

A Solution to the Duration Problem of Daniel 12:11-12

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The last few verses of the book of Daniel¹ are famously difficult. Among other issues, they apparently present a duration problem that has long seemed intractable. But they also contain a key that provides a solution to the problem. That key is found in the lack of parallelism between the Aramaic expression of 7:25b and the Hebrew expression of 12:7b. The solution it allows, while subtle, is accessible and expected. The author of Daniel created in his closing verses a mechanism to convey his view of the proper cultic calendar. That view places him securely among the other writers of early Jewish apocalypse, the authors of the early Enoch literature and the book of Jubilees. That mechanism and the solution it reveals are the subjects of this paper, which is adapted from an unpublished monograph by the author entitled *The Hidden Bones Apocalypse*.

The duration problem of Daniel 12 is well known. Two successive verses, 12:11-12, provide two different measures of time. Both have been understood to refer to the duration of the desecration of the Second Temple under the edicts of Antiochus IV. Neither of those two duration measures can be confidently associated with any known combination of historical dates or events, however. To compound the problem, those two measures of duration are understood to be associated with a third, found at Dan 8:14, which apparently refers to the same period. Scholars and commentators from Jerome in the fourth century, who cites the earlier Porphyry; to Driver, Charles, and Montgomery in the

¹ All references are to the version of Daniel in the Hebrew Bible.

early twentieth century; to Di Lella, Collins, Boccaccini, Mathews, and others more recently; have struggled with this problem. Ideas have been proposed, but efforts to prove them have been frustrated.² Collins's conclusion that the solution might be "yet another of the mysteries that was only revealed in symbolic code",³ suggests that, in his view, the effort at solution had not been advanced appreciably since Jerome wrote that the explanation "rests in the knowledge of God."⁴

An analysis of the problem must begin with a review of the three "duration verses" that create the difficulty.

The verse in Chapter 8 reads:

"For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."⁵ (*Dan* 8:14)

The measure in 8:14 is understood to mean, or to be the equivalent of, one thousand one hundred and fifty days.

The duration verses in Chapter 12 are:

"From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Happy are those who persevere and attain the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days." (*Dan* 12:11-12)

² Di Lella points to two surveys of the attempts made historically to explain the problem: Linder, J. *Commentarius in Librum Daniel*. Cursus Scripturae Sacrae 23. Paris: Lethieaux, 1939; and Schedl, C. *Mystische Arithmetik oder geschichtliche Zahlen* (*Dan.*, 8,14; 12, 11-13). *BZ* 8 (1964) 101-105. See Hartman, Louis F. and Di Lella, Alexander A. *The Book of Daniel*. AB 23. Doubleday & Company, Inc. Garden City, NY 1977. p 314.

A review of the full history of attempts to solve the problem is beyond the scope of this paper and is not necessary to its argument or conclusion.

³ Collins, John J. *Daniel: With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*. FOTL 20. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, MI 1984. Kindle Edition. Loc 1796

⁴ Archer, G. *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*. Wipf & Stock Publishers. Eugene, OR. 2009 p 151. (Baker Publishing Group. Grand Rapids, MI 1958.)

⁵ All translations are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

The problem that all have faced is that the text seems to associate each of those three measures: that is, 1,150 days, 1,290 days, and 1,335 days, with the length of time of the temple's desecration.

The language of Chapter 8 is specific in its descriptions of both the beginning of the defined period and its end. The beginning of the time of desolation is specified in 8:11, "It took the regular burnt offering away from him and overthrew the place of his sanctuary." That is understood to refer to the suspension of the twice-daily offerings in the temple. And 8:14 describes the end, "Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state." There is little to argue about except whether it is correct to interpret "two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings" to mean 1,150 days. That argument does not, in any case, aid the effort to understand the period referenced, which seems unambiguously to be the one during which the sanctuary was desecrated.

A closer look at the verses in Chapter 12, though, shows that they are explicit only with respect to the defined beginning of the duration, not its end. "From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up" (12:11a) is a specific condition that defines the beginning of the measured period. But the account in Chapter 12 does not actually provide an explicit ending condition. There is no definite parallel in Chapter 12 to the specification in 8:14 that the ending condition is when, "the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state." A parallel has been assumed by some, and it has been argued and proposed by others, but the text does not explicitly provide it. That assumption has led to conclusions regarding the actions and motives of the author⁶ that are difficult to accept.

⁶ I assume here that there was a single individual responsible for the final composition and editing of the text. Describing that person as the "author" does not suggest responsibility for the entire composition. It does seem likely that the "court tales" in the first half of the book are older stories that were edited and adapted by the author. I use the term "author", then, for convenience.

