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel: A New Translation With Notes and Commentary* (AB 23; New York: Doubleday, 1978), 245–46. They conclude that 9:20, “is such an obvious anacoluthon that the reader cannot fail to recognize the prayer as a later insertion” (246).

5. W. Sibley Towner, “Retributional Theology in the Apocalyptic Setting,” *USQR* 26 (1971): 208.

6. John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 360.

7. John J. Collins, *Daniel: With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (FOTL 20; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 91, 95.

8. So Collins, *Daniel*, 347–348; André Lacocque, “Liturgical Prayer in Daniel 9,” *HUCA* 47 (1976): 119.

9. In twenty-four pages of commentary on ch. 9 Wright devotes less than one to vv. 4–19 (Charles H. H. Wright, *Daniel and its Critics: Being a Critical and Grammatical Commentary* [London: Williams & Norgate, 1906], 140–63).

rather than around it.”¹⁰ That said, Pieter Venter isolates the difficulty that interpreters continue to face. “The main challenge remains to give an acceptable explanation why the prayer and narrative . . . have been integrated to form one composition.”¹¹

Daniel 9 also presents a number of historical and theological problems.¹² While many attempts have been made to fit the “seventy sevens” (שבעים שבעים, 9:24) with known events, none has proven persuasive enough to sway consensus.¹³ Similarly, the debate surrounding the identity of “Darius, son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of Media” (דָּרְיוֹשׁ בֶּן־אֲחַשְׁוֵרֹשׁ מִזְרַע מֵדָי, 9:1) is notoriously complex and, although generating a significant body of literature, remains without definitive solution.¹⁴ Difficulties such as these lead Hartman and Di Lella to suggest that Daniel’s view of history “cannot be taken too seriously.”¹⁵

10. Samuel E. Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 104.

11. Pieter M. Venter, “Daniel 9: A Penitential Prayer in Apocalyptic Garb,” in *Seeking the Favor of God: Volume 2: The Development of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (ed. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney Alan Werline; SBLEJL 22; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 40.

12. The hermeneutical questions raised by Dan 9 are beyond the scope of this current study. The issues come to the fore when a comparison is made between Reformed, Dispensational and Progressive Dispensational readings of Dan 9, esp. vv. 24–27. Compare, for instance, the approach of Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1983) with that of Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton: Bridgepoint Books, 1993), 57–105, and Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), 87–97.

13. I will discuss the “seventy sevens” further below. For a history of interpretation, see Gerhard F. Hasel, “Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks,” in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy* (ed. F. Holbrook; Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 3; Washington D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 3–63.

14. Klaus Koch (“Dareios, der Meder,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of his Sixtieth Birthday* [ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O’Connor; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983], 287) identifies the nub of the problem: “Nirgends setzt sich das Danielbuch mit dem tatsächlichen Verlauf der Geschichte des Altertums so sehr in Widerspruch wie bei der Gestalt des medischen Königs Dareios.” See also, H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1964); John C. Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede: A Study in Historical Identification* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974).

15. Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 250. So also, W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), 142.

Yet historical difficulties aside, the figure of “Darius” remains important within the narrative framework of the Book of Daniel.¹⁶ For readers, the character is connected with the fall of Babylon (5:30–6:1 [5:30–31 EB]). Thus, irrespective of any possible correlation with the historical figure of Cyrus, “Darius” within the narrative functions to evoke the significant shift of fortunes represented by the termination of Babylonian hegemony and subsequent repatriation of Judah’s exiles. Daniel 9, therefore, invites a reading set against the pivotal moments of 539/8 B.C.

On the theological front, the chapter’s ascription of sin is odd. Instead of an expected focus on the sin of Gentile oppressors, congruent with persecution under Antiochus IV, Daniel’s prayer, in contrast to the other visions of chapters 7–12, seems to highlight the sin of Israel as being the reason for experienced suffering. Furthermore, Collins posits that Dan 9 rejects both a Deuteronomic theology of history and the Chronicler’s interpretation of Jeremiah’s seventy-year prophecy,¹⁷ suggesting that the chapter is at odds not only with its historical and literary contexts but also with the other Scriptures.

Nonetheless, this enigmatic chapter also presents a rich tapestry of inner-biblical quotations and allusions. While various connections between Dan 9 and Leviticus have been noted before, others remain undiscussed. As a result, their *combined* explanatory power remains underappreciated. Yet as I will contend, increased sensitivity to Leviticus as intertext opens a theological perspective on Dan 9 that can alleviate some of the problems raised above. My aim, therefore, is twofold. First, I will outline connections between Leviticus and Dan 9 before examining their significance for interpretation. In particular, I hope to demonstrate that intertextual connections suggest a theological coherence to the entire text of Dan 9, explain the contingency of the prayer, and elucidate the response to Daniel’s entreaty.

Before I begin, however, a caveat is necessary. In exploring intertextual connections between Dan 9 and Leviticus I am in no way suggesting that Leviticus is the only intertext worth considering, nor even that it is necessarily the most important. Other texts that have demonstrable parallels with Dan 9 include Deut 28, 1 Kgs 8, Ezra 9, Neh 1 and 9, Isa 10, Jer 25–29, and Ezek 28. The exploration of intertextuality in relation to these passages, however, is well beyond the limits of

16. Here I am following the helpful suggestions made by George Athas in “In Search of the Seventy ‘Weeks’ of Daniel 9,” *JHS* 9 (2009): 3.

17. Collins, *Daniel*, 352, 360.

what I can accomplish here.¹⁸ My purpose is much more specific. What I aim to demonstrate is that careful consideration of Levitical parallels opens a window into the theological intent of Dan 9, which in turn has a bearing on the exegesis of this enigmatic pericope.

SOME METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

First, a word regarding methodology is required. Intertextuality has become “trendy”,¹⁹ and its wide-ranging appropriation in relation to OT studies has been charted elsewhere.²⁰ Regarding Dan 9, the chapter’s interrelationship with other OT texts is widely acknowledged.²¹ Towner, following Montgomery, concludes that eighty-five percent of Daniel’s prayer consists of inner-biblical quotation.²² Indeed, Dan 9 overtly indicates an awareness of, even interaction with, other sacred writings, particularly those of “Jeremiah the prophet” (ירמיה הנביא, 9:2) and the twice referenced “*torah* of Moses” (תורת משה, 9:11, 13). Intertextuality is an explicit dimension of this text.

