

DANIEL'S PRAYER IN CHAPTER 9¹

by
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INTRODUCTION

That Daniel 9 contains perhaps the most significant prophecy for understanding most other OT and NT eschatological passages can hardly be denied. It has been described as “the ‘key’ to prophetic interpretation...the ‘backbone’ of prophecy.”³ Desmond Ford says that it is “not only the devotional heart of the book but also contains ‘the crown jewels’ of Old Testament prophecy.”⁴ Alva J. McClain claims that no other prophecy is “more crucial in the fields of Biblical Interpretation, Apologetics, and Eschatology.”⁵ Henry Guinness claims that “of all prophecies in the Bible, Daniel’s of the ‘seventy weeks’ is the most

¹It was with joy and gratitude that I read the e-mail inviting me to participate in the volume honoring Dr. Rolland McCune on the occasion of his 70th birthday. It was my good fortune, at God’s leading, to sit under his teaching ministry for both my M.Div. and Th.M. degrees at Central Baptist Seminary in Minneapolis in the 1970s. His influence, example, and encouragement have never been far from my heart throughout my pastoral and teaching ministries. Consequently, I offer this article as another, though inadequate, expression of gratitude for his faithful ministry not only to my life but also to my preparation for labor in the harvest field of our Lord.

It has been a privilege during more than twenty years of teaching for me to open the Book of Daniel, which Dr. McCune first opened to me as a student, to hundreds of students both nationally and internationally. Prayerfully, in a small but effective way, the admonition of 2 Timothy 2:2 continues to be lived out in my students because Dr. McCune lived it out in his life: “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

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³James Montgomery Boice, *Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), pp. 103–4.

⁴Desmond Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assoc., 1978), p. 198, quoted in Paul D. Feinberg, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24–27,” in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, ed. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), p. 189.

⁵Alva J. McClain, *Daniel’s Prophecy of the 70 Weeks* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), p. 9.

wonderful and the most important. It stands erect among the ruins of time like the solitary and colossal obelisk amid the mounds of Heliopolis.⁶ Boice identifies it as “a decisive passage for all the various systems of prophetic interpretation.”⁷ If space permitted, the accolades of the four prophetic verses of this chapter (vv. 24–27) could continue for many pages.

Though the “seventy weeks” prophecy of Daniel 9 is certainly of great significance, however, the chapter contains more than these four verses of prophecy. Yet while multiple volumes have been written on the last four verses of the chapter, the first twenty-six verses have received comparatively little attention. Many articles and discourses on this chapter begin abruptly with verse 24, giving no reference at all to the verses that precede. At times it appears as if verses 24–27 were the chapter and verses 1–23 were a kind of apocryphal appendage deserving less than slight attention. This reality is perhaps based in mankind’s insatiable appetite to gorge on the future and what it holds while viewing the past, if not as tasteless fare, at least as twice-chewed food unfit for present consumption. So we hurry through the chapter’s extended opening as through a salad appetizer, assuming that the “main course” contains all the flavor and nutrients we seek.

We would do well to remember George Santayana’s admonition that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”⁸ Daniel’s prayer that occupies almost seventy percent of this chapter contains a large dose of history in the form of a theological evaluation of Israel’s past leading up to the Babylonian captivity. Although this dose goes down like medicine with a taste that seemingly would best be avoided, the benefits of the medicine are indisputable. Two observations are instructive. First, Leupold points out:

The entire prayer of Daniel (v. 4–19) deserves to be ranked with the finest of the psalms but usually receives rather scant treatment on the part of commentators, chiefly, we presume, because it is overshadowed by that difficult *crux interpretum*—the vision of the seventy weeks (v. 24–27). Anxious to take the avowedly perplexing passage in hand, the commentator hurries through this prayer.⁹

Second, Longman notes, “Interest in this chapter has usually bypassed the prayer for the more enigmatic prophecy of the seventy weeks. This

⁶Henry C. Guinness, *The Divine Programme of the World’s History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1888), p. 329, quoted in Feinberg, “Daniel 9:24–27,” p. 189.

⁷Boice, *Daniel*, p. 103.

⁸*Reason in Common Sense, The Life of Reason*, vol. 1 (New York: Scribner’s, 1905), p. 284.

⁹H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969), pp. 380–81.

is unfortunate, for the prayer contains much rich theology and important practical application to those of us reading it today.¹⁰ There is a richness and depth that is lost from our view of this chapter when the chapter's opening is either avoided or quickly skimmed.

The scope of the present study is Daniel's prayer (vv. 1–19), which not only precedes the prophetic conclusion of this chapter (vv. 24–27) but also introduces that prophecy. The purpose of this study is to investigate the interpretation and significance of Daniel's prayer as a foundation for understanding the prophecy of this chapter. Consequently, this study will provide an interpretation of Daniel's prayer in light of its linguistic, literary, and rhetorical features. Based on this study, considerations for the interpretation of the concluding prophecy will be proposed.

THE PRELUDE TO DANIEL'S PRAYER (9:1–3)

HISTORICAL SETTING (9:1–2a)

The prelude to Daniel's prayer begins with an introductory formula much like those used to introduce the other three major prophetic passages in the book of Daniel (7:1; 8:1; 10:1). Although each introductory formula contains a reference to the king and to the year of his reign, the introductory formula used to introduce the prophecy in this chapter is unique. Two things set this formula apart from the other three prophetic introductions of Daniel. The first distinction involves the form of the designation of the king. The second distinction involves the repetition of the year of the king's reign.

Designation of the King

The reference to Darius in verse 1 is the most detailed reference to any king in the book of Daniel. Four kings are mentioned by name in the book of Daniel—Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, and Darius. Although kings may simply be identified by name at times, designations for title (or function), geographic domain, subjects, lineage, etc. are also used. The most common form of identification is a two-part designation including name and title; e.g., "Nebuchadnezzar the king" (Dan 3:1). Of the forty-nine name references to kings in the book, twenty-seven of them (55%) use the two-part form. The next most frequent form is the one-part form using only the name of the king which occurs sixteen times (33%). A king is designated by more than two elements only six times (12%) in the book and five of these occurrences use three-part designations.

¹⁰Tremper Longman, III, *Daniel*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), p. 220.

Twice Nebuchadnezzar is referred to with a three-part designation. First, in Daniel 1:1 he is identified as “Nebuchadnezzar [name] king [title] of Babylon [geographic domain].” Although he is identified with both title and geographic domain in this verse, historically the use is proleptic since his father, Nabopolassar, actually sat on the throne of Babylon at this time.¹¹ The second occurrence is found in Daniel 5:11 in the queen mother’s address to Belshazzar. She identifies him as “the king [title] Nebuchadnezzar [name] thy father [relationship], the king [title] I say, thy father [relationship].” The number of elements and repetition in this occurrence were most likely for the benefit of Belshazzar more than for the reader.

Once Cyrus is referred to with a three-part designation (Daniel 10:1)—“Cyrus [name] king [title] of Persia [geographic domain].” The remaining two occurrences are used of Belshazzar.¹² First, in Daniel 5:30 with the record of his death he is called “Belshazzar [name] the king [title] of the Chaldeans [subjects].” Then in the introductory formula in Daniel 7:1, he is identified as “Belshazzar [name] king [title] of Babylon [geographic domain].”

Only once in the entire book is a king designated with more than three elements. That occurrence is found in the introductory formula of Daniel 9. First, the king is identified by *name*—“Darius.” Second, he is identified by *descent*—“the son of Ahasuerus.” Third, he is identified by *ethnicity*—“from the seed of the Medes.” Fourth, he is identified by *title*¹³ though somewhat indirectly—“who was made king.”¹⁴ His position as king (*melek*, מֶלֶךְ) appears to be reinforced by the use of the verb *mālak* (מָלַךְ) in verse 2a—“of his reign.” Fifth, he is designated as to his *subjects*—“over the kingdom of the Chaldeans.”¹⁵ The

¹¹This may also be a reference to Nebuchadnezzar’s co-regency with his father.

¹²The use of a three-part identification is rhetorically significant in light of the critic’s continued questioning of Belshazzar’s status as “king” of Babylon.

¹³The reference in this case is verbal (“was made king”) and not nominal (“[the] king”).

¹⁴Although the verb מָלַךְ (‘to make king’) is followed by the preposition עַל (‘over’) forty times in the OT, this is the only occurrence where the verb is passive. Two popular explanations are given to the passive verb. Seow states, “He ‘has been made king,’ the passive verb here being a circumlocution for divine agency; the implication is that Darius has been made king by divine action. The Babylonian Empire is finished and history moves on by the will of God” (C. L. Seow, *Daniel*, Apollos Westminster Bible Companion, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2003], p. 138). Montgomery summarizes the evidence in this manner—“The passive had been explained from the alleged institution by Cyrus of a viceroy, Darius-Astyages-Gobryas, in Babylonia” (James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1972], p. 359).

¹⁵It is noteworthy that this element specifies not only the ethnicity of his

designation of Darius in the introduction to this prophecy involves a total of five elements.

This extended designation is significant for several reasons. First, it identifies the king both by name ("Darius") and by title/function ("was made king over"; "his reign"). Although Darius' identification is the subject of much study and dialogue, his title and function are not. Second, it emphasizes that he is of non-Babylonian descent. Unlike all the other Babylonian rulers since Nebuchadnezzar's death, Darius is the "son of Ahasuerus." He is "from the seed of the Medes" and not a Chaldean by birth. A new dynasty has begun. Third, it reveals that the Babylonian empire founded by Nabopolassar and established by Nebuchadnezzar has come to an end—"who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans." Darius does not simply reign over ethnic Chaldean subjects, but he reigns over ethnic Chaldean subjects because he rules their kingdom.

This extended designation serves two rhetorical purposes. First, it emphasizes the fact that a transition has occurred. The Babylonian Empire of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar has entered the realm of history and the Medo-Persian Empire of Cyrus now rules the contemporary world. Daniel and the other Judean captives live in a new world. Second, it helps to focus the reader's attention on this passage. Not only has a transition taken place, but the extended introductory formula causes the reader to slow his pace and invites his focused attention on what follows. In essence it serves as a red flag to signal the reader that something significant is occurring and thus careful reading is in order.

Chronological Reference

The second feature that makes this introductory formula stand out is the repeated chronological reference—"In the first year of Darius...in the first year of his reign." This repeated chronological reference is unique to the entire book of Daniel and not just to the prophetic section (chaps. 7–12). The repetition not only marks the boundaries of the formula but also emphasizes the chronological element. As with the extended designation of the king, the rhetorical purpose of this repetition appears to emphasize the transition that has just occurred. It is the "first year" of the kingdom of Medo-Persia and things have changed. It is also used to focus the reader's attention to a closer reading of this passage. Daniel has raised a second red flag to signal the reader to slow his pace and read closely.

subjects, but also includes reference to their "kingdom."