Montgomery accepts the conclusions of Gunkel and others that the two measures in Ch 12 “are successive glosses intended to prolong the term of 1,150 days announced at 8:14; that term was not fulfilled and these glosses, which must be very early, successively extend the time to 1,290 and 1,335 days.”⁷ Collins makes the point more precisely. He writes, “The conflicting numbers in 12:11-12 can only be explained as successive attempts to give precision to the ‘time, two times and half a time’ of verse 12:7. Verse 11 was presumably added after the lapse of the 1,150 days mentioned in 8:14, and 12:12 after the lapse of the number in 12:11.”⁸

Is the “successive gloss” argument reasonable? Why would the author, having observed that 1,290 days had passed without the occurrence of the ending condition, add an additional verse with another duration measure? Why would he not simply amend the one that had proven incorrect? What purpose might he have had in leaving a clearly “incorrect” measure in the text? If he waited an additional forty-five days beyond the 1,290; and he then observed the ending condition, and then wrote the verse specifying 1,335 days, why did he not provide an explicit notice of the ending condition? That is, why did he not clearly record the event that ended the measured duration? And if he waited beyond the 1,335 days and he did not observe the end of the measured period, what is the meaning of the 1,335-day measure? Why is it even provided? There are no good answers to these questions. There has been no convincing explanation of the “successive gloss” theory. There is only the assumption of parallelism that associates the Chapter 12 measures with that of 8:14.⁹

⁷ Montgomery, James A. *The Book of Daniel: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*. ICC. Varda Books. Skokie, IL. 2016 p 477. (Previously, T & T Clark. Edinburgh. 1927)

⁸ Collins. *Daniel: With an Introduction to Apocalypse*. Loc 1698

⁹ There have been many efforts to find and explain an approach that associates these durations with messianic expectations, including many among the Adventist scholars. An interesting survey of those efforts was recently done by Hernandez in Hernandez, Abner F. “Adventist Eschatology and the Interpretation of the Time Periods of Daniel 12:11-12.” *Andrews University Seminary Student Journal*. Vol 1 no. 1. 2015 pp 65-84. None of the attempts has succeeded.

Di Lella does offer a possible solution in his suggestion, following Ginsberg, that the Masoretic Text of 12:7 contains a mistranslation of an assumed original Aramaic. After analyzing the possibility, though, he concludes, "It seems best to admit that what the glossators had in mind as happening at the end of 1,290 days in 12:11 and 1,335 days in 12:12 simply cannot be ascertained with any confidence. Only guesses are possible."¹⁰ Driver noted that earlier commentators resorted to transposing words in the text and changing punctuation in an effort to find clarity but acknowledges that "the answer was far from explicit."¹¹ The question then becomes, why would the author, in a matter of such importance, choose to end his work with such a lack of clarity?

The verses at 12:11-12 do not stand on their own, of course. They are an answer to verses 12:8-10, which precede them. There, Daniel says to the "man clothed in linen":

I heard and I did not understand, so I said, "My Lord, what will be the outcome of these things?" He said, "Go, Daniel, for these words are secret and sealed to the time of the end. Many will be purified and purged and refined; the wicked will act wickedly and none of the wicked will understand; but the knowledgeable will understand." (*Dan* 12:8-10)

Verses 11 and 12, then, are offered in answer to Daniel's question. They follow what is essentially an admonition. Daniel is told that the answer is a secret that will be understood by the knowledgeable but not by the wicked. The knowledgeable have, in some way, been "purified and purged and refined." They will come to know the secret. The wicked persist in wickedness and will not come to know the secret. If the two durations are not meant to convey a meaning parallel to that of 8:14, what might they be intended to convey? What kind of information that must be kept secret, at least for a time, will be known to the knowledgeable but not to the wicked?

¹⁰ Hartman and Di Lilla 1977. p 314.

¹¹ Driver, S. R. *The Book of Daniel With Introduction and Notes*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 1900. p 204

Gabriele Boccaccini writes, “Every time Daniel refers to the time of God’s wrath between the desecration of the temple and the end of history, it gives the figure of ‘a time, two times, and half a time’ (Dan 7:25; 12:7), which 9:27 makes explicit as ‘half of the week [of years],’ that is, ‘three and a half years.’”¹² He rejects the “successive gloss” approach. He assumes the duration measured begins with the desecration and extends to the “end of history.” Boccaccini thinks the issue is theological rather than temporal. He calls the progressive lengthening of times an “almost careless, yet ingenious mechanism” that “fits well with the theology of the author more than [with] the concerns of any elusive glossator.”¹³

Boccaccini argues that the *Dan* 12 measures of time can be reconciled by reference to a measure found in the book of Revelation, which at *Rev* 11:3 and 12:6 specifies time periods equal to 1,260 days. He finds that “evidence strongly suggests that Daniel must have used the old Zadokite sabbatical calendar of 360+4 days.”¹⁴ If we ignore the four annual intercalary days¹⁵, the figure found in Revelation would be the equivalent of three and a half years: $360 \times 3 \frac{1}{2} = 1,260$. He then observes that adding one month to that figure would produce the 1,290 days of Dan 12:11, and adding a further one and a half months would then produce the 1,335 days of Dan 12:12. He proposes that this progression defines a movement through the Jewish liturgical calendar, beginning on the first day of the first month of the liturgical year¹⁶—a beginning point to which he assigns a value of 1,260 days. He then adds thirty days to reach the 1,290 mark of 12:11, noting that Passover occurs during that first thirty days. From that point he adds another month and a half, arriving at the 1,335 days of 12:12, which he notes would

¹² Boccaccini, G. *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History from Ezekiel to Daniel*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, MI. 2002. Kindle Edition. Loc 2575

¹³ Boccaccini. *Roots*. Loc 2581

¹⁴ Boccaccini. *Roots*. Loc 2581

¹⁵ The “intercalary days” are the two solstices and the two equinoxes, which in some calendars are not counted as days.