Nevertheless, a measure of caution is required. As Christopher Rowland correctly recognises, inner-biblical links in Daniel are typically “allusive and indirect.”²³ The overt references in Dan 9:2, 11, and 13

18. For a recent exploration of wider intertextual connections in Daniel’s prayer, see Ron Haydon, “The Law and the Prophets’ in MT Daniel 9:3–19,” *BBR* 24 (2014): 15–26. For studies of the broader cultic and canonical resonances evident throughout Daniel, see, respectively, Winfried Vogel, *The Cultic Motif in the Book of Daniel* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010) and Michael B. Shepherd, *Daniel in the Context of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

19. I borrow the expression from Ellen J. van Wolde, “Trendy Intertextuality?” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel* (ed. Sipke Draisma; Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989), 43.

20. See the overviews presented in Patricia Tull, “Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures,” *CurBS* 8 (2000): 59–90; Geoffrey D. Miller, “Intertextuality in Old Testament Research,” *CBR* 9 (2011): 283–309. For a critique of ways in which intertextuality has been *mis*-appropriated, see the recent article by Russell L. Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology,” *Bib* 95 (2014): 280–91.

21. E.g., Montgomery, *Daniel*, 361; John E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 232; Robert Fyall, *Daniel* (Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 1998), 140; Ronald S. Wallace, *The Message of Daniel: The Lord is King* (BST; Leicester: IVP, 1979), 154; Collins, *Introduction*, 90.

22. Towner, *Daniel*, 127.

23. Christopher Rowland, “Apocalyptic Literature,” in *It is Written: Scripture Citing*

noted above are the exceptions that prove the rule. That does not mean, however, that one must retreat to unrestrained subjectivity. Instead, the need to avoid illegitimate connections that exist only in the eye of the beholder raises the need for proper procedure. The point is widely recognised and various methodologies have been suggested.²⁴ The classic exploration remains Michael Fishbane's *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*,²⁵ a significant catalyst for the recent upsurge of interest in the topic and the departure point for studies that have followed.²⁶ Since *Biblical Interpretation*, principles for testing inner-biblical connections have been further refined.²⁷ The diagnostic criteria proposed by Jeffrey Leonard are representative:

- (1) Shared language is the single most important factor in establishing a textual connection.
- (2) Shared language is more important than nonshared language.
- (3) Shared language that is rare or distinctive suggests a stronger connection than does language that is widely used.
- (4) Shared phrases suggest a

Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars (ed. Donald A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 170.

24. Some approaches are more suited to the NT's use of the OT. So, for example, Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), esp. 29–32; Gregory K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012). While substantial overlap exists, the OT's use of the OT raises its own unique problems. For instance, while it can be assumed that NT writers/readers were aware of OT texts, the literary knowledge of OT writers/readers is much more difficult to ascertain.

25. Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).

26. Tull, "Intertextuality," 75, refers to Fishbane's volume as "the most monumental single work on intertextual relationships within the Hebrew Scriptures." Yet while undoubtedly seminal, *Biblical Interpretation* also has its limitations. James Kugel has suggested that Fishbane's categories—scribal, legal, aggadic, mantological—are derived more from rabbinic categories than the biblical material. Moreover, Kugel rightly questions whether "inner-biblical exegesis" is a sufficient explanation to account for all the ways in which authors connect texts. See James L. Kugel, "The Bible's Earliest Interpreters," *Proof 7* (1987): 275–76, 280.

27. E.g., Risto Nurmela, *Prophets in Dialogue: Inner-Biblical Allusions in Zechariah 1–8 and 9–14* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1996), 23–37; Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 6–31; Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets* (JSOTSup 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 222–39; Michael R. Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1–8* (LHBOTS 506; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 16–39.

stronger connection than do individual shared terms. (5) The accumulation of shared language suggests a stronger connection than does a single shared term or phrase. (6) Shared language in similar contexts suggests a stronger connection than does shared language alone. (7) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared ideology to establish a connection. (8) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared form to establish a connection.²⁸

Leonard's criteria, or other similar systems that have been formulated,²⁹ may be used to demonstrate the probability that a given text shares *lexical* parallels with another. However, as I will note below, *conceptual* parallels are also vital. While these are by nature less objective than shared terms and phrases, they still perform a significant function. In fact, conceptual similarities may indicate the reason for which lexical parallels have been utilised, for shared language can act as a trigger to bring to mind a wider textual *milieu*. For this reason, in what follows I will proceed on the basis of demonstrated lexical and syntactical connections to explore wider conceptual parallels that exist between Dan 9 and Leviticus. Each type of evidence should be allowed to bear the weight it can carry. Nevertheless, a confluence of lexical, syntactical and conceptual parallels increases the likelihood that a connection to Leviticus is intended. If that is, in fact, the case, then underappreciating Leviticus as intertext can only result in a reduced grasp of Dan 9.

DANIEL'S PRAYER (9:4b–19)

The prayer of Dan 9:4b–19 is a veritable mosaic of intertexts. As noted above, the majority of this passage consists of words and phrases drawn from various parts of the OT. For my purposes here, connections to Lev 26 prove crucial. While parallels to Lev 26 have been noted before,³⁰ they are more pervasive than has been recognised. Multiple points of contact are discernible at lexical, syntactic and conceptual levels. Taken

28. Jeffery M. Leonard, "Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case," *JBL* 127 (2008): 245–46. The strength of Leonard's method lies in its clear articulation of the central issues as well as its applicability to intertextuality in the OT. For an appropriation of Leonard's approach, see Seth D. Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1–3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 67–69.

29. See n. 27.

30. See especially Goldingay, *Daniel*, 231–35; Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel* (AOTC 20; Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 249–54.

together, these connections become essential for grasping the nature of, and reason for, Daniel's petition. Parallels, albeit with a degree of overlap, may be collated under three headings. Each adds further nuance to the purpose of verses 9:4b–19.