Summary

While all the major prophetic chapters of Daniel are introduced by an historical formula, the introduction of Daniel 9 is unique. The basic ingredients of each introduction include the year of the king's reign followed by the name of the king. The prophecy of Daniel 8 has the only introduction limited to the basic ingredients—"In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar." The introductions of Daniel 7 and 10–12 contain the basic ingredients plus an indication of the geographic domain of the king. In Daniel 7:1 the reader is informed that Belshazzar is "king of Babylon." In Daniel 10:1 the reader is informed that Cyrus is "king of Persia." Yet even with these expansions both introductions amount to no more than five words in the Hebrew text contained in one prepositional phrase. The introduction of Daniel 9 like the others contains the basic ingredients—the year of reign ("In the first year") and the name of the king ("Darius"). However, unlike the other introductions chapter 9 contains four expansions. Darius is further described as to his *lineage* ("the son of Ahasuerus"), *ethnicity* ("of the seed of the Medes"), *title or function* ("was made king"), and *geographic domain* ("over the realm of the Chaldeans"). This introduction is composed of twelve words in the Hebrew text contained in two prepositional phrases and a modifying relative clause (רַשָּׁאִי). The reader is forced to slow his pace and focus on the content of this chapter from its very beginning.

In addition to this unique expanded formula designating the king, Daniel repeats the chronological reference of the introduction. He uses the repeated reference to form an *inclusio* marking the boundaries of the introduction. This repetition is not only unique to the prophetic chapters of the book but also to the historical chapters. It is as if Daniel is raising a second red flag to warn the reader to slow his pace, to look carefully, and to focus on the story and message to follow in the opening of chapter 9. The design of the introduction to Daniel 9 is not simply to supply the reader with a detailed description of the setting but to signal the reader to proceed slowly and carefully. This chapter deserves a careful reading from its very beginning.

THE OCCASIONING EVENT (9:2b–3)

Unlike the other prophetic revelations in Daniel, the prophecy of Daniel 9 is preceded by an occasioning event. While the other three major prophetic sections of the book move directly¹⁶ from the

¹⁶Dan 7:1 reads, "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed"; Dan 8:1, "In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel"; and Dan 10:1, "In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, . . . and he

introductory historical reference to the revelatory “dream and visions” (7:1), “vision” (8:1), or “message” (10:1), the introduction of Daniel 9 uses an occasioning event to transition from the introductory formula to the reception of the prophecy.¹⁷ The occasion that leads to the prophetic revelation of Daniel 9:24–27 is the insight that Daniel gained by his study of Jeremiah’s prophecy (v. 2b) and Daniel’s response to that insight with prayer (v. 3). This occasioning event in chapter 9 raises a third red flag to signal the reader to give close attention to what is being written from the very beginning of the chapter.

Personal Insight

The first emphasis of the occasioning event is the personal nature of the event. Daniel reinforces the personal nature of his insight by repeated reference to himself (v. 2b). He does this by means of a syntactic string composed of the independent pronoun *I* followed by the proper noun *Daniel* and a first person verb *understood*.¹⁸ This personal emphasis carries over into his preparation for prayer (v. 3)—“Then *I* gave *my* face unto *my* Lord God.” Daniel is recounting his own experience and not acting as a mediator for someone else.

The occasioning event itself is simply stated as “I understood” (בִּינְתִּי). The verb “understood” (בִּין) basically refers to insight or understanding gained by observation. Although this verb is part of the basic Hebrew vocabulary for attaining knowledge, Schmid observes that “in the vision narratives of Dan, *bin* becomes a technical term for understanding of visions and auditions.”¹⁹ However, that is not the only connotation attached to this word in Daniel. The verb is used twice in chapter 1, once to describe the education of the Hebrew youth up to that point of their lives (v. 4) and once of Daniel’s unique ability to

understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.”

¹⁷Seow identifies three ways Daniel 9 is set off from the rest of the Book of Daniel: “In the first place, its point of departure is neither a direct encounter of a threat posed by an oppressive regime (as in chaps. 1, 3, 6) nor a dream or vision by one of the principal characters in the book (as in chaps. 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 10–12). Rather, the story begins with reflections on what is ‘in the books,’ a reference to certain prophecies of the prophet Jeremiah” (*Daniel*, pp. 135–36).

¹⁸The syntactical string: independent pronoun + proper noun + 1cs verb occurs only three times in Daniel. Besides the reference in Dan 9:2, it is found in Dan 8:27: “And *I Daniel I fainted*, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king’s business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.” Also in Dan 10:2, “In those days *I Daniel I was mourning* three full weeks” (italics supplied). Each occurrence outside of chapter 9 involves Daniel’s emotional and physical reaction to prophetic revelation.

¹⁹*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. “בִּין *bin* to understand,” by H. H. Schmid, 1:232 [hereafter cited as *TLOT*].

understand “all visions and dreams” (v. 17). In chapter 9 the verb is used three times (vv. 22, 23, 23) of Daniel understanding the prophetic vision²⁰ and once (v. 2) of his understanding of what Jeremiah had written.

It has been pointed out by several commentators that the transition from Babylonian to Medo-Persian rule would have impelled Daniel to search Jeremiah concerning the timing of the end of the 70 year’s captivity. Consider Lucas’ comment that “the repetition here of the date ‘in the first year of his reign’ is no doubt intended to underline the fact that this was an appropriate time for Jewish exiles to take note of Jeremiah’s words that ‘when Babylon’s seventy years are complete’ (Jer. 29:10) God would return the exiles to their land.”²¹ Seow also notes the significance of the repeated date.

The prophet Jeremiah had predicted that the Babylonians would be defeated and replaced by “the kings of the Medes...” (Jer. 51:28). For the narrator of Daniel, that prophecy has apparently come true with this Darius.... So it is appropriate at the beginning of the reign of Darius the Mede to reflect on the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning Jerusalem’s “devastation” (Dan. 9:2)—the same word used by Jeremiah in his prophecy concerning the seventy years of exile (Jer. 25:11).²²

Daniel did not miss the significance of the transition to the kingdom of Darius and the Medo-Persians or of the close of the seventy years of captivity to Babylon. It was an appropriate time for Daniel to be expectantly searching for understanding of the full significance of this time period.

The object of Daniel’s understanding is described by a number of terms. First, he indicates the source of his understanding was “in the scrolls,” a specific, definite set of scrolls. Second, he specifies the revelatory nature of the scrolls (“which was [revealed] in the word of YHWH”): Daniel was reading from the sacred canon that he possessed. Third, this revelation came through “Jeremiah the prophet,” a contemporary of Daniel’s early ministry. Fourth, the material dealt with “the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem”: it must have been self-evident to Daniel, having spent the majority of his life in the captivity in Babylon and now of Medo-Persia, that he had been living during “the desolations of Jerusalem” that was nearing its conclusion.

²⁰The verb also is found in 8:17 where Gabriel is instructed to “make this man to understand the vision.”

²¹Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 235.

²²Seow, *Daniel*, p. 138.

Fifth, the number of years involved was “seventy years,” a numerical reference immediately following a reference to chronological termination (“completion”²³) that must have stirred hope in Daniel, who had been a part of the first exile in 605 B.C. and who had spent almost seventy years in captivity.

Chronological Reference

A second emphasis found in the occasioning event is the chronological reference: “the number of the years.” It is noteworthy that the references to the number of years (“the number of years...seventy years”) form an *inclusio* to this section dealing with Daniel's insight. The chronological *inclusio* of the introductory formula, “In the first year” (vv. 1a and 2a), is paralleled by the chronological *inclusio* of the occasioning event. The *inclusio* in both instances emphasizes the chronological element itself.²⁴ The focus of Daniel's insight during this occasioning event is the length of the Babylonian captivity, particularly as it comes to a conclusion.

Preparation for Prayer

Following Daniel's insight, he turns to God in prayer—“I gave my face to my Lord God” (v. 3)²⁵—with the purpose of “seeking” (שָׁקַד).²⁶ When Daniel “gave his face” he may have been referring to “the practice of facing Jerusalem when one prays (see 6:10, but also 1 Kgs 8:35)”²⁷ or simply stating his determination to reach God in prayer. The apparent means by which this “seeking” was to be accomplished is further clarified as “prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.” The terms “prayer and supplication” refer to the nature of Daniel's seeking. “Prayer” (תַּפִּלָּה) basically refers to “petition, with a

²³The Hebrew term is שָׁקַד, for which “temporally, this vb. depicts the completion of a particular period of time” (*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, s.v. “שָׁקַד,” by M. V. Van Pelt and W. C. Kaiser, 2:939 [hereafter cited as *NIDOTTE*]).

²⁴For the use of *inclusio* to mark emphasis see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech in the Bible* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), p. 245; Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, JSOTSup, no. 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), p. 285, n. 446; and Luis Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, Subsidia Biblica 11 (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988), p. 78.

²⁵The phrase “to give ones face to” is used twice by Solomon in the dedicatory prayer of 1 Kings 8:46 and 50; however, neither use refers to prayer.

²⁶This verb may serve as an intensifying element in prayers (*NIDOTTE*, s.v., “Prayer,” by P. A. Verhoef, 5:1061).

²⁷Seow, *Daniel*, p. 140.

strong element of intercession...similar to a plea for mercy.”²⁸ “Supplication” (תַּחֲנוּנִים) is derived from the verbal root *hānan* (נָנַן) and refers to the demonstration of favor, graciousness, or generosity. This prayer which Daniel was offering up to God was not part of his normal routine or a formulaic prayer. Daniel was making a special, personal appeal to his God seeking his favor.

The term “fasting” indicates the exercise of self-denial particularly from food in order to pursue spiritual purposes. It is a typical expression associated with conviction of sin, supplication for deliverance, mourning for death, etc. The fact that Daniel was involved in fasting indicates that “he had been preparing himself before coming.”²⁹ Daniel did not rush into God’s presence on this occasion; instead, he spent time preparing for his prayer with God.

The terms “sackcloth and ashes” refer to the symbolic accompaniments of Daniel’s seeking. Wood observes that “sackcloth and ashes” reflect “the degree of his burden.”³⁰ At a foundational level these terms are associated with death and grieving. They thus provide a necessary picture of repentance which requires a genuine view of “human mortality and consequently of the humility required of human beings before their Creator and Judge.”³¹ Daniel’s prayer-petition for divine mercy and favor was no empty formulaic prayer. His prayer was genuine, as evidenced by grief as if from the edge of the grave.³²

The fivefold expansion on the nature of Daniel’s prayer serves to emphasize the genuine sincerity of Daniel’s prayer. Not only did Daniel respond to his insight from God’s Word in prayer, but that response was a heart-driven petition seeking mercy from God from a position of total humility.

