Daniel 9:26–27 and the Seventieth Seven

Introduction

Because Gabriel does not clearly state when the seventieth seven begins, what happens after the sixty-two sevens and during the seventieth seven seems to run together. Lacocque goes so far as to say, “The text of this verse [Dan 9:26] is almost impossible to understand, its style being so truncated.”¹ This assessment overstates the hermeneutical challenge. Readers of Daniel might wish that Gabriel’s reference to the seventieth seven occurred in 9:26 instead of 9:27, but there are references nonetheless to the end of the sixty-two sevens and the seventieth seven. Because these verses are part of a vision set between two other visions about the Antiochene crisis, the truncated style is not so difficult to figure out. The events of that crisis are known well enough that readers can make sense of the text as it stands. This chapter will exegete the Hebrew text of Daniel 9:26–27, explain these verses in terms of the book’s interest in Antiochus IV, and then relate the meaning of these verses to the jubilee structure of the seventy sevens.

Exegesis of Daniel 9:26–27

Verse 26 announces that another anointed one is cut off (תֵרָכִּי) after the sixty-two sevens. If verse 25 identifies the first anointed one of the seven sevens as a דִּגָּנ (leader), verse 26 similarly mentions another דִּגָּנ in conjunction with the second anointed one. Because דִּגָּנ in verse 26 is not in apposition to חַיִּשָּׁמ (anointed one) as it is in verse 25, the second leader is not necessarily the same individual as the second anointed one. In fact, the leader in verse 26 is said to have a people who will destroy רַיָּה (the city) and שֶׁדֹקַּה (the holy one, whether a place or a person). In other words, the leader seems to oppose God. If the second anointed one, like the first, is involved with accomplishing the six objectives of 9:24, it seems unlikely that he and the second leader are the same person.²

¹ Lacocque, Book of Daniel, 195.
² Pitre (Jesus, Tribulation, End, 57 footnote 51) suggests that they are but does not explain why.
Meanwhile, the second half of verse 26 says that וֹצִּיקְוףֶטֶשַּׁבדַעְוץֵקהָמָחְלִמ (his end will be with a flood, and there will be war until the end). If the pronominal suffix on the first occurrence of וֹצִּק has the nearest masculine singular noun for its antecedent, then the end of the second leader is in view. The second occurrence of וֹצִּק could refer to war until the end of the second leader or until the end of the seventy sevens. Both ends may occur at the same time, but not necessarily. What is evident is that the trouble of the sixty-two sevens does not end with the sixty-two sevens. It extends beyond them into the seventieth seven and remains part of the historical process by which God accomplishes the six objectives of Daniel 9:24.

The second half of Daniel 9:26 presents other challenges to the translator and interpreter, and these challenges continue into verse 27. Determining the syntax of the words (how they relate to one another to create meaning) is by no means straightforward. A survey of translations in versions and commentaries will reveal a variety of possibilities that are allowable by the rules of Hebrew grammar and syntax. This chapter will not perform that survey as such, but it will work directly with the Hebrew text to demonstrate why different translations are possible.

The Masoretic punctuation understands חָלִשָּׁמ (he has nothing) to refer back to חָלִשָּׁמ (the anointed one who is cut off). חָלִשָּׁמ is the antecedent of the third masculine singular pronominal suffix on the preposition ל. The point is that ריִעָהְושֶׁדֹקַּה (both the city and the holy place) is the direct object of תִּחְשַׁי (he will destroy both the city and the holy place) and not of חָלִשָּׁמ (he has no city or holy place). The subject of תִּחְשַׁי (he will destroy) is מַעֲדֵי (a people of a coming ruler). So then, ריִעָהְושֶׁדֹקַּה תִּחְשַׁי מַעֲדֵי can be translated as “a people of a coming ruler will destroy both the city and the holy place.” The people, of course, are an army.

The next clause says וֹצִּיקְוףֶטֶשַּׁב. The antecedent of the third masculine singular pronominal suffix on וֹצִּק is not obvious. It can refer back to מַע (the construct noun) or מַע (the absolute noun). These nouns that comprise the subject of תִּחְשַׁי are closest to the pronominal suffix on וֹצִּק. The clause can be translated as either “their [the people’s] end will be in the flood” or “his [the ruler’s] end will be in the flood.” Perhaps there is, in effect, little difference

---

3 Because מַע is the absolute noun in a construct chain, the construct noun, מַע, might be the antecedent. Another possibility is חָלִשָּׁש, but it is part of a compound direct object with חָלִש, a feminine noun. Even though Hebrew often uses a 3ms pronominal suffix for plural antecedents, מַע or מַע is the likelier antecedent.

4 Cf. Lucas, Daniel, 244.