A Shared Focus on Covenant

The first point of connection is a shared focus on covenant. The importance of this theme within the priestly writings is widely acknowledged.³¹ In Lev 26, the eight-fold repetition of ברית ("covenant") signifies the importance of the theme for the chapter.³² In fact, Christophe Nihan argues that Lev 26 is unique within the Pentateuch as it not only concludes Exod 19–Lev 25 but also evidences engagement with the Patriarchal covenant(s) as well as material from Deuteronomy.³³

In Dan 9, covenantal language pervades the prayer. The twin references to the "torah of Moses" (9:11, 13) overtly signal the passage's interest. This focus is furthered by the use of ברית ("covenant") to frame the chapter (9:4, 27), coupled with the presence of other important covenantal terms throughout: חסד ("loving-kindness" 9:4), תורה ("torah" 9:10, 11, 13), מצוה ("commandment" 9:4, 5), משפט ("judgment" 9:5), שמר ("to keep" 9:4 [x2]), שמע ("to hear" 9:6, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19), שוב ("to (re)turn" 9:13, 16, 25), אהב ("to love" 9:4).³⁴ While any one of these terms on its own might simply reflect common word use, the clustering of terms is suggestive. Also of interest is the recalling of the exodus—YHWH is explicitly addressed in 9:15 as the one "who brought your people out from the land of Egypt with a mighty hand" (אשר הוצאת את־ך (עמך מארץ מצרים ביד חזקה).

31. E.g., David Noel Freedman, "Divine Commitment and Human Obligation, the Covenant Theme," *Int* 18 (1964): 421. Generally included in the Priestly texts are the covenants made with Noah (Gen 9), Abraham (Gen 17) and Phinehas (Num 25). Large sections of the Sinai material are also usually included.

32. Only Gen 17 has more occurrences of ברית; the noun appears only two other times in Leviticus (2:13; 24:8).

33. In Nihan's compositional model Lev 17–26 is the product of the Pentateuch's priestly redactors and is written to complement, correct and complete the covenants made with the Patriarchs, the Sinai material, and Deuteronomy. See Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus* (FAT 2/25; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 545–59. The concluding role of ch. 26 within chs. 17–26 thus marks it out as a key text for understanding the nature of God's covenant with Israel. If Nihan is correct then it is perhaps not surprising that Dan 9 alludes specifically to this text.

34. Cf. Goldingay, *Daniel*, 234.

The divine names employed in Dan 9 serve as additional pointers to this underlying covenantal concern. The frequent use of אֲדֹנָי (“Lord” 9:3, 4, 7, 9, 15, 16, 17, 19 [x3]) is an appropriate theonym for denoting God’s status as suzerain. However, it is Dan 9’s use of יהוה (9:2, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14 [x2], 20) that is particularly striking, for it is only here that the tetragrammaton appears in the Book of Daniel. This unique-to-Daniel use of יהוה, as noted above, is viewed by some as being problematic and indicative of interpolation even though other chapters within the book also manifest unique use of the divine names.³⁵ However, the conspicuous use of יהוה in Dan 9 is better understood as a device that brings the God-Israel relationship, and particularly its Mosaic expression, into focus. Meredith Kline rightly concludes that the appearance of יהוה in ch. 9 is “a plain index to its major theme.”³⁶

The Situation Addressed

A second set of connections relates to the situation addressed. As seen above, the concept of covenant represents a dominant concern in Dan 9 with the language and ethos of ברית (“covenant”) comprising the framework around which the chapter is structured. However, the focus of the prayer is not just on covenant in general, but more specifically on its violation. The calamities experienced by Israel are unambiguously identified as those “written about in the *torah* of Moses” (כתוב(ה) בתורת משה) 9:11, 13). Furthermore, the use of אלה (“curse”) and שבועה (“oath”) in connection with “Moses” (9:11) instantly recalls the warnings against covenant breaking explicated in Lev 26 and Deut 28.³⁷ Although many argue that the prayer primarily reflects Deuteronomistic influence,³⁸ in a number of cases the language is particularly Levitical.

35. For example, אלה שמיא (“God of heaven”) only occurs in Dan 2:18, 37, 44 (noted by Collins, *Daniel*, 348-349).

36. Meredith G. Kline, “The Covenant of the Seventieth Week,” in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis* (ed. John H. Skilton; Philipsburg: P&R, 1977), 456.

37. Collins, *Daniel*, 350; Lucas, *Daniel*, 239; Montgomery, *Daniel*, 365; Kline, “Covenant,” 456; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), 506.

38. E.g., Anthea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 246; Walter Brueggemann, *Great Prayers of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 112; Tremper Longman, *Daniel* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 234; Lacocque, “Liturgical Prayer,” 125.

The שָׁמַם root (“to be desolate”) is used five times in Dan 9 to depict desolation (9:17, 18, 26, 27 [x2]),³⁹ yet does not appear anywhere in Deuteronomy. Leviticus 26, however, has the highest frequency of occurrences in the Old Testament (26:22, 31, 32 [x2], 34, 35, 43), where שָׁמַם depicts desolation as punishment for covenant unfaithfulness.

Similarly, the objects of desolation connect Dan 9 to Lev 26. The warning expressed in Lev 26:31, “I will desolate (וְהִשְׁמֹתִי) your sanctuaries (מִקְדָּשֵׁיכֶם),” is explicitly alluded to in Dan 9:17 with a request for YHWH to make his face shine upon “your desolate (הַשְׁמָמָה) sanctuary (מִקְדָּשְׁךָ).”⁴⁰ Also of interest is Leviticus’s threat of חֲרָבָה (“desolation”) in conjunction with עִיר (“city”) in 26:31, 33.⁴¹ In Dan 9, the realisation of such “desolation” (חֲרָבָה) is bemoaned in relation to a particular city, viz. Jerusalem (9:2, cf. 16, 18, 19). While Deuteronomy uses עִיר in 28:16, there it forms part of a merism describing the sphere in which curses would be experienced by the people rather than being the object of destruction itself.

Thus, Daniel describes his situation using terminology that is particularly Levitical. Importantly, in a wider *milieu* of covenant resonances, connections to Lev 26 explicate the nation’s suffering as the due consequence for obviating vassal obligations. Israel’s desolation is nothing short of realised covenant curse.

The Nature of Daniel’s Prayer

A third area in which Leviticus as intertext becomes important is clarifying the nature of Daniel’s prayer. As noted, the reality of realised covenant curse is the exigency that provokes appeal to YHWH. Yet the role of the prayer is debated, especially with regard to the type of petition offered and its function in the chapter. Is Daniel’s prayer a prayer for illumination, or is it a prayer of confession and repentance?

The narrative introduction (9:3–4a) gives an important indication. Daniel, having discerned the number of years of Jerusalem’s desolation (9:2), turned to YHWH in prayer with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes (9:3). Hartman and Di Lella posit that such activity was appropriate preparation for receiving a revelation.⁴² Thus understood,

39. The emphatic final word of the chapter is the *qal* participle of שָׁמַם.

40. מִקְדָּשׁ (“sanctuary”) does not appear in Deuteronomy.