Summary

The structure of the occasioning event accomplishes multiple functions in the formulating of this chapter. First, it serves to transition between the introductory formula in verses 1–2a and what follows. Second, it introduces Daniel’s prayer contained in verses 4–19. Finally, it emphasizes the focus of Daniel’s insight—the number of

²⁸*NIDOTTE*, s.v. “Prayer,” 5:1061.

²⁹Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), p. 234.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, s.v., “Ashes,” p. 50.

³²Daniel’s reaction stands in sharp contrast to that of the nation of Israel who, in spite of all their symptoms, would not even admit their illness (see the comments on verse 13).

years concerning which Jeremiah had prophesied.

The content of the occasioning event serves to direct the reader's attention to a number of details: (1) it informs the reader of the personal nature of Daniel's insight and prayer; (2) it draws attention to the source of Daniel's insight—God's revelation through the prophet Jeremiah; (3) it draws attention to the chronological element involving the close of the captivity; and finally, (4) it reflects on the character of Daniel with the details of Daniel's preparation for prayer: Daniel approaches this prayer with personal preparation and genuine humility.

DANIEL'S PRAYER (9:4–19)

If for no other reason than its length, Daniel's prayer demands our attention. The prayer proper makes up almost sixty percent of the chapter and is four times longer than the prophetic portion of the chapter.³³ His prayer is often compared to confessions by Ezra and Nehemiah. Longman claims that "Towner is right to identify the following prayer as a 'prose prayer of penitence' and to cite its close connections with prayers found in Ezra 9:6–15; Nehemiah 1:5–11 and 9:6–37. They are 'all penitential in character and all containing elements of ascription, confession, and petition.'"³⁴ The prayer contains two parts: a very brief narrative serving as an introduction (v. 4a) and an extended, highly structured confession (vv. 4b–14).

NARRATIVE INTRODUCTION (9:4a)

The prayer's introduction continues the narrative of verse 3 and transitions from preparation for prayer to the prayer itself. It is pointed and concise, and moves the reader directly into Daniel's prayer. Although this narrative introduction is grammatically contained in three independent clauses, lexical similarity would argue that they should be taken as a threefold hendiadys. That is, Daniel prayed (פָּלַל, Hithpael) orally (אָמַר) making confession (יָדָה, Hithpael). Although the verb *pālal* (פָּלַל) basically means to intervene or arbitrate, it regularly occurs in the Hithpael stem as a general word for prayer.³⁵ The verb *yādah* (יָדָה), while basically meaning to praise or acknowledge, in the

³³Calculations are based on the number of verses involved. The prayer contains sixteen verses and the prophecy four verses.

³⁴Longman, *Daniel*, p. 223.

³⁵Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 813. E. Gerstenberger notes, "The vast majority of occurrences of the root comprise the hithpael of the verb" (*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, s.v. "פָּלַל pl," 11:568 [hereafter cited as *TDOT*]).

Hithpael stem regularly refers to acknowledging and confessing sin.³⁶ Daniel's use of the Hithpael stem of both verbs in this narrative introduction indicate that Daniel's insight from God's Word drove him to make intense confession before his God.

Daniel's prayer was directed to "YHWH my God." The use of the divine name YHWH not only ties Daniel's prayer back to the occasioning event but also points ahead to the content of the prayer. In the occasioning event, YHWH is the God of revelation who had revealed to Jeremiah the time frame for the completion of Jerusalem's desolations (v. 2). In the prayer, Daniel uses the divine name YHWH five times in making confession (vv. 8, 10, 13, 14, 14).³⁷

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (9:4b–14)

Daniel's prayer is composed of two parts. He begins with a prayer of confession (vv. 4b–14) and concludes with an appeal for mercy (vv. 15–19). Both sections are introduced by extended vocative addresses with explicit covenant references and are highly rhetorically structured. Daniel's prayer of confession is structured in two parts: invocation (v. 4b) and corporate confession of sin (vv. 5–14). The corporate confession contains two movements: first, the causes (vv. 5–11a) and second, the effects (vv. 11b–14).

Invocation: Praise of YHWH (9:4b)

The tone of Daniel's prayer is evident from his very first word. Daniel begins his prayer with a rare interjection³⁸ indicating "an urgent appeal."³⁹ Miller suggests that this is but one element of the prayer indicating its fervency.⁴⁰ It is almost as if the preparation that Daniel made in verse 3 is now bursting forth like a flood.

Daniel directs his address to "the Lord my God" (לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי).⁴¹

³⁶NIDOTTE, s.v. "יָדָה," by Leslie C. Allen, 2:405–8. The term is used both with sin offerings (Lev 5:5) and the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:21).

³⁷All occurrences of YHWH in Daniel are found in chapter 9—in addition to those occurrences in the prayer the name is also found in vv. 2, 4, and 20.

³⁸Mandelkern lists only 13 occurrences: Gen 50:17; Exod 32:31, 31; 2 Kgs 20:3; Pss 116:4, 16; 118:25; Dan 9:4; Neh 1:5, 11; Isa 38:3; Jonah 1:14; 2:2 (Solomon Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae Atque Chaldaicae* [F. Margolin, 1925], p. 130).

³⁹Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naude, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Richard Hess (Sheffield: Sheffield, 2000), p. 335.

⁴⁰Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1994), p. 243.

⁴¹This is the only occurrence of the name "Lord the God" (לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי) in the OT.

Outside of this prayer Daniel uses the name “Lord” (יְיָ) only in 1:2 and 9:3 and the name “God” (אֱלֹהִים) only in 11:36.⁴² Lucas points out that the use of “Lord” (יְיָ) is common when pleading with God.⁴³ Although the vast majority of this prayer is corporate in nature, Daniel's personal involvement is also evident (cf. “my God” vv. 4, 18, 20, 20).

Daniel begins his prayer by addressing God as both transcendent and immanent, as powerful and personal. He acknowledges God's greatness because it will take a great God to accomplish what Daniel is about to request. He appeals to God's personality because it will take a personal God to listen to the confession of multiple offenses and to react with mercy and grace. Daniel describes the God to whom he directed his confession in three ways. The first two attributes (greatness and fear) reflect God's transcendence and power. The third attribute (keeping covenant and lovingkindness) reflects God's immanence and personality.

The Divine Attributes

Daniel initially describes God as “great” (גָּדוֹל), a term that has three distinct functions in reference to God in the OT. First, it “occurs primarily in the hymnic texts of the Zion traditions” (e.g., Pss 48:2; 77:14; 95:3; 96:4; 99:2; 135:5).⁴⁴ Thus “great” is part of praising God. Second, it is found in “confessional statements” (e.g., Exod 18:11; 2 Sam 7:22; 2 Chr 2:4).⁴⁵ Thus “great” is part of confession. Third, it is used of “Yahweh's historical power experienced and expressed in Israel's faith.”⁴⁶ As such it “speaks of his incomparable activeness and efficaciousness in history.”⁴⁷ “Great” is an attribute referring to God both in his person and in his dealings. Daniel's choice of this term may reflect all three major OT functions of “great” in reference to God—praise, confession, and description. However, in the context of chapter 9 it appears that Daniel's choice primarily reflects the third function of the description. Daniel is appealing to the God who interacts directly

The name does occur in Ps 86:15 without the article (אֱלֹהֵינוּ).

⁴²The term יְיָ is found in 1:2; 9:3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 19 (3X) and the term אֱלֹהִים in 9:4; 11:36 (3X) (George Wigram, *The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970], pp. 24, 77).

⁴³Lucas, *Daniel*, p. 237.

⁴⁴*TLOT*, s.v. “גָּדוֹל *gadol* great,” by Ernst Jenni, 1:305.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*TDOT*, s.v. “גָּדוֹל *gadhāl*,” by R. Mosis, 2:406.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 2:411.

in history to effect his own will. In this case Daniel is appealing to the great God who can and does answer prayer.

Daniel also describes God as “one to be feared” (הַמְּרֹאָהוּת). Daniel uses the Niphal participial form of the verb “fear” (יָרָא), which is almost exclusively used of God. This attribute of God carries two significances for Daniel’s confession. First, Daniel makes confession to the God who alone is worthy of worship: true worship of the God “to be feared” includes obedience to his decrees and commandments, appropriate moral conduct, and a faith response to the redemptive acts of God.⁴⁸ God was deserving of covenant faithfulness on Israel’s part. Second, Daniel makes confession for Israel’s benefit: when this term is applied to God’s deeds it “usually refers to occurrences that benefit Israel.”⁴⁹ Daniel’s description of God was ultimately designed to engage God to activity on Israel’s behalf.

Finally, God is the one who “keeps the covenant and lovingkindness” (שָׁמַר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֶסֶד). The phrase “covenant and lovingkindness” occurs only seven times in the OT.⁵⁰ It is always used with the verb “keep” (שָׁמַר) and always has God as the subject.

The verb *šamar* (שָׁמַר) in covenant contexts carries the joined aspects of responsibility and accountability. The concept of responsibility is evident in the root meaning “to pay careful attention to.” This concept is underscored when it is realized that one of the most frequent uses of this verb “is the admonition to be careful and diligent in respect to religious and spiritual responsibilities.”⁵¹ The concept of accountability is evidence in the establishment of the Abrahamic covenant.⁵² It is noteworthy that in six of the seven occurrences of this phrase the participial form of the verb, which often indicates “an office that is bestowed,”⁵³ is used. It is almost as if God were being identified by title as the “Keeper of the Covenant.” God not only dictated the terms of the covenant but also accepts responsibility and accountability for the enforcement of the covenant.

The object of God’s keeping activity is “the covenant and the lovingkindness.” The use of these two nouns together seems to include both explicit and implicit aspects of the covenant relationship. The

⁴⁸NIDOTTE, s.v. “יָרָא,” by M. V. Van Pelt and W. C. Kaiser, Jr., 2:530.

⁴⁹TLOT, s.v. “יָרָא” to fear,” by H. P. Stahli, 2:572.

⁵⁰See Deut 7:9, 12; 1 Kgs 8:23; Dan 9:4; Neh 1:5; 9:32; and 2 Chr 6:14.

⁵¹NIDOTTE, s.v. “שָׁמַר,” by Keith N. Schoville, 4:183.

⁵²For example, consider Genesis 17:2; 22:16–17 (“By Myself I have sworn”) and Hebrews 6:13 (“For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself”).

⁵³TLOT, s.v. “שָׁמַר” *smr* to watch, guard, keep,” by G. Sauer, 3:1381.

term “the covenant” (הַבְּרִיתָ) is an explicit reference to the covenant between God and Israel⁵⁴ that had been given to Israel's leaders and recorded for Israel's future generations. It detailed the terms by which Israel could maintain her relationship with God and also provided positive and negative reinforcement (blessings and curses) for obedience and disobedience.