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¹⁶ That is, the Hebrew month of Nisan.

correspond to the festival of Shavuot using the calendar of Jubilees. I think Boccaccini's intuition is correct but the progression he suggests seems to be more coincidence than evidence.

Boccaccini's search for a solution to the problem in the calendar controversy is understandable. His proposed proof that Daniel holds to a version of the 364-day calendar¹⁷ seems forced, however. He looks beyond the time and evidence of the text itself, writing that, "It is time to hand back the notion of the delay of the end to the New Testament theology, from where it comes and to which it more properly belongs."¹⁸ He provides, and offers as support, detailed calculations of the dates of events that are found in both 1 Maccabees and Josephus. He calculates those dates using a 364-day calendar and compares them to dates derived using a 354-day calendar. That comparison does not, he acknowledges, produce results that prove his argument, but it does come close. He finds that "the closeness of these dates is striking."¹⁹ As striking as those results might be, closeness should not be the measure of the success of the argument. If the author were trying to convey a specific message with the numbers he used, why would he not use numbers that conveyed his message precisely? We should not be satisfied with closeness nor, I believe, should we need to look to the first century CE Apocalypse of John to understand the second century BCE apocalypse of Daniel. That is to assume that the author of Daniel was inadequate to the task he set himself.

Mathews proposes an even more complex analysis of the duration problem that seeks a solution to the relationships among essentially all the numbers in Daniel.²⁰ I think she is correct in two of her conclusions. She writes, "None of the specified numbers of days in Daniel is unintentional"²¹ And,

¹⁷ Boccaccini does distinguish among the calendars of Enoch, Jubilees, the Qumran sectarians, and others. For our purposes, the relevant issue is the common duration of 364 days.

¹⁸ Boccaccini, Gabriele. "The Solar Calendars of Daniel and Enoch," in *The Book of Daniel, Vol. 2, Composition and Reception*. VTSup Vol 83/2. eds. Collins, John J. and Flint, Peter W. Brill. Leiden. 2001. p 321

¹⁹ Boccaccini. *Solar Calendars*. 324

²⁰ Mathews, Susan Fournier. "The Numbers in Daniel 12:11-12: Rounded Pythagorean Plane Numbers?" *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. Vol 63 no. 4 (2001) 630-646

²¹ Mathews. 645

specifically as to the numbers in Daniel 12:11-12, she concludes, “They are intended to be ahistorical and strictly symbolic.”²² Her argument, though, and her conclusion that their “full, symbolic meaning is discoverable only when read against the background of the Pythagorean ‘arithmology’”, are not persuasive. Mathews observes that the three duration numbers of Daniel 8 and 12 are, in each case, nearly the same as “parallel Pythagorean plane numbers.”²³ She asks, “What if all three specified numbers for days in Daniel (i.e., 1,150, 1,290, 1,335) are meant to be read as rounded approximations of Pythagorean plane numbers?”²⁴ But, none of those three numbers is actually the same as the Pythagorean plane number she proposes as “parallel.” All are close, but all need to be rounded to produce the number targeted by the analysis, and the rounding convention she employs is inconsistent and idiosyncratic.²⁵ Mathews’s analysis is fascinating. She finds that “Daniel’s numerology with its use of rounded Pythagorean plane numbers in Dan 12:11-12 is the author’s means of unifying his whole book.”²⁶ She sees the message of Daniel 12 as being a combination of apocalyptic tradition and numerology. Ultimately, though, her argument suffers the same problem as Boccaccini’s; that is, the product of her analysis only comes close to confirming her proposed solution. It is not precise. Closeness is interesting, but it is not proof. Mathews also acknowledges in a footnote that, “There is no Hebrew or Aramaic literature contemporary with Daniel that exhibits use of this Pythagorean system.”²⁷ If the author intended to convey a message, we must assume that he intended it to be accessible. He might have chosen a subtle means to communicate it and he might have hidden the key. But it is only reasonable to believe that he would have hidden the key in a place where a contemporary could find it.

²² Mathews. 645

²³ It is not necessary for us to explain, or for the reader to understand, the theory of Pythagorean plane numbers. Mathews provides sufficient detail in her paper for those interested.

²⁴ Mathews. p 641

²⁵ The comparisons of the Pythagorean numbers to the Daniel numbers are: 1,156 rounded down to 1,150; 1,296 rounded down to 1,290; and 1,332 rounded up to 1,335. Typical rounding convention, however, would require the first two numbers to be rounded up, rather than down, and the third would be rounded down rather than up. Consistency would also require all to be rounded to the same degree of significance.