41. חֲרָבָה (“desolation”) is not attested in Deuteronomy.

42. Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 245–48.

Daniel prayed for illumination in order to understand his nation's predicament.

However, the combination of terms for "fasting" (צום), "sackcloth" (שָׂק), and "ashes" (אפר) is found elsewhere in the OT only in contexts of mourning and distress (Esth 4:1–3), humility (Isa 58:5), or explicit repentance (Jonah 3:6). That said, for interpretation, contextual use remains the deciding factor. What is the context of Dan 9? As I have suggested, the covenant between YHWH and Israel is the dominant concern of the chapter. Moreover, bolstered by language shared with Lev 26, covenant violation is particularly in focus. In this context, fasting with sackcloth and ashes is best understood as signifying contrition. Norman Porteous concurs, noting that while fasting alone may relate to seeking revelation (cf. Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9), here it is associated with confession of sin.⁴³

This conclusion is strengthened by the vocabulary of the prayer itself. In 9:4, Daniel says, "I prayed to YHWH my God and confessed" (וְאֶת־פְּלִלְיָהּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֶת־תּוֹרָהּ). While, as Tremper Longman states, "Daniel's prayer is founded on the Deuteronomic covenant,"⁴⁴ the language also draws on Levitical resonances. Important in this regard is the verb יָדָה which appears in Dan 9:4, 20. The *hithpael* form used, meaning "to confess,"⁴⁵ is rare, appearing only eleven times in the OT,⁴⁶ where its use is predominantly connected to postexilic prayers of penitence (Ezra 10:1; Neh 1:6; 9:2, 3).⁴⁷ Yet significantly, the same *hithpael* form also appears in Lev 26. In v. 40a, potential restoration from exile is said to hinge on the enactment of יָדָה. "But if they confess (וְהִתְוֹדוּ)⁴⁸ their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their unfaithful acts with which they acted

43. Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1965), 136.

44. Longman, *Daniel*, 234.

45. *HALOT*, 2:389. Cf. Leslie C. Allen, "יָדָה," *NIDOTTE* 2:405.

46. Lev 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num 5:7; 2 Chr 30:22; Ezra 10:1; Neh 1:6; 9:2, 3; Dan 9:4, 20.

47. These prayers are similar in form and content and are often assigned a unique genre. For discussion of *Gattung* in Dan 9, see Venter, "Daniel 9," 33–37. See also Richard J. Bautch, *Glory and Power, Ritual and Relationship: The Sinai Covenant in the Postexilic Period* (LHBOTS 471; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 72; Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Leicester: IVP, 1978), 165; Towner, *Daniel*, 130; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 234–235.

48. In my translation I read 26:40–41 as the protasis of a new pericope with the apodosis following in 26:42–45. See similarly, Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3B; New York: The Anchor Bible, 2001), 2330; Bautch, *Glory and Power*, 72–73.

unfaithfully against me, and that they also walked in opposition to me . . .” Thus, both contextual similarity—confession by those suffering deserved covenant curse—and unusual verb form, the *hithpael* of ידה, link Dan 9 to Lev 26:40.

A connection to Lev 26 is further supported by the fact that each clause in 26:40 is alluded to in Dan 9. The phrase, “But if they confess” (והתוודו), is echoed by the *hithpael* of ידה in Dan 9:4, 20. The required confession of “their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers” (אתם ועונם ואת־עון אבתם) is expressed in Dan 9:5 with “we have committed iniquity” (ועוֹינוּ), and in Dan 9:16 with frank acknowledgment of “the iniquities of our fathers” (ובעוֹנוֹת אבותינו). The next clause, employing מעל⁴⁹ to denote faithlessness, במעלם אשר מעל־רבי (“in their unfaithful acts with which they acted unfaithfully against me”), is repeated verbatim with necessary adjustment for context in Dan 9:7: במעלם אשר מעל־רבך (“in their unfaithful acts with which they acted unfaithfully against you”).⁵⁰ The final phrase, “and that they also walked in opposition to me” (ואף אשר־הלכו עמי בקרי), is echoed in Dan 9:10 which confesses that Israel has not walked (הלך) in accordance with YHWH’s voice or laws.⁵¹

Thus, the prayer of Dan 9 is not only best viewed as being a prayer of confession, but it is a confession worded precisely in the form and language prescribed by Lev 26 for those finding themselves in exile and experiencing covenant curses.⁵² Therefore, Daniel’s prayer functions canonically as the fulfilment of the injunction of Lev 26:40.⁵³ Michael Fishbane is right. “The key purpose of Daniel’s prayer was not solely to suggest that old covenant curses had been fulfilled. It was also to emphasize the more hopeful side of Lev. 26, which announced that repentance could terminate the severe decree.”⁵⁴

49. For a detailed discussion of מעל, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3; New York: The Anchor Bible, 1991), 345–56. Milgrom concludes, “Every act of *ma’al* involves sacrilege against the sancta or name of God” (356). Cf. Robin Wakely, “מעל,” *NIDOTTE* 2:1020–25.

50. These are the only two places in the Old Testament with this construction, although Ezek 39:26 is similar.

51. The verb הלך plays a crucial role in Lev 26 where it is used to communicate the Eden-evoking blessing that would follow obedience (26:12; cf. Gen 3:8) as well as the curse that covenant violation would occasion (26:24).

52. Milgrom (*Leviticus 23–27*, 2330) concludes with regard to 26:40: “Herewith H sets a precedent for all subsequent confessions” (italics removed).

53. Collins, *Daniel*, 347. So also, Goldingay, *Daniel*, 236; Paul L. Redditt, “Daniel 9: Its Structure and Meaning,” *CBQ* 62 (2000): 246.

54. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 489.

THE MEDIATED RESPONSE (9:20–27)

The final section of Dan 9—Montgomery’s “dismal swamp”—has been the subject of much debate, especially with regard to its connection to the prayer of 9:4b–19. That an answer was given as soon as Daniel began praying (9:23) has been taken to support a deterministic outlook that is impervious to supplication.⁵⁵ However, as Goldingay aptly comments, immediacy may simply highlight the willingness of God to respond to the prayers of his people.⁵⁶ In fact, in the light of what we have seen thus far, 9:23 may function to emphasise the covenant faithfulness and responsiveness of a God who so eagerly desires to restore his people that immediately upon their repentance he acts. In the end, resolution of the issues raised by these verses depends in large measure on whether or not the divine response addresses the concerns of the prayer.