The term “the lovingkindness” (רַחֲמֵי) is an implicit reference to conduct beyond the requirements of the covenant. “Lovingkindness” not only acts within the letter of the covenant but also goes beyond the letter of the covenant to provide graceful and merciful treatment in line with the spirit of the covenant. Clark concludes that “lovingkindness” (רַחֲמֵי) is “a beneficent action performed, in the context of a deep and enduring commitment between two persons or parties, by one who is able to render assistance to the needy party who in the circumstances is unable to help him- or herself.”⁵⁵ God's lovingkindness counteracts God's wrath, and, as such, is often “the basis or motive for petition or approach to God. Sinners seek forgiveness on the basis of God's *hesed*.”⁵⁶ Daniel is appealing to the God whose heart may be touched by Israel's failures and plight through prayer.

Daniel is directing his prayer of confession to God for he alone has assumed responsibility and accountability for the enforcement of the terms of the covenant. He alone punishes covenant infractions and restores covenant relationships. He alone “keeps” lovingkindness which allows not only for the approach to petition for forgiveness and restoration but also for the experience of God's pardon and renewal of covenant relationship. As Leon Wood observes,

Both words ‘covenant’ and ‘steadfast love’ have the article. If this were true only of ‘covenant,’ one would think specifically of the Mosaic covenant. Since it is true also of ‘steadfast love,’ however, it is better to think of Daniel's using both words as appellative nouns, employed in a generic sense....The idea is that God keeps *all* covenants He makes and then *always* extends steadfast love to man in his frailty and inability to live up to them....God not only graciously makes covenant with man, but also extends necessary love toward man as man finds himself falling short of meeting his responsibilities in the covenant.⁵⁷

⁵⁴The use of “the covenant” in this context is intended to be generic; that is, the covenant concept which took various forms (e.g., Abrahamic, Davidic, etc.).

⁵⁵Gordon R. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup, no. 157 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1993), p. 267.

⁵⁶*NIDOTTE*, s.v. “חֶסֶד,” by Baer and Gordon, 2:216.

⁵⁷Wood, *Daniel*, p. 235.

Summary

As Daniel turns to God in prayer the flood gates of his heart burst forth. The insight he has attained from his study of Jeremiah's writings (v. 2b) and the preparations of his heart and life (v. 3) have become too much to contain. Daniel personally approaches God ("O Lord *my* God") praising his transcendent and immanent nature, acknowledging God's power and personality in his approach to God in prayer. The God to whom Daniel makes his confession and appeal is a "great" God able to intervene in the course of history and reverse Israel's plight. He is also a God "to be feared" and must be approached not only reverentially but also with assurance he will act beneficially toward Israel. Finally he is a God who institutes and enforces "covenant and lovingkindness." He is a God of relationship and tenderness. He is a God who desires Israel's approach and who will intervene when that approach is interrupted by covenant unfaithfulness.

Corporate Confession of Sin (9:5–14)

Daniel's confession of sin opens with an intricate account of the causes for Israel's present exile (vv. 5–11a) and moves to the effects to which those causes led (vv. 11b–14). The two sections are distinguished grammatically on the verbal level. The first movement (causes) is structured on perfect verbs and verbless clauses. The second movement (effects) is structured on jussive verbs joined by *waw* consecutives. Both sections appear to be arranged in chiasmic patterns.

First Movement: Causes (9:5–11a)

The first movement of this section enumerates the causes that make Daniel's confession necessary. Daniel's confession of Israel's corporate sinfulness is structured chiasmically.⁵⁸ The section opens (A, v. 5) and closes (A', v. 11a) with sin lists. The second (B, v. 6) and eighth (B', v. 10) elements of the chiasm involve confession of Israel's failure to "listen" to God and his messengers. These outside elements of the chiasm detail Israel's actions which caused her to experience her present state of exile. While all the outer elements of the chiasm (A, B...B', A') contain dynamic ideas,⁵⁹ the inner elements (C, D, E, D', C') take the form of verbless clauses indicating a state of existence or condition. The third (C, v. 7a) and seventh (C', v.9) elements of the chiasm reflect on God's character as righteous, compassionate, and

⁵⁸See appendix 1 at the end of this article.

⁵⁹The main clauses of all the outside elements of the chiasm contain perfect state, fientive verbs.

forgiving. The fourth (D, v. 7b) and sixth (D', v. 8b) elements, by contrast, both reflect on Israel's character as "shameful." The fifth element (E, v. 8a) which is found at the core (and thus the focal point) of the structure is a vocative of address—"O YHWH!"

The Corporate Nature of the Prayer

The corporate nature of Daniel's confession cannot be missed. The main finite verbs (vv. 5, 6, 10, 11) of this section all have first person plural subjects—"we." The verbless clauses use first person plural pronominal elements ("us") to maintain the corporate focus. Pronominal references and modification also point out the corporate nature of Daniel's confession.⁶⁰ The reader's search for the antecedents of these first person plural verbal and pronominal references reveals that they are explicit references to the nation of Israel. In verse 7 Daniel specifically mentions "the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to all Israel." Again in verse 11 he explicitly mentions "all Israel." Daniel's confession is not for his own sins, but for the sins of the nation. This is a corporate confession—the nation had sinned.

The Sin Lists

The movement of confession begins and ends with sin lists (A, A', vv. 5, 11a). Daniel enumerates Israel's sins using perfect verbs which describe real, complete, past actions. His confession is based in reality and truth; not in exaggeration or false piety.

Although the underlying history of Israel's sinfulness is woven throughout this account, Daniel begins and ends this structure by enumerating six details of those sins. The first count that Daniel enumerates in Israel's self-indictment is that "we have sinned" (v. 5a). The term "sinned" (חָטָא) is one of the most generic OT terms for sin and refers to the full sphere of sinfulness—the act and/or guilt and/or punishment of sin. It signifies both intentional and unintentional sins. The literal meaning of the verb is to "miss a target," a definition supported by Judges 20:16: "They all hurled stones and hit precisely, without missing." The transition from the basic literal sense to the figurative "sense of a perverted life-style"⁶¹ cannot be missed. Israel had at the most generic level committed acts of sin within its covenant relationship with God; such acts could only result in guilt and punishment.

The second count in Israel's self-indictment is that "we have done wrong" (v. 5b). The basic meaning of the verb "done wrong" (עָוָה) is "to bend, curve, turn aside, twist." This term for sin "has

⁶⁰For example, vv. 6, 8—"our king, our princes, and our fathers"; v. 9—"our God"; v. 10—"before us."

⁶¹TLOT, s.v. חָטָא *hr'* to miss," by R. Knierim, 1:407.

predominantly religious and ethical function...and its pl. form sometimes serves as a summary word for all sins against God.”⁶² The nominal form of this verb “primarily designates the character of an action rather than act itself. It highlights a deviation or twisting of a standard (with full knowledge of its significance).”⁶³ Israel’s actions were characterized by a turning from God’s covenant path. While God had described in the covenant actions by which Israel might maintain her relationship with God, Israel had turned from God’s directives to follow her own path right out of God’s will.

The third count in Israel’s self-indictment is that “we have acted wickedly” (חָרַשְׁעֵנוּ, v. 5c). This term denotes the idea of wickedness in the spheres of thoughts, words, and deeds. However, it primarily focuses on “the inner nature of the guilty person when evil had become a habitual feature of one’s disposition and actions.”⁶⁴ As such the term occurs in judicial pronouncements of guilt and in prayers of confession seeking relief from such guilt. Israel’s actions brought both an internal consciousness of guilt and an external reality of judicial guilt before the covenant keeping God. Consequently, Daniel’s confession was appropriate and God’s forgiveness was necessary.

The fourth count in Israel’s self-indictment is that “we have rebelled” (וּמָרְדָנוּ, v. 5d). While “rebellion” seems to be a common activity in the OT, this verb, in fact, occurs only twenty-five times, frequently within the context of covenant relationships. Daniel more fully explains this rebellion as “turning aside from your commandments and from your judgments” (וּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ וּמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ). The verb “turn aside” (סוּר) is most often used of “the moral/spiritual direction someone is taking.”⁶⁵ Israel’s rebellion took the form of abandonment of God’s commandments and judgments. Israel chose its own paths to follow—a path that led in direct defiance of God.

The fifth count in Israel’s self-indictment is that “all Israel has transgressed your instructions” (עָבְרוּ אֶת־הוֹרֹתֶיךָ, v. 11a). Although the verb “transgressed” (עָבַר) has the basic meaning of moving physically from point “a” to point “b,” it also has definite covenantal significance. It is used of both entry into (i.e., the passing between the pieces of a dismembered animal) and abandonment of a covenant relationship. The nation of Israel bore responsibility for violating the covenant by turning aside from her covenant relationship with God.

The sixth and final count in Israel’s self-indictment is that “they

⁶²NIDOTTE, s.v. “חָשָׂא,” by Alex Luc, 2:88.

⁶³NIDOTTE, s.v. “רָשַׁע,” by Eugene Carpenter and Michael A. Grisanti, 3:1203–4.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵NIDOTTE, s.v. “סוּר,” by J. A. Thompson and Elmer A. Martens, 3:238.

turned aside not hearkening to your voice” (וְסוּר לְבַלְתִּי שְׁמוֹעַ בְּקוֹלְךָ) (v. 11b). The verb סוּר basically refers to physical movement—turning aside from a course of direction. In the ethical or religious sphere “to turn from the way God commanded is to invite a curse (Deut 11:28) and worse (Jer 17:13).”⁶⁶ In this context, the turning aside refers to an abandonment of God’s word: Israel listened to God’s word and then went down their own path anyway.

Failure to “Listen”

The sin lists are set apart from the core of the structure by statements that Israel “did not listen” (B, B’, vv. 6, 10).⁶⁷ Admittedly, the OT vocabulary for “listening” is relatively sparse⁶⁸ and שָׁמַע is the most common and predominant term in that vocabulary. However, it cannot be overlooked that this is the term which introduces the foundational statement of Israel’s faith, the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4 and thus carries special significance.

Although the main clause of each statement is identical (וְלֹא שָׁמַעְנוּ), the object to which they did not listen is distinct in each element. In verse 6 Israel did not listen to the attempt of God’s “servants, the prophets” to communicate. In this instance Daniel deals with the identity of the messengers, their authority, and their recipients. The messengers are identified not only as “your [i.e., God’s] servants” but also as “prophets.” They were subordinate spokesmen for God. The prophets did not originate their message. They spoke the message that God had given to them. Second, Israel did not listen even when the prophets spoke in God’s own name (בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה). Third, they did not listen even when God’s messengers spoke directly, not only to Israel’s leadership (kings, princes, and fathers), but also to the common people (all the people of the land). They did not listen even though the messengers stood directly and immediately before them.