²⁶ Mathews. p 645

²⁷ Mathews. p 634 n11

Can we believe that the hidden message would be constructed in such a way that, even if we were to find the key to unlock it, the message would still not be clear; that it would be imprecise; that we would still need to employ inconsistent rounding methods to find a coherent relationship among its parts? No.

I think Collins is correct in concluding that the answer is among the “mysteries” that will be revealed “in symbolic code.” And Boccaccini is correct in concluding that the author provided “an ingenious mechanism” to signal his true intent. And Mathews is correct that the numbers used are “ahistoric and strictly symbolic.” But the question is still open. What is the code? What is the mechanism? What is the symbol?

The lack of explicit parallelism between the duration account of 8:14 and those of 12:11-12 should alert us to look closely at the surrounding texts for other anomalies. When we do that, we find another failure of parallelism, and that leads us toward the author’s key.

One of the conflicts presented in Daniel involves the power to “change the times and the seasons.” In Dan 2:21 we find Daniel recounting his revelation regarding the king’s dream. He says that it is God who “changes times and seasons.” In 7:25, though, we read of one who will “speak words against the Most High, shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High, and shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law.” The “one” referenced in that verse is obviously Antiochus IV and the attempt to change the seasons has been understood by some scholars to refer to a mandated change in the cultic calendar. Jaubert, Vanderkam, Boccaccini, Elijor, and others have argued that Antiochus forced the temple establishment to adopt the 354-day Seleucid calendar for cultic use²⁸ rather than the 364-

²⁸ Vanderkam suggests that the 354-day calendar had already been used for purposes of civil administration in Judea for some, perhaps long, period of time. See Vanderkam, James C. “2 Maccabees 6, 7a and Calendrical Change.” *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*. Vol 12 no. 1 (1981) pp 52–74

day calendar that had been in use—some argue²⁹—throughout the Second Temple period. But the text of Daniel appears to be silent on the subject.

If Daniel were completed during the period of the edicts, its author would have been acutely aware of the calendar issue. He used his considerable literary talents to provide an account of the major political events of his day using allegory and allusion. Is it reasonable to believe that he would not have had a position on the calendar question? Is it reasonable to believe he would not, in some way, convey that position in his text? No. The issue had divided his community at least since the time of the earliest Enoch writings. Vanderkam, with Jaubert, writes that even many “late priestly writings (Ezekiel, P, Haggai, Zechariah, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and perhaps some parts of Kings) evidence the very calendaric traits and concerns”³⁰ found in the early apocalypse literature. All the other early Jewish apocalypses and many contemporaneous non-apocalyptic writings addressed it. The author of Daniel would not avoid the issue. But it would be in character for him to signal his position in an indirect way.

I think the author of Daniel does, in fact, tell us—and quite clearly— that he holds to the 364-day calendar of apocalypse. He leads us to his message—or, at least, we can find it— in a series of steps, which begins with the initial observation of a lack of parallelism where parallelism is expected.

The first step is the observation, made above, of the lack of parallelism between the definition of the durations found in 8:14, 12:11, and 12:12. Those appear to be parallel, and have been understood to be parallel, but close reading reveals that they are not.

²⁹ Some, such as Jonathan Ben Dov, object to this conclusion. See, for example: Ben Dov, Jonathan. “The 364-day Year in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Jewish Pseudepigrapha”. Originally in *The Qumran Scrolls and Their World*. ed. Menahem Kister. Yad Ben-Zvi (Heb). Jerusalem. 2009. pp 435-476. And, earlier, Davies, Philip R. “Calendrical Change and Qumran Origins: An Assessment of VanderKam’s Theory,” in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. January 1983. Vol. 45, No. 1. pp 80-89

³⁰ VanderKam, J. “The Origin, Character, and Early History of the 364-Day Calendar: A Reassessment of Jaubert’s Hypothesis.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. Vol 41 no.3 (1979) pp 390–411

As we look more closely at the adjacent text, which we have been alerted to do, we find that there is another lack of parallelism. The passage in 7:25 regarding Antiochus, quoted above, continues “...and they will be delivered into his power for a time, two times, and half a time.” That text is written in Aramaic (Dan 7:25b). It reads:

ויתיהבון בידה עד-עדן ועדנין ופלג עדן

The last Aramaic term in that phrase—פלג עדן—appears to unambiguously mean “and half a time.” So, the translation “a time, two times, and half a time” is uncontroversial.³¹ The phrase is agreed to have a numerical value equal to $1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2} = 3 \frac{1}{2}$ times. And “a time”; that is, an עדן; is agreed to mean a year. The issue, as we have seen, is the inability to fit that value to the duration of the desecration of the temple. The association of that time reference with the “half week” of years, or three and one-half years, in 9:27, which Boccaccini cites and many commentators explore, is ultimately not helpful. The key is in the phrase that appears to be its parallel in 12:7.