As in 9:4b–19, parallels to Leviticus are once again evident. Indeed, three conceptual connections to Leviticus prove essential for understanding not only the angelically mediated response but also how it relates to Daniel’s petition. Again, while some of the links to Leviticus have been charted before, others have not. Their cumulative force, however, is crucial. As Vogel notes, cultic motifs in Daniel have the potential to generate insight into the book’s theology and the intent of its author(s).⁵⁷

Sevenfold Judgment

The first Levitical concept relates to the “seventy sevens” (שבעים שבועים) that are decreed for Daniel’s people and city (9:24–27).⁵⁸ “Seventy” immediately recalls the length of exile Daniel had discerned “in the

55. E.g., Bruce William Jones, “The Prayer in Daniel IX,” *VT* 18 (1968): 492–93.

56. Goldingay, *Daniel*, 255.

57. Vogel, *Cultic Motif*, 224.

58. For discussion of the unusual masculine plural form of שבוע, see *BDB*, 988–89; *HALOT* 4:1383–84; Paul Joüon and T. A. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1993), §90 d-e. See also Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Hebrew Masculine Plural for “Weeks” in the Expression “Seventy Weeks” in Daniel 9:24,” *AUSS* 31 (1993): 105–18.

books” (בספרים, 9:2).⁵⁹ “Books” may be a reference to Jeremiah only,⁶⁰ or it may also include the Prophets and Torah.⁶¹ Regardless, Daniel understood that seventy years were to elapse before Jerusalem’s restoration. This period could be either literal or symbolic,⁶² and refer to the length of the exile (cf. Jer 29:10; Zech 1:12),⁶³ or to the hegemony of Babylon (cf. Jer 25:12).⁶⁴ Either way, awareness of the historical moment implied by the narrative setting of Dan 9 is vital. The juncture is emphasised by the twofold repetition of the phrase בִּשְׁנַת אֶחָת (“in the first year”) in 9:1, 2. This “first year” of Darius witnessed the fall of Babylon (cf. 5:31 [6:1]) and provided the catalyst for Daniel to anticipate the restoration of Jerusalem.⁶⁵

What becomes important for this investigation is the combination of the forecasted seventy-year exile with the sevenfold judgment threatened by Leviticus (26:18, 21, 24, 28) to produce the “seventy

59. The root בִּין (“to understand”) in 9:2 next appears in 9:22 in connection with the “seventy sevens,” thus linking the seventy years of exile with the “seventy sevens.” Noted by Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Seventy Weeks of Dan 9: An Exegetical Study,” *AUSS* 17 (1979): 5.

60. As argued by Gerald H. Wilson, “The Prayer of Daniel 9: Reflection on Jeremiah 29,” *JSOT* (1990): 91–99. Wilson posits that Jer 27–29, with its forecast of seventy years, was circulated as an individual letter sent to the exiles in Babylon (94).

61. So Goldingay, *Daniel*, 240.

62. Edward Lipiński, “Recherches sur le Livre de Zacharie,” *VT* 20 (1970): 25–55, examines the ANE background associated with periods of seventy years. He concludes: “70 years constitute a time of divine wrath against a city or a temple. It was a time of penance, destined to appease the wrath of God. This concept existed in Mesopotamia and in Israel, at least in the 7th and 6th centuries before our era” (40, translation mine).

63. Determining the *terminus ad quo* and the *terminus ad quem* for the exile is problematic. Second Chronicles 36:20–23 equates the end of exile with the proclamation made by Cyrus (539/8 B.C.). Zechariah 1:12, however, seems to imply a date c. 520/19 B.C. Perhaps in context, Zechariah’s concern centres on the temple (cf. Zech 1:16) which had lain in ruins since 587 B.C. and was completed c. 516/5 B.C. (cf. Ezra 6:15), a period of approximately seventy years. See further, Anthony R. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* (AOTC 25; Nottingham: Apollos, 2015), 116–17.

64. So Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21B; New York: The Anchor Bible, 2003), 249. Lundbom notes that the period between the actual fall of the Assyrian empire (609/8 B.C.) to the coming of Cyrus (539 B.C.) is seventy years.

65. Wallace (*Daniel*, 155–56) argues that Daniel’s driving question was determining the end date of the exile. However, in Dan 9 the issue seems rather to be that *having witnessed the fall of Babylon* Daniel understood the need for confession and set about doing that.

sevens” announced by Gabriel (9:24).⁶⁶ That שבעים שבעים forms a word play with the divine “oath” (שבועה) in 9:11, an oath to execute judgment, further connects the “seventy sevens” both to the concept of forewarned divine punishment and to Daniel’s prayer. In this way, exile is extended sevenfold and becomes more than mere dislocation from the land. Restoration in its fullness would be realised, not after seventy years, but after 490 years.⁶⁷

This understanding of Levitical influence on postexilic conceptions of the exile is supported by consideration of the similar interpretative move made by the Chronicler.⁶⁸ Leviticus 26:35 had promised that during exile the land would rest “all the days of its desolation” (כל־ימי השמה) in order to make restitution for the Sabbath rests not enjoyed every seven years (cf. Lev 25:1–7) due to covenant disobedience. Chronicles develops this idea by integrating it with Jeremiah’s prophecy of a seventy-year exile. “All the days [the land] was desolate (כל־ימי השמה) it kept Sabbath in order to fulfill seventy years” (2 Chr 36:21). Thus Chronicles has in mind enough Sabbath rests to cover 490 years of neglect.⁶⁹

Once again, the importance of Leviticus for understanding Dan 9 can be observed. Moreover, this connection with Leviticus adds a significant theological dimension to the time periods in ch. 9, a point I will return to below.

The Day of Atonement

A second Levitical concept lying behind Dan 9, one that remains virtually unexplored,⁷⁰ is the Day of Atonement. Throughout his prayer Daniel’s concern with the totality of his people’s sin is emphasised by the quantity and variety of synonyms he employs. Nine different roots are used twenty-six times to present an exhaustive catalogue of wrong-

66. The connection is widely suggested. See, for instance, Lucas, *Daniel*, 241.

67. I will return to discuss the theological import of the 490 years below.

68. Cf. Ben Zion Wacholder, “Chronomessianism: The Timing of Messianic Movements and the Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles,” *HUCA* 46 (1975): 202.