In verse 10 the object that they did not listen to was “the voice of YHWH our God.” In this instance Daniel deals with the purpose, content, and means involved. The purpose of God’s attempted communication was to get Israel “to walk” in accord with his communication. God was seeking Israel’s obedience. God was seeking a change of direction on Israel’s part and a return to the path that God had laid out before them in the covenant. The content of his communication is identified as “his instructions” (בְּתוֹרָתוֹ). This is the first of only four

⁶⁶Ibid, 3:239.

⁶⁷Another way of viewing this structure is that the failure to listen is part of the sin lists—ending one and beginning the other.

⁶⁸NIDOTTE (5:120) lists only three Hebrew roots that carry the idea of listening—שָׁמַע (forty-one times), קָשַׁע (forty-six times), and שָׁמַע (1,159 times).

occurrences of the noun “instructions, law” (תּוֹרָה) in the book of Daniel, all of which are found in Daniel’s prayer of corporate confession (vv. 10, 11, 11, 13). It appears that the last two references (vv. 11b, 13) refer specifically to the law proper since they are described as the “law of Moses.” The first two (vv. 10, 11a) are described as coming “by the hand of his servant the prophets.” Since this phrase appears in the context of covenant violations and Mosaic identification, it appears that this “instruction” (תּוֹרָה) is to be understood as covenant content and to be given a legal connotation. Israel had broken and abandoned God’s law, the expression of his covenant will, and had thus ruptured their covenant relationship and made themselves liable to covenant correction. The means by which God communicated was “by the hand of his servants the prophets.” God had sent his word repeatedly to Israel by many, different messengers. They had placed the message from God directly and immediately before Israel (“before us,” לְפָנֵינוּ). In spite of the multitude of witnesses delivering God’s word and the unobstructed view they were given of God’s message, Israel did not hearken to the voice of God. Israel chose to walk in their own path in disobedience to God.

Evaluation of Character

Once the reader enters the core of this chiasmically structured confession, he notices that Daniel is no longer speaking of actions but of states or conditions. Israel’s sinful actions did not arise from a void. Israel’s sinful actions reflected their shameful character. On the other hand, Daniel’s appeal to God to act with mercy and favor are based on God’s righteous character.

God’s Character

In the first set of structural elements that make up this core, Daniel reflects on God’s character (C, C’, vv. 7a, 9b), describing God with three terms: he is righteous (v. 7a, תְּצַדִּיק), compassionate (v. 9a, תְּרַחֵם), and forgiving (v. 9a, תְּסַלַּח).

“Righteousness” (צִדִּיק) has both active and stative dimensions: God is the source and standard of right conduct and character. Righteousness also has theological dimensions: God is the standard by which Israel’s sin is judged. Finally, righteousness has forensic dimensions: God is the judge to whom appeal is made for forgiveness and cleansing. Daniel directs his confession to the righteous God, a God who was in no way liable for the covenant disruption Israel was experiencing. God had upheld his covenant responsibilities: “He had not been lax in warning, nor unclear in demands.”⁶⁹

⁶⁹Wood, *Daniel*, p. 237.

“Compassion” (רַחֲמִים) is the plural form of the Hebrew word for “womb” (רֶחֶם) which “carries with it a picture of the tender care bestowed on an infant when it is most vulnerable.”⁷⁰ As Lucas suggests the plural “probably expresses either the intensity of these qualities (so BDB), or the repeated expression of them.”⁷¹ Compassion includes several aspects, including an emotional response, a contrast to anger, and a willingness to “go the extra mile” in a relationship—God is “ready to forgive sin, to replace judgment with grace.”⁷² Daniel makes his confession to the tenderhearted God.

“Forgiving” (סָלַח) is an act belonging only to God. Every time the verb or nominal forms of this word are found in the OT, God is the subject. God’s forgiveness is all inclusive involving “the removal of sin and the restoration of communion between God and humanity.”⁷³ Consequently, “it depends solely on God’s love, mercy, and compassion towards the sinner...and on his readiness to initiate the processes of reconciliation and atonement. It requires, and usually goes hand in hand with, the confession of sin, repentance, restitution, and renewal.... It entails the nullification of guilt, the release of obligations, and the reduction or total relinquishment of punishment.”⁷⁴ Daniel prays to the God who is prone to forgive confessed sin.

Daniel directs his confession and appeal to God because it is of God’s nature and character to hear and accept confession and to answer prayer. Because of God’s righteousness Daniel is confident that God will not only condemn Israel’s sin but also forgive it. Because of God’s compassion Daniel knows that God is ready to hear his pray and respond positively to it. Because of God’s forgiveness Daniel knew that full and complete reversal of Israel’s plight would be granted. Daniel thus brought his appeal to God based on God’s nature: “Daniel’s appeal is ultimately based not on the people’s plight but on the reputation of God himself.”⁷⁵

Israel’s Character

The innermost parallel elements of the chiasmic structure describe Israel’s character (D, D’, vv. 7b, 8). The main clauses of each element are identical—“To us belongs shame of face” (לָנוּ בִשְׁמַת הַפָּנִים). The

⁷⁰NIDOTTE, s.v. “רחם,” by Mike Butterworth, 3:1093.

⁷¹Lucas, *Daniel*, p. 238. This comment also applies to “righteousness.”

⁷²NIDOTTE, s.v. “רחם,” 3:1094.

⁷³NIDOTTE, s.v. “סלח,” by J. P. J. Olivier, 3:260.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Longman, *Daniel*, p. 225.

phrase “shame of face” occurs five times in the OT.⁷⁶ The phrase apparently refers to shame that is so fresh and extreme as to be visually evident to anyone who looks upon their face.⁷⁷ The noun “shame” (בִּשְׁתוֹת) overwhelmingly “has to do with a negative condition or experience as a result of a relationship in which perceived codes of conduct, honor, position, or expectations are not fully met or are violated.”⁷⁸ Consequently, it is used to describe conduct or attitudes that are morally disgraceful and is particularly appropriate for describing covenant unfaithfulness. The use of “shame of face” with the *lamedh* of possession (לָנוּ, “to us”) indicates that Israel “owned” shame as their nature: Israel was characterized by a bent toward covenant unfaithfulness—by open shamefulness.

In verse 7 the antecedents are identified as “the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to all Israel, the near ones and the far ones in all the lands.”⁷⁹ The ones bearing “shame” involve all classes of Israel who by means of God’s judgment had been scattered throughout all nations. In this verse Israel finds herself “driven out” because she had acted treacherously (לְעַלְוֹת) toward God. To act treacherously involved infidelity to a relationship or a breach of trust—an appropriate term to describe covenant violators.

Israel’s unfaithfulness to God is acknowledged in three frank prayers of confession and supplication offered by representatives of the people: those of Hezekiah (2 Chron 29:6; 30:7), Nehemiah (Neh 1:8), and Daniel (Dan 9:7). All of these share two important features: the recognition that the calamity suffered by the people for their perfidious conduct was fully justified, and an appeal to the faithfulness of God to his promises (punishment for treachery; compassion in response to genuine repentance) as the ground for fresh hope.⁸⁰

In verse 8 the antecedents are more specifically identified as Israel’s “kings, princes, and fathers.” In this verse the cause is the “rebellion” of Israel’s leadership. As in verse 5b, “rebellion” (מִרְדָּת) summarizes Israel’s abandonment of God’s commandments and judgments. Perhaps the reference to the shame-bearers in both verses form a merism indicating that shame belonged to the nation of Israel totally, people and leaders. Throughout all levels of society Israel was the cause behind her

⁷⁶Jer 7:19; Dan 9:7, 8; Ezra 9:7; and 2 Chr 32:21. See also Ps 44:16.

⁷⁷Compare the NASB and ESV which translate the phrase—“open shame.”

⁷⁸*NIDOTTE*, s.v. “בִּשְׁתוֹת,” by Philip J. Nel, 1:622.

⁷⁹Consideration must be given to a possible reference to the two exiles of Israel, the “near” being a reference to Judah and the Babylonian exile and the “far” being a reference to Israel and the Assyrian exile.

⁸⁰*NIDOTTE*, s.v. “מִרְדָּת,” by Robin Wakely, 2:1024.

own dispersal into exile. They had no one to blame but themselves. Israel as a nation had acted treacherously toward God because of their inherent shameful nature. They were a nation of covenant violators at heart.

Structural Focus

The final, focal element of the chiasmic structure is the vocative of address—"O YHWH" (v. 8a). Not to be lost in this extensive confession is the one to whom Daniel is directing his prayer. Daniel is making confession to the personal God—the God of the covenant, YHWH. While Daniel's invocation to the prayer (v. 4b) did contain a vocative addressing God, this is the only vocative of address found in Daniel's confession of sin (vv. 5–14). Two observations may be made concerning this fact. First, it is entirely appropriate in a prayer of confession to find few vocatives addressing God. The subject of this confession is the nation of Israel. Daniel in his confession of Israel's sins provides a theological synopsis of Israel's history of covenant unfaithfulness. The causes of Israel's present exile were hers alone. The effect of the vocative in verse 8a is to anchor Daniel's confession in the ears of the God of the invocation (v. 4b). Second, while Daniel's confession of sin contains only one vocative (v. 8a), his appeal for mercy contains seven (vv. 15, 16, 18, 19 [4X]). Daniel not only begins the appeal section of his prayer with a vocative (v. 15) but also introduces each individual appeal with a pointed address to God. It is almost as if Daniel does not want God's attention to waver as he begs for God's merciful intervention.

Summary of Daniel 9:5–11a

In his confession Daniel wastes no time getting to the point. He begins and ends his confession with an indictment of Israel's covenant infractions (vv. 5, 6, 10, 11a). There was no question concerning their guilt. Their sin involved both generic and specific aspects. The real problem, however, was not their actions, but their "shameful character" (vv. 7b, 8a). This wretchedness of Israel's character is made even clearer by contrasting it with God's righteous, compassionate, forgiving character—the divine character upon which Daniel will base his appeal for mercy (vv. 15–19).

Second Movement: Effects (9:11b–14)

Daniel's confession of sin transitions to a second movement detailing the just effects of Israel's sins. Israel's present state of exile is neither unfair nor unjust. The righteous God had been clear and consistent in his message. However, as often as God called through the prophets, Israel had rejected God's message and messengers. Consequently, Israel was experiencing the effects of covenant infidelity. The experienced

effects of their sinfulness should have been no surprise to Israel since they had been fully informed and repeatedly warned. God had clearly and repeatedly called Israel back to her covenant relationship.