There, Daniel has learned that a time of great trouble and distress will come. He is told “There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred...” (12:1) and he asks, “How long until the end of these wonders?”³² (12:6b) The heavenly being answers that the awful period will extend only “for a time, two times, and half a time”, after which the promises to the holy people will be fulfilled. The language in this part of Daniel is Hebrew, not Aramaic. It reads:

למועד מועדים וחצי

³¹ The term עדנין acts in Aramaic like some plurals do in Hebrew; that is, to double the value of the term referenced.

The text in Driver has “a time, times and the dividing of time” in 7:25b but in Driver’s notes he uses “a time, times, and half a time”, quoted from the Revised Version, and he specifies the value as $3 \frac{1}{2}$ years. See Driver. Daniel. p 93

³² NJPS has “awful things” rather than the NRSV “wonders.”

This Hebrew phrase in Dan 12:7b is translated, and understood, in the NRSV and elsewhere, in the same way as the seemingly parallel Aramaic phrase in 7:25b. But there is an obvious and significant difference between the two. The last term of the phrase, which is unambiguous in the Aramaic of 7:25b; that is, “and half a time”, is not unambiguous in the Hebrew of 12:7b. The final word of the Aramaic phrase makes it clear that the specified “half” refers to the unit of measure that follows; that is, an עֵדָן or “a time.” But the corresponding word מוֹעֵד is missing in the Hebrew. That is, the Hebrew phrase does not end וְחָצִי מוֹעֵד, as we would expect it to end if the parallel to עֵדָן וּפְלֵג were to be maintained. It ends simply וְחָצִי, meaning “and a half” or “and half.”³³ The difference has, of course, been recognized. The KJV is literal in its translation, giving “and a half.” Charles translates the last term as “and a[n] half.”³⁴ Collins also provides the literal, “and a half”, translation in his 1993 Commentary.³⁵ But many others add the expected, but absent, expansion. Di Lella has “and half a year.” The NRSV gives “and half a time”, although it does note the literal “and a half” in a footnote. The NJPS has “and half a time”, as do many others. Driver uses “and a half” but specifically notes that the phrases in 7:25b and 12:7b are “the same expression” and he assigns them both the same value.³⁶

Those who have adopted the position that the phrases in 7:25b and 12:7b are equivalent have perhaps been influenced by the Septuagint, which does supply the missing term in 12:7b. That is, the LXX gives the phrase as καὶ ἥμισυ καιροῦ in both places,³⁷ but the added καιροῦ in 12:7b seems to

³⁴ Charles, R. H. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Daniel*. Oxford; 1929; Wipf and Stock. Eugene. 2006. p 393

³⁵ Collins, John J. *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel. Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*. Fortress. Minneapolis. p 399

³⁶ Driver. p 204

³⁷ My thanks to James C. VanderKam for pointing this out.

assume the missing מועד in the MT was an error. In its attempt to correct the “error” it may have deflected attention from a key element of the author’s message.

Even though the lack of parallelism in the MT is obvious, the question of its meaning seems to have gotten no attention. Why is there a lack of parallelism and what, if anything, is it meant to convey? We must assume that the author created the difference intentionally. He could have easily made the Hebrew of 12:7b the functional equivalent of the Aramaic of 7:25b, but he did not. What is it that the lack of parallelism calls to our attention? It is a specific measure of time. It is a מועד, a year. The author has chosen to draw our attention to that measure of time. Better put, he has attempted to draw our attention to it, but we have not complied. Ignoring the lack, commentators have assigned the same value to the Hebrew phrase in 12:7b that they assign to the Aramaic phrase in 7:25b. That is, the Hebrew of 12:7b is understood to represent $1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2} = 3 \frac{1}{2}$ times or years—the same as 7:25b. But the lack of parallelism invites the reader— requires the reader, in my view—having understood the Hebrew phrase to specify “for a time, two times, and a half ...” to ask, *and a half of what?*

To assume without question what only appears obvious—that the measures in 7:25b and 12:7b have the same duration value— is to ignore the actual language of the text. If there is one section of text to which we should pay closest attention, giving due respect to the author, it seems to me that it is to the conclusion. There is more than one way to formulate an answer to the question “and half of what?” There is a plausible alternative to the conventional, “and half a time”, which deserves consideration. It is this: rather than reading “a time, two times, and a half” as:

$$1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2} = 3 \frac{1}{2},$$

We can, and I think we should, read it as:

$$(1 + 2) = 3 + (3 \times \frac{1}{2}) = 4 \frac{1}{2} \text{ times}$$

The value of the 12:7b phrase is, in that reading, not 3 ½ times or years, which would parallel 7:25b, but 4 ½ times or years. Stated in language rather than numbers, I suggest we can understand the phrase not as:

“a time, two times, and half [a time]”, but rather as

*“a time, two times, and half [of **that time** or **those times**].”*

The lack of specificity allows us to understand the missing term to mean the sum of the first two terms, which we might think of as either “that time” or “those times.”