69. I.e., a yearlong rest for every seventh year. Seventy such rests would correspond to a combined period of 490 years.

70. To my knowledge only Lacocque (“Liturgical Prayer,” 124) and Collins (*Daniel*, 349) make the same connection. Neither, however, develops the point.

doing.⁷¹ The culpability of the people, Daniel included, is emphasised by the subjects of the verbs (“we,” “they,” “all Israel”) and by the use of pronominal suffixes (“my,” “our,” “their”). The sin in view is manifestly Israel’s. It is this iniquity, along with his own (e.g., 9:5), that Daniel confesses, establishing, as we have seen, a connection with Lev 26:40 through the use of the verb ידה (“to confess”).

In addition, ידה in the same rare *hithpael* form appears in Lev 16:21. There, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest was to “confess” (ידה) over the head of the “scapegoat” all the “iniquities” (עון), “trespasses” (פשע), and “sins” (הטאת) of the people. Critically, this same tripartite description of wrongdoing is also found in Dan 9:24 in relation to the purpose of the “seventy sevens.”⁷² While Daniel is *still confessing* (*hithpael* participle of ידה) on the people’s behalf (9:20), Gabriel arrives (9:24) to outline a period of “seventy sevens” that will finish “rebellion” (פשע), put an end to “sin” (הטאת), and atone for “iniquity” (עון).⁷³ The rare combination of terms—פשע, הטאת, עון and the *hithpael* of ידה—strongly suggests a parallel between Dan 9 and Lev 16. Consequently, it appears that the concerns of Daniel’s confession are addressed by means of evoking Day of Atonement language. Moreover, unlike the annually repeated ritual of Lev 16, Dan 9 hints at a superlative Day of Atonement—one that is able to bring about a permanent end to sin and thereby inaugurate “eternal righteousness” (צדק עלמים).

The parallel with Lev 16 adds rich theological depth to the idea of atonement conveyed in Gabriel’s response. Moreover, Daniel’s concern regarding Israel’s sin was addressed. Allusion to the Day of Atonement is eminently appropriate, for the ritual of Lev 16 was able to deal with the full spectrum of both impurity and wrongdoing—including highhanded sin.⁷⁴ The total purging implied by a superlative Day of Atonement would therefore deal with the totality of the nation’s sin so much in view throughout Daniel’s confession. Thereby imagined is the

71. The roots הטאת (9:5, 8, 11, 15, 16, 20(x2), 24), עון (9:5, 13, 16, 24), רשע (9:5, 15), מרד (9:5, 9), סור (9:5, 11), שמע (9:6, 10, 11, 14), מעל (9:7(x2)), עבר (9:11), and פשע (9:24) are all employed to convey the breadth of covenant violation.

72. These three words only appear together in four other places in the Old Testament: Job 13:23, Ps 32:5, Isa 59:12, and Ezek 21:29.

73. Doukhan, “The Seventy Weeks,” 20–21, suggests that the indefinite noun forms used in 9:24, in marked contrast to the definite forms used throughout the prayer, perhaps hint at a universal perspective, incorporating, but not being limited to, Daniel’s supplication on behalf of Israel. If correct, then Daniel’s confession was not only acknowledged, it was surpassed.

74. Highhanded sin is indicated in Lev 16 by the chapter’s recall of the Nadab and Abihu incident (16:1; cf. 10:1–2) and by the use of פשע (“rebellion”) in vv. 16, 21.

means for ending Israel's extended exile.

The Year of Jubilee

A third Levitical connection that provides important conceptual background to Dan 9 is the Year of Jubilee. The Jubilee, outlined in Lev 25, prescribed restoration, cancelation of debts, freedom of slaves and a return to ancestral land every forty-nine years.⁷⁵ That the “seventy sevens” of Dan 9 equates to ten complete Jubilee cycles, viz. 490 years,⁷⁶ has been widely suggested.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Goldingay disagrees, arguing that Dan 9 does not describe the 490 in Jubilee terms.⁷⁸

However, while the term יובל (“Jubilee”) does not appear in Dan 9, a reference to the number forty-nine (or multiples thereof) would have created immediate associations for Israelite readers familiar with Leviticus.⁷⁹ That such a connection would be made is evidenced by the intertestamental literature, among which periodisation of history is a standard feature of historic apocalypses.⁸⁰ Such periodisation is readily observable. In relation to my argument here, division of history into periods of forty-nine or seventy are of particular interest. Several examples will suffice to illustrate the widespread use of these numbers.

75. Cf. Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 317–24; Christopher J. H. Wright, “What Happened Every Seven Years in Israel: Old Testament Sabbatical Institutions For Land, Debts and Slaves,” *EQ* 56 (1984): 193–201. For discussion concerning whether Jubilee fell on the forty-ninth or fiftieth year, see Kim Young Hye, “The Jubilee: Its Reckoning and Inception Day,” *VT* 60 (2010): 147–51; John S. Bergsma, “Once Again, the Jubilee, Every 49 or 50 years?,” *VT* 55 (2005): 121–25.

76. Various attempts have been made to divide all of Israelite history into blocks of 490 years. For instance, see E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture* (New York: Cosimo, 2005), 5–6; J. W. Bosanquet, *Messiah the Prince: Or the Inspiration of the Prophecies of Daniel* (2nd ed.; London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1869), 322–24.

77. E.g., Doukhan, “The Seventy Weeks,” 8; Lucas, *Daniel*, 248; Baldwin, *Daniel*, 170.

78. Goldingay, *Daniel*, 232.

79. The number forty-nine is important in Leviticus beyond its connection to Jubilee. There are seven weeks of days (i.e., 7x7) between the raised sheaf and the Feast of Weeks (23:15); on the Day of Atonement blood is sprinkled a total of forty-nine times (16:14–19). Furthermore, the phrase אני יהיה (“I am YHWH”) appears a total of forty-nine times in the book. See Roy E. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 455.

80. Collins, *Daniel*, 352.

In *1 Enoch* 10:11–12, judgment comes after seventy generations; it falls after seventy weeks in 4Q181.⁸¹ *1 Enoch* 91:11–19 and 93:1–10 divide all of history into ten weeks (i.e., 10x7). Periodisation into Jubilee cycles is also evidenced. *Jubilees* reckons the time between Adam and the exodus to be 2,401 years—viz. forty-nine Jubilee cycles.⁸² 11QMelch understands the period before the final judgment to comprise of ten Jubilee cycles. Use of the same numerical patterns is also attested in later Judaism. The Talmud combines Jubilee structuring with messianic expectation. For example, “In the last jubilee the son of David will come.”⁸³ Thus the number forty-nine in the intertestamental period and beyond, based on its connection to Jubilee, had theological overtones over and above any literal sense.