The second movement, like the previous one, is structured in a similar, though less complex, chiasmic arrangement.⁸¹ The outside elements (A, B...B', A') are grammatically structured around *waw* consecutives on jussive verbs with third person singular subjects. However, the core element (C) is set apart by a simple adversative *waw* on a perfect verb with a first person plural subject. The outer elements (vv. 11b–13a, 14) recount God's reaction to Israel's sin. The inner element (v. 13b) recounts Israel's failure in sin.

Logical Connection

The use of the *waw* consecutive with a jussive state verb indicates that the outer elements of the chiasmic structure mark the logical results of the sins recounted in Daniel's confession (vv. 4b–14). There was a direct cause and effect relationship between Israel's acts and God's response. Thus God's reaction to Israel's sins was not arbitrary, but fully justified.

Enumeration of Effects

The effects of Israel's sin are recorded in four independent clauses: first, Israel experienced "the curse was poured out upon us" (v. 11c–d); second, God "confirmed his words" (vv. 12–13a); third, "YHWH watched vigilantly on the evil" (v. 14a); and finally, God "brought it on us" (v. 14b). The clauses appear to be arranged chiasmically. The outside elements (A, B, B', A') deal with God's just punishment of Israel. The core element (C, v. 13b) contains a summary statement of Israel's guilt, the reason for God's response.

Although God is not specified as the subject of the verb "poured out" (v. 11b), the references to "Moses, the servant of God" and to "sinned against *him*" make it evident that the pouring out of the curse is God's covenant response to Israel's sin. Daniel adds "even the oath" following the main clause of verse 11b, a reference that may have a cumulative effect: "the oath" was added to the "curse" with a reinforcing effect. Or the reference may function in apposition, forming a hendiadys—"the curse-oath." Leon Wood takes the previous position: "Curses were solemnly threatened as a way of giving incentive for the people to obey God. The oath (*shbu'ah*, from *shaba'*, 'to swear'), used in various forms, as added to statements, usually either promises or warnings, to lend a sense of authority or solemnity. The thought here is that God's punishing curse, backed by His solemn oath, had been

⁸¹See appendix 2 at the end of this article.

poured out upon Israel.”⁸² Daniel notes that the reason for the curse's outpouring was that “we had sinned against him [God]”: Israel's experience of God's curse was the just effect of their sins.

Second, God “confirmed his words” (v. 12a). The verb “confirmed” (קָיַם, Hiphil) has a wide variety of connotations depending on the context in which it is found. The verb is used here “in the sense of ‘establishing’ and ‘following through’...in conjunction with oath (e.g. Jer 11:5) and especially in the hi. form, with covenant.”⁸³ The phrase “confirmed his words” (וַיִּקְיַם אֱתֵּי דְבָרָיו) occurs nineteen times in the OT.⁸⁴ With few exceptions the idea is to confirm, establish, or verify the message or matter to which *dabar* (דְּבָר) refers (e.g., Deut 19:15, where “at the mouth of three witnesses *shall a matter be established*”). In this context the “confirmed words” concerned God's message of unparalleled judgment against Israel and Jerusalem (v. 12b).

Third, “YHWH watched vigilantly on the evil” (v. 14a). The verb “watched vigilantly” (שָׁקַד) is related to the Hebrew noun used for the almond or almond tree: “The bloom of the almond tree appears early in the spring in Israel; it is the sign watched for as a harbinger of the seasonal change.”⁸⁵ The verb occurs twelve times in the OT,⁸⁶ and although it is usually used in positive settings (Prov 8:34), it also occurs in a number of negative settings. Jeremiah uses the verb “to express God's judgment, such as the watching of a leopard, waiting to rend to pieces the people who dare to leave the city (Jer 5:6).”⁸⁷ In this context YHWH is focusing his gaze on the calamity (vv. 12, 13) that he was bringing on Israel for their covenant violations.

The final effect was that God “brought it on us” (v. 14b, וַיְבִיאָהּ עָלֵינוּ). Unlike the first effect which simply communicates the nature of the action (v. 11b, “the curse poured out,” Qal), this effect emphasizes agency. Daniel uses the Hiphil verb form of *bō'* (בִּוֵּא, “caused to come”) to focus attention on the agent who brings about the action. The actor/agent (“he”) throughout this section (vv. 11b–14) is “YHWH our God” (vv. 13b, 14a, 14c). The direct object of the verbal action is grammatically expressed by the third feminine singular pronominal suffix of the verb. The use of this pronominal suffix helps to tie this section together by referring back not only to “calamity”

⁸²Wood, *Daniel*, p. 239.

⁸³NIDOTTE, s.v. “קָיַם,” by Elmer A. Martens, 3:903.

⁸⁴The noun דְּבָר may be marked or unmarked as to the direct object.

⁸⁵NIDOTTE, s.v. “שָׁקַד,” by Keith N. Schoville, 4:230.

⁸⁶Job 21:32; Ps 102:8; 127:1; Prov 8:34; Isa 29:20; Jer 1:12; 5:6; 31:28; 44:27; Ezek 8:29; Dan 9:14.

⁸⁷NIDOTTE, s.v. “שָׁקַד,” 4:230.

(כָּעָרָה, fem. noun) in verses 12, 13, 14a but also to the “curse” (קִלְעָה, fem. noun) and “oath” (הַשְּׁבָעָה, fem. noun) in verse 11b. These four clauses detailing the effects of Israel’s sin are all referring to one event—God’s punishment of Israel’s covenant infractions. Unlike the first effect, however, the cause behind the fourth effect is not Israel’s covenant violations, but God’s righteousness—“YHWH our God is righteous with regard to all his doings.” God’s actions (vv. 11b–14) in regard to Israel’s sins reflect his character (v. 7a)—God’s reaction was a just response to Israel’s covenant unfaithfulness: “Because the legal demand and the penalties for disobedience have already been announced, and because Israel has been warned as the law required, God is blameless in bringing forth the calamity already prepared and stored up.”⁸⁸

Although not as explicit as other chiasmic structures in this chapter, this section has an apparent chiasmic arrangement. The first effect (A, v. 11b), which describes the curse being poured out because of Israel’s sinful covenant violations, is paralleled by the fourth effect (A’, v. 14b), which describes God causing the curse and calamity to be brought on Israel in God’s righteousness. These two effects portray both halves of the covenant relationship. The vassal (Israel) suffers for her covenant violations at the hands of the sovereign’s (God’s) punishment. These outer elements also both contain subordinate references to Israel’s sinful actions (vv. 11b, 14b). The inner elements of the apparent chiasm (B, vv. 12–13a and B’, 14a) focus on God’s action in punishing Israel for her covenant violations. In the second effect God “confirmed his words...to bring great calamity on us.” God caused “his words” to be established (קָוָה, Hiphil): the words which God “had spoken” and were contained in the “law of Moses” are now confirmed by God for execution. The punishment is being carried out. In the third effect (v. 14a) God watches carefully and intently as the calamity proceeds on course. These two elements also are tied together by the use of the Hebrew term קִלְעָה (vv. 12–14) to describe the “curse” of verse 11b.

The focal point of this chiasmic structure is contained in the adversative statement of verse 13b. In spite of having God’s written law in their possession (“written in the law of Moses,” vv. 11b, 13a) and the oral message of the prophets (“which he had spoken against us,” 12a), Israel did not repent—“we did not seek favor from the face of YHWH our God.” Daniel describes Israel’s lack of response to God as “not seeking favor” (וְלֹא־הִקְלִינוּ). Except for special idiomatic uses, the verb “seek” “always describes a situation of bodily weakness.”⁸⁹ The use of the Piel stem verb (as occurs in this verse) with “face” carries the

⁸⁸W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), p. 136.

⁸⁹TLOT, s.v. “קָוָה *hllh* to be sick,” by F. Stolz, 1:425.

connotation of appeasement.⁹⁰ The phrase “face of YHWH” (פְּנֵי יְהוָה) is used almost exclusively in worship contexts as “a gesture of respect, of worship, and of submission, performed with the purpose of seeking favor.”⁹¹ Israel refused to make herself weak before God to seek healing from God. Israel was sick, but in spite of all the symptoms which God had pointed out, they refused to admit their illness.

Daniel lists two means by which Israel could have sought favor from God. First, they could have sought his favor “by turning from our iniquities.” “Turning” (שׁוּב) “is a central word for the concept of repentance: the imagery is a person doing a turnabout. Critical in this turnabout, if it is to be repentance, is the direction toward which one turns, namely, to Yahweh.”⁹² Israel did not seek “the face of YHWH” because she was unwilling to turn from her iniquities (בְּעֵוֹנוֹתֶיהָ), a term which functions as a generic reference to all sins against God. Second, they could have sought his favor “by showing devotion to your truthfulness.” The verb “to show devotion” (לְהַשְׁכִּיל) “can best be rendered ‘to be insightful, clever’.... Yet the emphasis often lies on the act of attentive observation, of perception and scrutiny, through which one becomes ‘insightful.’”⁹³ Israel did not act with devotion either to perceive or to practice God’s “truthfulness” (בְּאֵמֶתֶךָ). The object on which they failed to focus was God’s “truthfulness” (אֱמֶתֶךָ), a term which goes beyond mere acts to “the character of being trustworthy and reliable.”⁹⁴ Repentance at a basic level is a “turning from” and a “turning to.” In this context Israel’s unwillingness to repent is explained in terms of failing to turn from their iniquities and failing to turn to God’s reliable truthfulness. More than an external facade of “truthfulness” was necessary: God required “truthfulness” from the core out.

Summary of Daniel 9:11b–14

The cause of Israel’s present condition was her sins (vv. 5–11) and the effect was God’s punishment (vv. 11b–14). Daniel first describes this punishment as “the curse” (v. 11b), and if being cursed were not enough, God reinforced it with an “oath.” Yet as extreme as that may seem it was entirely appropriate. God had forewarned them in writing—“which is written in the law of Moses” (v. 11c). Since Israel had sinned against God (v. 11d), punishment was the expected and

⁹⁰Ibid., 1:427.

⁹¹TDOT, s.v. “חָלַב חָלָה; חָלָה חָלָה; חָלָה חָלָה פְּנֵים; חָלָה חָלָה פְּנֵים,” by K. Seybold, 4:409.

⁹²NIDOTTE, s.v. “שׁוּב,” by J. A. Thompson and Elmer A. Martens, 4:57.

⁹³TLOT, s.v. “שָׁכַל skl hi. to have insight,” by M. Sæbø, 3:1270.

⁹⁴NIDOTTE, s.v. “אֱמֶת,” by R. W. B. Moberly, 1:428.

experienced effect of Israel's sins.

Daniel three times describes this punishing curse as "evil," and in verse 12 as a "great evil." The punishment had an extensive qualitative and quantitative nature. In verse 13 he describes it as "all this evil." The full extent of Israel's punishment was characterized by "evil": it was a characteristic act emanating from their very nature.