Next, we note again that the duration given in 12:12, the longer one, is the one that will bring happiness. That duration represents something that is qualitatively better than the measure in 12:11. The difference between the two durations is forty-five days, which is unambiguous. The action that results in the happiness of 12:12 is perseverance, as NRSV has it; or “waiting,” which NJPS, Collins, and Charles prefer. Di Lella understands it as having “patience.” The sense of all approaches is that waiting forty-five days is associated with happiness and knowledge.

And now we have all the elements required to understand the message of the apparently conflicting verses. It is this:

The Solution:

- a) The value provided by the lack of parallelism in the text is one year, מוֹעֵד.
- b) The alternate calculation of the value of the phrase in 12:7b is 4 ½ years.
- c) The action that results in the happiness of 12:12 is perseverance or “waiting.”
- d) The one who is knowledgeable, who will attain happiness, is the one who waits 45 days.
- e) The 45 days of waiting are associated with 4.5 units of time, or years.
- f) The one who is happy is the one who waits $45 \text{ days} \div 4.5 \text{ years} = 10 \text{ days per year}$.

g) The author of Daniel is telling us that he holds to the calendar of 364 days; the one that requires ten days of “waiting.”

In this reading, the “problem” of 12:11-12 is that we assume the author is conveying a message about the two numbers given: 1,290 and 1,335. And we try, in vain, to reconcile the two. In fact, the difference between the two is not the problem. The difference is, itself, the message. The purpose of 12:11-12 is to produce the calculated result; that is, 45 days. That result is needed as a term in the formula that, along with the 4 ½ year message pointed to by the “missing” מועד, produces the key value of ten days, which is associated with the key duration: one year.

And so we find that the author of Daniel holds to a solar calendar that, like the calendars of Enoch and Jubilees, has 364-days as opposed to the 354-day Seleucid lunar calendar.

Conclusion

There is every reason to believe that the author of Daniel shared the views of the other writers of early Jewish apocalypse on the question of the appropriate cultic calendar. That view was shared by the sectarians and by other non-sectarian authors of the time as well. But his way was one of allusion, allegory, and indirection. He did not take the approach of the author of Jubilees, for example, who made his adherence to the 364-day calendar explicit. Rather than provide direct confirmation of his position, he marked a path to it, leaving it to his reader to find the way.

Collins wrote of the lack of parallelism in the duration accounts that “the exact date was not ultimately important.”³⁸ And in that conclusion he was certainly correct. Boccaccini’s intuition that the calendar was the issue in the argument was also correct. What has been missing is an understanding of the “ingenious mechanism” fashioned by the author to convey his message. Mathews’s analysis is

³⁸ Collins. Daniel with an Introduction. Loc 1796

interesting, but it attributes to the author an approach that is unrealistically complex. And ultimately it achieves only an approximation. Subtlety was needed if the author were to protect his work but, surely, he wanted his message to be accessible.

The approach suggested here produces a precise result, using information derived only from the author's text. The message it uncovers is clear and important. Without that message, the text would appear anomalous among the early Jewish apocalypses. We would expect that the author of Daniel would hold to the calendar of apocalypse. The calendar issue was certainly on his mind, which is clear from his text at 2:21 and 7:25. It would be out of character for his text to be silent on an issue that was so important at the time of its completion.

I suggest that it is not silent, that we have not understood the message because we have not asked the correct question: "and half *of what?*"

Had the author of Daniel made his position on the calendar explicit, he would have been in open conflict with those who controlled the temple. He chose to obscure his position on the calendar in order to preserve his larger work from obscurity. Had he been explicit on the issue, as the authors of the Enoch and Jubilees literature had been, his text might not have become a part of the Hebrew canon.

CRL 2/10/21 REV

(Note: minor clarifying edits made 5/11/2021)

Abbreviations

Bible Versions Cited:

KJV	The King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NJPS	Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RV	Revised Version

Series Cited:

AB	Anchor Bible
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
ICC	International Critical Commentary
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

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ADDENDUM

to

A Calendar Solution to the Duration Problem of Daniel 12:11-12

Charles R. Lightner

Responses to Review Comments

For those not working in an academic environment, peer feedback can be difficult to obtain. That makes the review process, which is part of many publication decisions, so valuable for the author. My paper on Daniel 12:11-12 has been reviewed anonymously for a well-known journal by two scholars, both of whom raised questions about it, some specific and others more general. Rather than address those as a part of a revision, it seems to me most valuable to leave the paper as it is and to respond to the points raised in a separate addendum. (I will paraphrase the questions raised or positions expressed and in some cases I combine similar issues raised by both reviewers.)

- 1. Are there other instances in the biblical text in which the Hebrew צד is used in the way that I suggest the Daniel author uses it here? That is, to apply to the total of a series of preceding values.*

That is an interesting point. The answer is no. There are 103 cases in the Hebrew Bible in which the word is used and, except in the case we are studying at Dan 12:7b, there is no ambiguity. Whether in the many instances of the “half tribe of Manasseh”, or the cases where measures are in the form of “one and a half cubits”, for example, or in specifications like “half

the district of Jerusalem”, or where חצי refers to “the middle” of something, the meanings are clear. I find no other case in which a series of measures is given which is then followed by a term meant to be applied to the sum of the series.