A recent article by Ron Haydon reaches the same conclusion.⁸⁴ Haydon approaches the “seventy sevens” of Dan 9 in light of heptadic themes found in the Dead Sea literature. Examination of several Qumranic texts including *Jubilees* and *pseudo-Daniel* (4Q243) leads Haydon to conclude that the heptadic structures employed therein “relay a theological message in the first instance and then a chronological message in a secondary capacity.”⁸⁵ Heptadic language thus becomes a means of “theologizing” time.⁸⁶

What then is the theological point being made in Dan 9? The answer has been obscured by the debate surrounding the division of the “seventy sevens.” The accents in MT suggest a division into three distinct periods: “seven sevens,” “sixty-two sevens” and one “seven.”⁸⁷ The Septuagint, however, allows for merging the “seven sevens” with the “sixty-two sevens.” Hence, scholars argue both for,⁸⁸ and against,⁸⁹ the

81. Noted by Goldingay, *Daniel*, 232.

82. James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1983-1985), 2:39.

83. b. *sanh.* 97b, with text cited from Isidore Epstein, ed., *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud* (30 vols.; London: Soncino Press, 1960-1990), ad loc.

84. Ron Haydon, “The ‘Seventy Sevens’ (Daniel 9:24) in Light of Heptadic Themes in Qumran,” *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 3 (2014), 203–14.

85. *Ibid.*, 208.

86. *Ibid.*, 210.

87. Indicated by the placement of the *atnach* in v. 25.

88. E.g., Collins, *Daniel*, 355.

89. E.g., Edward J. Young, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth,

Masoretic tradition. At the centre of the debate seems to be a desire to make the numbers fit historical events. The fact that no one has done so convincingly, however, should urge caution. Nevertheless, the division attested by MT makes sense when understood against the background of Jubilee.⁹⁰

The initial “seven sevens” forms a complete Jubilee cycle of forty-nine years, a “time image”⁹¹ with rich theological overtones. George Athas suggests how these “seven sevens” may be integrated into the wider narrative of the book. In his reading of 9:25, Athas argues that the phrase, “from the going out of a word” (מִן־מִצָּא דְבַר), can justifiably be connected to the imperatives which precede it (“know and understand”) rather than to what follows.⁹² This rendering has several benefits,⁹³ and two have particular relevance here. First, the “anointed ruler” in verse 25 is now fronted—providing for readers, suggests Athas, a reference to the reestablishment of local leadership at the time of repatriation.⁹⁴ This historical anchor point means, secondly, that, “the beginning of the seven ‘weeks’ can be placed forty-nine years earlier at 587 BCE. . . . This seven ‘week’ period, therefore, represents the forty-nine-year hiatus in anointed leadership (Davidic and/or priestly) within Jerusalem.”⁹⁵

Based on this reading, allusion to the Year of Jubilee in Dan 9:25 makes immediate sense. The “seven sevens” represent the period of exile.⁹⁶ The completion of this forty-nine-year period, in turn, heralds the Jubilee with all its associated themes of restoration, emancipation of slaves and return to ancestral land. In the implied context of the end of Babylonian lordship (9:1–2), the symbolic freight of the “seven sevens” is evident. However, the twist in Gabriel’s decree is the outlining of an extended exile—a period totalling “seventy sevens.” Therefore, any

1972), 205.

90. Also, rejecting MT’s accents and combining the “seven sevens” with the “sixty-two sevens” into a single period begs the question concerning the seemingly pointless division.

91. I borrow this term from Haydon (“Seventy Sevens,” 214).

92. Athas, “In Search,” 14–15.

93. *Ibid.*, 15–17.

94. *Ibid.*, 16.

95. *Ibid.*

96. Interestingly, the period between the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C. and Cyrus’s decree in 539/8 B.C. is approximately forty-nine years.

restoration made possible by the decree of Cyrus would only be partial; as the conclusion to the first in a sequence of ten Jubilee cycles, the “going out of a word” (9:25) would function only as a foretaste of the superlative Year of Jubilee that the entire 490 years anticipated.⁹⁷

Connecting the Pieces

From the above discussion, it is readily apparent that Leviticus is a crucial intertext for reading Dan 9. While other Old Testament intertexts also remain important, the multiple lexical and conceptual connections to Leviticus together form an essential backdrop for interpretation. The theological freight of the “seventy sevens” is felt when read against the sevenfold judgement warned of in Lev 26. Likewise, the significance of the angelically mediated response, as well as its relevance to Daniel’s petition, is elucidated by allusion to Lev 16. In a context of confessed sin, Dan 9:24 pictures a superlative Day of Atonement. Then, through connection to Lev 25, the concept of Jubilee is utilised to picture not only the foretaste of restoration that repatriation would realise, but also the superlative restoration from “exile” that the tenfold Jubilee anticipated. Yet Leviticus also connects these themes. In Lev 25:9 the Year of Jubilee is set to commence on the tenth day of the seventh month. In other words, the Year of Jubilee began on the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev 16:29–30).⁹⁸ Thus the period of sevenfold judgment announced to Daniel was forecast to end with a superlative Day of Atonement, a Day whose final and eternal cleansing of sin would initiate a superlative and climactic Year of Jubilee.⁹⁹

97. Haydon, “Seventy Sevens,” 212, similarly concludes that the specific numerical image conveyed by the “seventy sevens” is a timespan that traces the journey of the faithful from exile to final restoration.

98. Thus Young Hye concludes: “The trumpet blast and loud proclamation signaling the start of the Jubilee should fall on a day possessing the full array of sabbatical associations. The Day of Atonement, not the first day of the year, served the purpose.” Young Hye, “The Jubilee,” 151.

99. This connection seems to have also been made by 11QMelch (see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Further Light on Melchizedek From Qumran Cave 11,” *JBL* 86 (1967): 25–41). Fitzmyer renders the text of v. 7 as:

In the year of the la[st] jubilee he sai[d] s []. BLY
[] and [tha]t is the d[ay of atone]ment []...
The [t]enth [ju]bile (p. 28)

That 11QMelch brings together the Day of Atonement, Jubilee and Isa 61:1 to combine them with a Melchizedek figure who is exalted above the heavenly host provides an intriguing background to the book of Hebrews. The same combination of themes also lies behind Luke 4:17–21. There Jesus declared in the language of Isa 61:1–3, a text

PROBLEMS IN DANIEL 9 REASSESSED

Does appreciation of Leviticus as intertext in Dan 9 provide a way forward for any of the exegetical and theological problems I outlined beforehand? I think it does in several ways.