As if the punishment itself were not enough, Daniel then points out in the focal point of the structure (v. 13b) that Israel could have avoided her punishment. They could have sought God's favor by "turning from their iniquities" and by "showing devotion to God's truthfulness." Daniel first pictures God as unmoved during the process, that is, Israel could have returned to him at any time since he had not moved; instead, they had departed from him. Daniel then pictures God as unchanging, that is, Israel did not have to guess or search for a means to return to God because God was unwavering in his nature and covenant requirements.

Final Summary of Daniel's Prayer of Confession

Daniel's prayer addresses two main themes: a corporate confession of Israel's sins (vv. 5–14) and an appeal to God for mercy on the nation of Israel (vv. 15–19). Each theme develops and details the covenant relationship between God and Israel. The first paints a picture of that covenant relationship in ruins due to Israel's covenant infractions and the second promises a picture of covenant restoration based on God's mercy.

In his confession Daniel has left no uncertainty as to the guilty covenant party—Israel as a nation had sinned. The confession was corporate; the sin was corporate; the guilt was corporate; the punishment was corporate and justly deserved. Daniel has detailed the symptoms and causes of Israel's unfaithfulness to God: they had repeatedly and knowingly sinned against God, because God had repeatedly and clearly given Israel instruction in covenant faithfulness to no avail. Israel's sins were symptomatic of a deeper problem: Israel at heart and nature was "shameful." Time after time God pointed out Israel's symptoms, but Israel could never admit she was sick. By nature Israel was prone to wander and leave the presence and path of God.

Having fully and skillfully detailed Israel's covenant indictment before God, Daniel now pleads for mercy. Israel's guilt was beyond obvious—God was well within his covenant rights and obligations to punish her. But Daniel would beg for mercy based on God's righteous, compassionate, and forgiving nature.

APPEAL FOR MERCY (9:15–19)

Having laid out the evidence of Israel's guilt by deed and nature, Daniel turns from confession to appeal. Daniel's synopsis of Israel's

history of covenant unfaithfulness gives way to an appeal for God's covenant intervention. This appeal for mercy does not occur in a void: Daniel has woven into his corporate confession the basis on which he will found his appeal for mercy. The God from whom Daniel seeks mercy is not only the transcendent and immanent, the powerful and personal God (v. 4b), but also the righteous, compassionate, and forgiving God (vv. 7a, 9).

INVOCATION: PRAISE OF YHWH (9:15a–b)

The major shift in Daniel's prayer is marked first by the discourse marker וְעַתָּה , signaling introduction and transition,⁹⁵ and second by the vocative "O Lord our God" in verse 15a.⁹⁶ Daniel begins his appeal for God's mercy with covenant language and reference. He describes God as the one "who brought out your people from the land of Egypt with a strong hand." The Exodus deliverance of Israel from Egypt not only serves as the greatest demonstration of God's redemptive powers in the OT but also serves repeatedly as the historical prologue to covenant contexts.⁹⁷ The Exodus was the act that established the relationship between God and Israel that is regulated by covenant. In this context, Daniel ties this historic event directly to his appeal for mercy by claiming that "you made a name for yourself like *it is* today." The testimony that God gained before Israel and the nations by his redemptive acts at the Exodus is still evident on the day that Daniel approaches him in prayer for mercy.

Daniel begins his appeal for mercy steeped in covenant reminders. God had initially established the relationship with Israel through the Exodus from Egypt and God remains unchanged from that day. The Exodus which gave God a great name before Israel and the nations could be reflected in Daniel's day by deliverance of Israel from the seventy years of captivity. Thus, Daniel bases his appeal for mercy on "God's righteous acts of history, which had before been able to include gracious deliverance for His people, particularly from Egypt."⁹⁸

⁹⁵Wolfgang Schneider, *Grammatik des biblischen Hebräisch* (Munich: Claudius, 1974), p. 261, quoted in Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 634.

⁹⁶This appeal for mercy contains a concentration of vocatives addressing God: compare v. 15a, 16a, 17a, 18a, 19a, 19b, 19c, 19d. See also Lucas, *Daniel*, pp. 231–32.

⁹⁷For example, Exod 20:2; 29:46; Lev 26:45; Num 15:41; Deut 5:6; 29:24; Judg 2:12; 1 Kgs 9:9; Jer 11:4; 31:32; and 2 Chr 7:22.

⁹⁸Wood, *Daniel*, p. 241.

REVIEW: CORPORATE CONFESSION (9:15c–d)

Before leaving the invocation and making his appeal for mercy, Daniel once again summarizes his confession in two parts. First, “we have sinned”—a repetition of the first self-indictment of verse 5a. Second, “we have acted wickedly”—a repetition of the third self-indictment of verse 5c. Confession has been so consuming in Daniel’s heart that it is still pouring out as he prepares to plead for God’s mercy.

PERSONAL APPEAL (9:16–19)

Daniel structures his appeal in a series of requests. The requests are framed by an inclusio of jussive volitive verbs (vv. 16a, 19d) with the enclosed requests expressed as imperative verbs (vv. 17–19c). Each request is introduced by a vocative of address. The structural marker וְעַתָּה in verse 17 marks a division between Daniel’s requests concerning God’s present action (v. 16) and God’s future treatment of Israel (vv. 17–19).

Initial Appeal (9:16)

This appeal begins with a vocative that is found three other times in this section—“O Lord” (יְיָ , v. 19a, c, c). The appeal proper is this: “Please turn your anger and your wrath from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain.” Daniel’s request for God “to turn” (שׁוּב) is reminiscent of verse 13, where this verb first occurs in this chapter. Israel had not repented, as evidenced by their failure “to turn” from their iniquities. Now Daniel asks God to do what Israel had failed to do, namely, to turn from his present activity of punishing Israel’s covenant unfaithfulness.

The object of this verb is God’s “anger and wrath” against Jerusalem. The reference no doubt is a request for a reversal of God’s dealings with Jerusalem that had resulted in the destruction and desolation of the city coincident with Israel’s departure into captivity. This reversal would include a removal of the reproach among the surrounding Gentile nations that the city and nation experienced with their departure into captivity. Daniel based his appeal on God’s character (“all your righteousness”) just as he had anchored his confession in God’s character in verse 7a.

Second Appeal (9:17)

This appeal is introduced by a second occurrence of וְעַתָּה in this chapter (cf. v. 15). Unlike the occurrence in verse 15, which marks a

major syntactic shift in Daniel's discourse, this occurrence functions to "introduce a reaction."⁹⁹ Daniel is praying that God, in turning from his "anger and wrath" (v. 16), will react positively according to Daniel's continued appeals.

The vocative of address that introduces this appeal is "O our God" (אֱלֹהֵינוּ). In this appeal Daniel seeks God's undivided attention, asking God to favorably listen to his prayer. What Israel had repeatedly failed to do (vv. 10, 11, 14) Daniel now asks God to do—"listen" (שָׁמַע).¹⁰⁰ Daniel expands the idea of listening by adding the request, "And cause your face to shine"¹⁰¹: the request is for God's favorable response to Daniel's appeal. The reason given with this appeal is significantly selfless: Daniel does not plea for mercy based in any way on Israel's benefit but entirely for God's own sake.

Third Appeal (9:18)

The third appeal, introduced by "O my God" (אֱלֹהֵי), expands on the previous appeal. Daniel asks God to "turn your ear and listen; open your eyes and see." Daniel requests unobstructed listening and seeing. "Turn" (פָּתַח) basically means to stretch or extend and when used with "ear" is almost always used in prayer. The expected result of this act follows: "so that you might hear." The directive *waw* conjunction on the verb "hear" (שָׁמַע) indicates action that is expected to result from "inclining the ear." "Open" (פָּתַח) is used almost exclusively with the noun "eyes": "When God opens his eyes it is an indication of his provision for those who stand in desperate need."¹⁰² The directive *waw* conjunction on "see" (רָא) indicates action that is expected to result from "opening the eyes." Daniel asks God to open his eyes without distraction or interruption and to see the needs of Israel and Jerusalem and to respond favorably to his prayer.

The object of the appeal is twofold. First, Daniel asks God to listen to and to see "our devastations": Daniel wants God to view the current condition of the nation of Israel in captivity. Second, Daniel asks God to listen to and see "the city on which your name is called":

⁹⁹*TDOT*, s.v. "פָּתַח 'er; פָּתַח 'atta," by T. Kronholm, 11:445. That this does not function as a major syntactical marker in verse 17 is evident by its proximity to the first occurrence in verse 15 and its position within the appeal section which is bordered by the jussive volitive verbs (vv. 16b–19).

¹⁰⁰Daniel repeats his request in this section—verses 17, 18, and 19 contain the only occurrences of שָׁמַע in the imperative mood in this book.

¹⁰¹This request is reminiscent of Psalm 80 where the refrain "Turn us again, O [Jehovah] God [of hosts]; And cause thy face to shine, and we will be saved" occurs three times (vv. 4, 8, 20). See also Psalm 31:17; 67:2.

¹⁰²*NIDOTTE*, s.v. "פָּתַח," by Victor P. Hamilton, 3:666.

Daniel wants God to view the current condition of Jerusalem which is in ruins. The reason for the request is “for the sake of your great compassions,” a clause which again reflects the appeal to God’s nature as compassionate in Daniel’s confession (v. 9).

Fourth Appeal (9:19a)

At this point Daniel’s appeals come in staccato fashion. Once again Daniel appeals for God to hear his plea—“O Lord, hear” (עֲשֵׂה).

Fifth Appeal (9:19b)

While the first four appeals focus on redirecting and focusing God’s attention, Daniel’s fifth appeal transitions to calling for God’s active intervention and forgiveness: “O Lord, forgive.” Daniel’s appeal for forgiveness of Israel’s covenant violations is based on God’s character as forgiving (v. 9). In the book of Daniel the verb “forgive” (סָלַח) occurs only here in Daniel’s appeal for mercy. Likewise, the noun “forgiveness” (הַסְּלִיחָה) occurs only in 9:9 in Daniel’s description of God’s character.