In looking at that question, though, I realize that I should have commented on the Hebrew of Dan 9:27, where we importantly find the unambiguous שבוע אחד וחצי השבוע. There the author of Daniel uses the Hebrew חצי in relation to a time measure and specifically avoids ambiguity. He does that in the same way he avoided ambiguity in the Aramaic of 7:25b. That is, he specifies the answer to “half of what?” It is the absence of that specification; that is, the lack of parallelism between 7:25b and 12:7b; that draws our attention.

The text at 9:27 confirms, if confirmation is needed, that the author of Daniel is quite capable of unambiguous expression. In both Aramaic and Hebrew he uses the “half” term to describe a specific measure of time in order to convey his message with precision. His lack of precision in 12:7b cannot be attributed to an inability to be precise and should not, I believe, be attributed to error or carelessness. If the author is ambiguous, the ambiguity is deliberate. I do not believe that he could have intended the Hebrew to be read as a simple re-statement of the Aramaic of 7:25b.

The deliberate ambiguity of 12:7b should command our attention.

2. *It was suggested that Carol Newsom’s interpretation in her Old Testament Library commentary is convincing and that it is more straightforward than mine.*³⁹

³⁹ Newsom, Carole A. *Daniel: A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville. 2014

I did not bring Newsom's analysis into the discussion, so I will briefly review it here prior to comment.

Newsom accepts the conventional understanding of 12:7b as "a time, (two) times, and half a time" which she notes "picks up the similar expression from 7:25." She finds that both represent 3 ½ years, which she calls a "symbolic calculation ... based on half a week of years."⁴⁰ The "half a week" is derived from the unambiguous phrase in 9:27. In that understanding of 12:7b, Newsom aligns with the clear consensus. She finds 12:7b "similar" to 7:25, certainly recognizing that they are not identical, but she does not comment on the difference.

Newsom writes that the durations found in 12:11-12 "appear to be an updating added to the original book of Daniel, added when the expected events did not take place at the end of 3 ½ years." That is the "successive glosses" approach of Gunkel and others, which I referenced. But she, understandably, does not find that explanation satisfying. Those who hold to that approach fail to see an important pattern, she finds. "What they fail to see is the pattern of what is left over from the original prediction of 'a time, (two) times, and half a time,' which amounts to 42 months (cf. Rev 11:2-3). What remains is 1 extra month in the first part [I assume by 'first part' she means the 1,290-day duration.], and 2 ½ months in the second part [Presumably the 1,335-day duration.] The length of the delay would have the same numerical pattern as the original prediction. This pattern would also account for why the 2 parts of the final period are not presented as of equal duration."

If I understand her correctly, she is pointing out that 1,290 days is 30 days more than 1,260 days, which Revelation 11:2-3 suggests is the duration of a year; that is, 12 months of 30

⁴⁰ Note: All references in this discussion are from Newsom's *Daniel* pages 366–68.

days each. And 1,335 days is 75 days more than that same reference. The sum of those differences equals 3 ½ 30–day months. The pattern she finds important is apparently the congruence of that 3 ½ *month* sum and the 3 ½ *year* understanding of the phrases at 7:25b and 12:7b. Her observation in this respect is essentially the same one made by Boccaccini. If one accepts that the Revelation 11 text is relevant, and that a year has a 360–day duration, the arithmetic both she and Boccaccini present is certainly clear.⁴¹ What that arithmetic might mean, however, is not clear. Boccaccini pursues the question. He explores a solution positing the author’s adherence to the 364–day calendar. The approach that he explores produces a result that comes close to proving his case but ultimately falls short. Newsom essentially leaves the topic at the level of observation, suggesting that the pattern found is in some way explanatory without, however, demonstrating that it is explanatory. She concludes that “one cannot say definitively what the author had in mind. That matters less, however, than the fact that the numbers lend themselves to symbolic patterns ...”⁴²

Newsom does not address the ambiguity of the Hebrew of 12:7b. She presents observations that are accurate in calculation, but if those observations do not support explanations, we are left essentially where we began. Newsom ends her analysis as both Boccaccini and Matthews did; with an acknowledgement that the case explored is not proven.

I cannot agree that that is a satisfying conclusion.

3. *It is suggested that the solution I propose requires an unlikely level of subtlety.*

Specifically, that a reader would need to recognize that the phrase in 12:7b could be

⁴¹ I questioned the use of the Revelation text in Boccaccini’s analysis, and I question it with respect to Newsom’s also. I do not understand why it is appropriate to resort to a later text to explain the meaning of an earlier one. I would add here, though, that while Boccaccini acknowledged, at least implicitly, that the use of Rev 11 leads to a discussion of the calendar, Newsom does not.

interpreted to mean 4.5 years, to recognize that the delay is 45 days, and that the relationship between those two; that is, 10 days per year; might be associated with the calendar issue.