First, in relation to approaches to Dan 9 I noted that the prayer has often been regarded as secondary on the basis of its atypical language. However, in light of the significant intertextuality present, with words and phrases being drawn verbatim from other OT texts, it is not surprising that the Hebrew is of a markedly different character. I suggest that such distinct terminology, including the unique-to-Daniel use of יהוה, is *intentionally utilised* to evoke the covenant focus so important to the chapter. Far from being problematic, lexical anomalies, or as Michael Riffaterre terms them, “ungrammaticalities in the ideolectic norm,” can actually signal important theological motives.¹⁰⁰

Second, Daniel’s prayer is reckoned by some to be “peculiar,” out of step with its narrative context, and ignored by the epiphany. Yet such conclusions invite the question: Why then has the prayer been included?¹⁰¹ Instead, I have argued that chapter 9’s covenantal concern, enhanced by its Levitical connections, pictures a situation of divine curse resulting from covenant unfaithfulness. In this context, a prayer of confession is not only appropriate, it is demanded. Furthermore, the prayer’s confession of Israel’s sinfulness is addressed by the angelically mediated response, which, as we have seen, utilises lexical and conceptual parallels to the Day of Atonement and Year of Jubilee to picture a conclusive end to Israel’s transgression that will usher in a time of untold blessing.

Third, the contingency of the prayer is viewed as being incongruous with the deterministic outlook typical of apocalyptic literature. Towner puts the point bluntly. “When placed in the apocalyptic setting,” the penitential conviction that permeates the prayer “seems to take on an

influenced by the concept of Jubilee (so Wenham, *Leviticus*, 324), that the promised year of the Lord’s favour (ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν) was being fulfilled in him (Lk 4:17–21). Moreover, John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 447, notes that in the days of Jesus there was an expectation that the tenth Jubilee was about to happen.

100. Michael Riffaterre, “Syllepsis,” *Critical Inquiry* 6 (1980): 627. Additionally, there are enough lexical links between the three sections of the chapter to support its overall unity. For discussion, see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 488; Lucas, *Daniel*, 234; Jones, “Prayer,” 491; Collins, *Daniel*, 347–348.

101. The comment by Porteous (*Daniel*, 136) is telling: “In fact the suggestion that the ineptness of the prayer for its presumed purpose justifies the conclusion that it is an interpolation has obscured the very good reason why the author has put it here.”

element of the absurd.”¹⁰² Thus Collins, following Jones, states that a “deterministic, apocalyptic view of history is in fundamental contrast to the Deuteronomic theology of the prayer.”¹⁰³ However, the immediate divine response, addressing as it does the very issues raised by the prayer, indicates that Daniel’s confession functions to allow the promised deliverance to be unfolded. Thus, this pericope relieves a particular tension raised by the exile for a deterministic view of history. While Jeremiah had predicted a return at the end of seventy years, Lev 26:40 made any return contingent upon repentance. Therefore, Dan 9 provides the canonical resolution to this tension between human responsibility and divine sovereignty as Daniel, within the narrative framework of the book, is seen to offer the required confession *in the very year* that Babylon fell (9:1–2; cf. 5:30–6:1 [5:30–31 EB]).

Fourth, many scholars resist the idea that Israel’s suffering is a result of her sin as it does not fit the context of persecution under Antiochus IV. A second-century setting would seem to demand a focus on *Gentile* sin, as indeed is the case in the other visions of chapters 7–12.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, a straightforward reading of Dan 9, especially against its Levitical background, indicates that the sin in view is demonstrably Israel’s. Therefore, commonly advocated solutions that either question the unity of the text and ignore the prayer’s force entirely¹⁰⁵ or insist that 9:24 has little to do with the sin of Israel¹⁰⁶ prove inadequate in the light of Dan 9’s overall coherence and trajectory. Thus, Dan 9 either raises questions regarding its “fit” with a late provenance or presents further evidence of the heterogeneous nature of Hellenistic Judaism in the second-century.

Fifth, the numbers in Dan 9 have spawned endless debate and speculation. For some, Daniel is seen to be at odds with history,¹⁰⁷ or at odds with other canonical books.¹⁰⁸ For others, the chapter becomes a

102. Towner, *Daniel*, 140.

103. Collins, *Introduction*, 95.

104. Although Lucas (*Daniel*, 242) urges caution against making overly simplistic distinctions.

105. E.g., Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 248.

106. E.g., Collins, *Daniel*, 354.

107. So Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 250; Towner, *Daniel*, 142.

108. So Collins, *Daniel*, 352.

chronological mine for eschatological speculation.¹⁰⁹ However, many such conclusions miss the theological significance of the chapter's numbers. While numerals in Dan 9 may retain a literal sense, their theological import seems primary. Appreciating the conceptual freight added through intertextual connection to Leviticus adds validation to approaches that read the numbers symbolically.

CONCLUSION

Although in some ways a straightforward text, Dan 9 raises a host of problems that have sparked, and will probably continue to spark, heated discussion. Yet as Portier-Young notes, "Echoes of scripture in Daniel draw the reader into a complex interface with multiple texts, inviting them to search the scriptures and find understanding even as they receive a new frame for their interpretation."¹¹⁰ One of those multiple texts is Leviticus. My aim, therefore, throughout this article has been to examine specific links that exist between Dan 9 and Leviticus in order to "find understanding." In fleshing out intertextual connections, whose combined force has heretofore been underappreciated, it is evident that Lev 16, 25 and 26 exert a significant influence on the vocabulary and theology of Dan 9. The text is, as Kline says, "saturated" with Mosaic expressions.¹¹¹ With these connections, the author of Daniel has produced a masterful exegetical ensemble that packs a considerable theological punch. Towner is right. "At first glance the least interesting in the entire Book of Daniel, chapter 9 in the end proves to be rich because of its elaborate inner-biblical connections."¹¹²

109. E.g., John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation: A Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 201–37.

110. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 267.

111. Kline, "Covenant," 456.

112. Towner, *Daniel*, 127.