Sixth Appeal (9:19c)

Daniel continues his appeal for God’s active intervention by asking, “O Lord, give attention so that you act.” The appeal to “give attention” (קָשַׁב, Hiphil) combines the ideas of attentiveness and active response. The verb קָשַׁב, unlike other verbs calling for attentiveness, is used both of listening and seeing.¹⁰³ Perhaps Daniel was summarizing his appeals in verses 17–19a for God’s attentiveness. However, in this appeal Daniel specifies the requested result: “so that you act” (וַעֲשֵׂה). Daniel has used the verb “act” (עָשָׂה) to describe God’s calamitous judgment in verses 12 and 14 and to describe the Exodus deliverance. Daniel appeals for the same active intervention seen in the Exodus in granting mercy to exiled Israel. Daniel pleads for God to respond to what he had been seeing and hearing with Exodus-like intervention and deliverance. “The prophets before Daniel saw an analogy between the Exodus and the future deliverance that would free them from the shackles of the Exile (cf. Isa. 40:3–5; Hos. 2:14–15). In essence, the return from Exile would be a sort of second Exodus.”¹⁰⁴

Seventh Appeal (9:19d)

Daniel ends this series of appeals with a call for haste: “O God, do

¹⁰³NIDOTTE, s.v. “קָשַׁב,” by K. T. Aitken, 3:997.

¹⁰⁴Longman, *Daniel*, p. 225.

not tarry.” The verb “tarry” (אָהַר) means “to remain somewhere for a protracted period of time past the expected norm.”¹⁰⁵ This appeal functions not only to emphasize the urgency of Daniel’s appeal (vv. 15–19) but also to tie back to the occasioning event that led to his prayer: the number of years “for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem—seventy years” was due imminently to expire (vv. 2b–3). Just as the historical setting that introduces this chapter ended with a temporal note, Daniel concludes his prayer with a temporal reference: the introductory temporal reference focuses on the anticipation of the seventy years of captivity coming to an imminent conclusion, and the concluding temporal reference focuses on an appeal for God’s immediate intervention to bring the captivity to a conclusion. Both the introduction and conclusion to the prayer evidence Daniel’s high degree of expectation.

Daniel bases this appeal on two things. First, he appeals for action “for your sake O God” (לְמַעַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ), employing an adverb (לְמַעַן) that most often indicates purpose or result.¹⁰⁶ The first purpose for Daniel’s appeal is for God’s own sake or benefit. Once again Daniel exhibits the selfless nature of his plea; his focus is on God. Daniel’s theology is evident in his practice of prayer, his reasoning and appeals being firmly anchored in the person and work of God. Second, he appeals for God’s active intervention because of the relationship between God and his city and his people. Daniel appeals for God’s active intervention “because your name is called on your city and on your people,” a clause reminiscent of Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8:43; 2 Chr 6:33), the only other places in the OT where the clause “because your name is called on” (כִּי־שִׁמְךָ נִקְרָא עַל) occurs.

The reader cannot miss the focus on the city of Jerusalem and the people of Israel in this appeal for mercy. The city is mentioned specifically in the first appeal (v. 16) as God’s possession (“your city”), by name twice (“Jerusalem”), and as having cultic and covenant significance (“your holy mountain”).¹⁰⁷ As the site of the temple now in ruins, Jerusalem is indirectly referenced in the second appeal as “your devastated sanctuary” (v. 17). In the third appeal (v. 18) Jerusalem is referenced twice: first as the second of two direct objects (“the city”) and second in the resumptive pronoun used in the relative clause that follows (“on which [lit. ‘her’] your name is called”). Here again the city is mentioned here in the seventh appeal (v. 19d): “Your name is called on your city.”

The people of Israel are mentioned specifically in the first (v. 17)

¹⁰⁵Bill T. Arnold, “אָהַר,” *NIDOTTE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:361.

¹⁰⁶Daniel uses the term לְמַעַן only here and in verse 17.

¹⁰⁷*NIDOTTE*, s.v. “הָרִ” by Martin Selman, 1:1051–54.

and last (v. 19d) appeals. Daniel begins by asking God to turn his anger from Jerusalem “because Jerusalem and your people have come to be a reproach” before the Gentiles. He concludes by asking God to hasten in dispensing and displaying his mercy “because your name is called...on your people.” The first and third appeals also contain less direct references to the people of Israel, in the pronominal references “*our* sins and the iniquities of *our* fathers” and “not for the sake of *our* righteousness we present *our* supplications.” In light of context, particularly the preceding corporate confession, these can only be references to the nation of Israel.

Daniel detailed no one else’s plight but that of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. Daniel confessed no one else’s sins but those of the nation of Israel which had brought devastation upon the city of Israel. Daniel prayed for God’s mercy to be poured out on the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel without delay.

SUMMARY OF DANIEL 9:15–19

A major shift in Daniel’s prayer occurs in verse 15 with the shift from confession of sin (vv. 4b–14) to appeal for mercy (vv. 15–19). As with his prayer of confession, Daniel begins his prayer for mercy with praise to YHWH (v. 15a–b), focusing his praise on God’s deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage by means of the Exodus. Daniel invokes the covenant relationship between God and Israel and God’s past act of deliverance to introduce his appeal for God’s mercy. God had been merciful to undeserving Israel in the past; consequently, Daniel seeks such mercy in the present.

Before Daniel begins his appeal he briefly summarizes the corporate confession (v. 15c–d) which he is bringing to a close. Daniel’s appeal for mercy is needed because of Israel’s covenant faithlessness. His confession is so consuming it spills over into his appeal for mercy.

Daniel’s appeal for mercy takes the form of a seven-step crescendo. Each appeal is introduced by a vocative of address appealing to God personally for his unmerited mercy. The first four appeals aim at redirecting God’s focus and attention to Israel’s condition and plight (v. 19a) while the last three appeals (v. 19b–d) call for God’s intervention on Israel’s behalf. Daniel begins his appeals by calling on God to turn and to listen and to look and to hear and concludes his appeals by calling on God to forgive, to act, and not to tarry.

Daniel completes his prayer with an appeal reflecting both the urgency he felt and the temporal focus that is repeated throughout his prayer—“O God, do not tarry!” Although verse 19 marks the conclusion of the content of Daniel’s prayer, Daniel’s praying did not end. In verses 20 and 21 the reader is informed that Daniel continued in prayer only to be interrupted by the angel Gabriel with God’s answer.

CONCLUSION

Daniel's prayer that introduces this chapter is neither an ornamental flourish designed simply for aesthetic purposes nor a conventional necessity designed to meet literary requirements. Daniel's prayer is inherently linked to the prophecy of the seventy weeks found at the conclusion of this chapter, providing the occasion and cause for Gabriel's visit (vv. 20–21) and God's message (v. 23). His prayer is foundational to understanding and interpreting the prophecy of the seventy weeks; the themes, requests, aims, etc., of Daniel's prayer foreshadow the prophecy that is to follow. Far from being the salad appetizer to be skipped in order to save room for the main course, Daniel's prayer is the first serving of the main course. It is not simply filling, but provides adequate and tasty nourishment in and of itself.

On one level the reader is introduced to the great contrast between Daniel, the intercessory prayer warrior, and his people Israel, who stand in great need of intercession. While Daniel is moved passionately by his reading of the Book of Jeremiah (v. 2), the nation of Israel seems incapable of hearing God's Word in spite of the manifold direct proclamation of God's Word (vv. 6, 10, 11). While Daniel's reaction to God's Word drives him to a response characterized by grave-side sorrow (v. 3), the nation of Israel refuses to admit the possibility of being ill (v. 13) in spite of manifold, indisputable symptoms (vv. 5–11). This contrast informs the reader of the genuine extent of Israel's covenant transgression, guilt, punishment, and need. It also provides the reader with a worthy example of intercessory prayer with passion and compassion.

On an interpretative level Daniel's prayer prepares the reader for the prophetic answer that follows. His prayer directly and indirectly foreshadows issues addressed in God's answer that concludes the chapter. For example, in this prayer the reader is introduced to God as sovereign in the affairs of men: God chooses to reveal himself as he will in revelation through his spokesmen and his Word (vv. 3, 6); God controls and directs the course and destiny of history. He raises up kingdoms when and as he wills (v. 1); and God causes and concludes the events of history (vv. 2, 15). Second, the reader is introduced to God as trustworthy and faithful, as one who keeps his word; what he has said he will do, he does and will accomplish: God has established the length of the Babylonian captivity and brought about release after the expiration of the seventy years and God has promised that those who approach him humbly in true faith and repentance will experience forgiveness and restoration. Third, the reader is introduced to the focus of the prophecy in this prayer—the nation of Israel: the setting of the whole chapter is Jewish-oriented (note the numerous references to Jerusalem, sacrifice, prophets, covenant, etc.), and one should not attempt to claim any of its explicit or implicit promises for Gentiles

through the Church. Fourth, this prophecy was given to be understood; in fact, a repeated emphasis on “understanding” runs throughout the introductory portion of this chapter. George Bush has pointed out, “The Scriptures were not written to gratify curiosity, not even *laudable* curiosity, but to nourish faith and govern human conduct. Accordingly they afford no answer to a multitude of questions that might be asked.”¹⁰⁸ Surely this indicates that one can approach this prophecy seeking more than an ambiguous “apocalyptic ideal”¹⁰⁹; surely there is more substance than shadow to be found in this prophetic answer to Daniel’s prayer. Fifth, Daniel makes repeated references to chronological and historical events that are actual and literal. While some were historical events (the shift in kingdoms, v. 1), others, now history, had once been part of prophecy (the Babylonian captivity); consequently, it would be expected that the time elements of the prophetic answer that Daniel receives must be considered to be actual and literal. Finally, the prayer teaches that expectancy with respect to God’s promises concerning the future should characterize life. Historically, it was a time of expectation with the replacement of the Babylonian kingdom by Medo-Persia. Prophetically, it was a time of expectation with the seventy years of captivity coming to a close. Theologically, it was a time of expectation with the confession of sin and appeal for mercy being made to a tender-hearted, forgiving God.

Daniel’s prayer that introduces the prophecy of the “seventy weeks” deserves much more attention than is typically given by scholars and preachers. Daniel’s prayer affords the opportunity not only to inform our understanding but also to change our practice. It is a rich portion of Scripture deserving our attention and assimilation.

¹⁰⁸George Bush, *Notes on Genesis*, 2 vols. (reprint of 1860 ed., Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1976), 1:3.

¹⁰⁹John J. Collins, *Daniel*, *Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), p. 353.

APPENDIX 1**The Chiastic Structure of the First Movement
of Daniel's Prayer of Confession: Causes**

- A Sin list (v. 5)
- B Failure to listen (v. 6)
- C God's character (v. 7a)
- D Israel's character (v. 7b)
- E Vocative Address "O YHWH!" (v. 8a)
- D' Israel's character (v. 8b)
- C' God's character (v. 9)
- B' Failure to listen (v. 10)
- A' Sin list (v. 11a)

APPENDIX 2**The Chiastic Structure of the Second Movement
of Daniel's Prayer of Confession: Effects**

- A The punishment is poured out on Israel (v. 11c-d)
- B God confirms the punishment (vv. 12-13a)
- C Israel is guilty before God (v. 13c)
- B' YHWH watches the punishment (v. 14a)
- A' God brought the punishment on Israel (v. 14b)