Surely, the only subtlety involved is that of interpreting 12:7b as meaning 4.5 years. The difference between 1,290 days and 1,335 days is obvious. The question is not whether the difference is 45 days. The question is what that 45–day difference means. I think it can be agreed that: a) the calendar controversy was a major issue of contention within the Jewish community at the time Daniel was completed, b) the point of contention was the duration of one year, and c) that the difference between the duration positions of the contesting parties was ten days per year. What other issue of great interest to mid-second century Jews was associated with a measure of ten days?

The subject of 12:7b is time as measured in years. The subject of 12:11 and 12:12 is time as measured in days. The controversy concerned the number of days in a year. If 12:7b is interpreted as I suggest, all of the elements of the calculation fall readily into place. There is no “close”, or “almost”, or “nearly” to be explained away or ignored. The approach I propose produces a solution. The other approaches proposed do not.

There is a valid point to address here, though, which I did address in the paper but perhaps not clearly enough. I do not suggest that the period of the Antiochian edicts had a 4.5-year duration. I am aware of no justification for such a position. In my reading, 12:7b only *appears* to be associated with the duration of the temple’s desecration, but it is not. The interpretation of 12:7b to mean 4.5 years suggests that the phrase is provided strictly a means to produce the value required to convert a total duration of 45 days into a 10-day per year result.

4. *It was suggested that my proposal is as complex as I find Matthews's proposal to be.*

Matthews proposes an explanation of the various durations in Daniel based on the system of Pythagorean plane numbers. She acknowledges that the Pythagorean system is not seen used in any other texts of the period and that it does not actually produce a solution to the problem. It merely comes intriguingly close. Her description of the Pythagorean system; provided as preface to the discussion of how it might apply in this case; requires seven pages of rather difficult explanation. That material is interesting, but I suspect few readers can claim to have gained clear understanding of the system or Matthews's proposed application of it. And, in the end, the hypothesis is not proven. By contrast, my suggestion requires only the re-grouping of the terms of a single calculation. That is not nearly as complex as Matthews's approach.

5. *The reason for such a subtle approach is questioned.*

At the time the book of Daniel was completed the temple was under the control of those who opposed the 364-day calendar. If the author of Daniel wanted to avoid conflict with the temple authorities, and those in power more generally—and there could have been many reasons he might want to do so—a resort to ambiguity could have seemed quite reasonable. We know now that subtlety in the expression of contrary calendar opinion was considered appropriate by other writers of that time. Among the material found at Qumran, for example, eight calendric texts have been identified that were actually written in code.⁴³ Various reasons for the use of code in those texts have been proposed, and secrecy of content might not have been a primary

⁴³ Ratzon, E. and Ben-Dov, J. A Newly Reconstructed Calendrical Scroll from Qumran in Cryptic Script. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 136 (4): 905–936, p 909

Note: Not all eight are dated to the mid-second century, but some are dated to that period.

concern. But the use of code in texts relating to the calendar certainly suggests an atmosphere in which concealment was considered appropriate.

Certainly, if the author of Daniel was associated with the temple, or had been, which seems likely, and he wanted to protect his position, he would not have openly espoused the 364–calendar.

6. I noted that a text that explicitly espoused the 364–day calendar would probably not have become a part of the Hebrew canon. That idea was questioned.

I did not elaborate on that point and perhaps should not have mentioned it without discussing it further. And my use of the term “canon” without discussion was perhaps inappropriate. There was no “canon” at the time Daniel was completed, of course. There were texts that had been accepted as authoritative and others that were held in high regard, but the collection itself, the grouping we call the “canon”, had not been fixed. Even the idea of “canon” might not have been understood at the time. My intention was to make another point related to the idea of subtlety discussed above.

No text that openly espoused the 364–day calendar became a part of the Hebrew canon. I do not think that is coincidence. I mentioned the books of 1 Enoch and Jubilees as examples of texts that were very important in mid-second century Judaism but were not accepted by those who finalized the canon. Given the history of those texts I do not think it goes too far to say they were rejected by the rabbinic authorities. An author in mid-second century Jerusalem, skilled enough to complete the book of Daniel, would have been aware of the risk to a text that openly espoused the sectarian calendar. I think it is a mark of his skill and foresight that he understood

the need to be circumspect. And it is a mark of his intellectual courage that he sought and found a way to make his position available without making it explicit.

So, the issue of the need for “subtlety” or discretion, in my view had at least two aims; one was to protect the author and the other to protect the text.

Conclusion:

The process of analyzing and crafting responses to the questions raised by reviewers has been valuable. That is true whether or not I agree with the points raised. As to the specific points/questions raised:

1) The question about the use of the Hebrew **הַצִּי** is a valuable one both in itself and because of the opportunity it provides to clarify the intentional nature of the ambiguity in 12:7b.

2) The questions regarding the motivations of the author allow useful opportunities to clarify my points on that subject in both of its aspects; that is, with regard to both the author and to his text, and

3) While I disagree with the points made about the approaches of both Newsom and Matthews, the incentive provided to look at them closely was helpful.

None of the questions/objections raised by the reviewers lessens my conviction in the thesis or conclusions of this paper.

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