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AN EXAMINATION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST INTERPRETATION OF TWO TIME PROPHECIES IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL - THE 2300 DAYS OF DANIEL 8 AND THE 70 WEEKS OF DANIEL 9.

ASSUMPTION 6

Daniel's statement in ch8:27 that he didn't understand the "vision" (mar'ê) meant that he didn't understand the 2300 days

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**NOVEMBER 1990
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The Purpose of This Assumption

This assumption is a part of a cluster of assumptions associated with the end of Dn8. Daniel could not endure any more information about the future for the people of God and he fainted; His fainting gagged Gabriel on the spot from explaining any more of the vision. Therefore, the vision is incomplete. Now another string in the bow of SDA historicists to prove the validity of this complicated piece of reasoning to tie the 70 weeks to the 2300 days is the argument that the statement in verse 27 referring to a lack of understanding undoubtedly refers to the start date for the 2300-days, as this was the only matter needing explaining but the most important piece of information.

The purpose of this assumption is to provide an extra link to show that the 2300-days was not explained in Dn8. This assumption is a more specific statement of two other closely related assumptions. The first is that Daniel’s statement that he did not understand the revelation was due to the fact that the information necessary for his understanding had not yet been given (cf. [Assumption 7](#)). The second assumption is that, as a consequence of some necessary information not being given, the instruction of Gabriel to Daniel was incomplete ([Assumption5](#)

This cluster of assumptions, coupled together with some arguments from Dn9, completes the tying-in of the 70-weeks of Dn9 as the solution to the start date for the 2300-days.

The Method of This Assumption

How is this assumption established? Some examples of the usage of this assumption follow. Comment on each of the quotes is given in the next section dealing with the problems of this assumption:

Cottrell gives us his version of how the lack of understanding in verse 27 is to be understood:

Daniel specifically mentions that he did not understand “the vision of the evenings and the mornings,” the 2300 “days”....([Cottrell, 1963](#), p.303)

From [Questions on Doctrine](#):

One feature seen in the overall *chazôn* was the “two thousand and three hundred days” of Daniel 8:14. This special scene is referred to as “the vision [mar’êh] “of the

evening and the morning” (verse 26)... It will be remembered that according to Daniel 8:26,27, it was the mar’eh “of the evening and the morning” that Daniel did not understand. It was not the vision as a whole, for all but the scene of the evening and the morning had been explained. ([Seventh-day Adventists, 1957](#), p.271)

Smith says:

We have seen that Daniel, at the close of that chapter, says that he did not understand the vision. Some parts of that vision were at the time clearly explained. It could not have been those parts which he did not understand. We therefore inquire what it was that Daniel did not understand, or what part of the vision was left unexplained. In that vision four prominent things are brought to view: the ram, the he-goat, the little horn, and the period of 2300 days. The symbols of the ram, the he-goat, and the little horn were explained, but nothing was said respecting the period of time. This must therefore have been the point that he did not understand. The other parts of the vision were of no avail while the application of this period of 2300 days was left in obscurity. ([1944](#), p.201f.)

James White:

But the angel did not explain the time [2300 days] in chapter 8. And , at the very close of the chapter, the prophet says, “I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.” It was the time alone that he did not understand, as all else had been explained in that chapter. But Gabriel did explain the time in chapter 9; so that in the first verse of chapter 10, he says that “he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. This understanding, therefore, he did receive in chapter 9. (J. [White, 1870](#), p. 137)

W.H Branson:

It is only necessary, therefore, to determine the time at which this 2300-day period was to begin in order also to determine the exact time for the cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven and the opening of the judgment. All this is made very clear in the prophecy itself...Daniel heard from the lips of Gabriel the announcement that at the end of a 2300-day period the sanctuary would be cleansed. At that time part of the vision was not clear to him. He was unable to comprehend its meaning. No details concerning it had been given. He had no starting point to enable him to reckon the time.

Gabriel had said: “The vision of the evening and the morning [the part that pertaineth to time – days]...is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.” Daniel 8:26.

When told that this part of the vision was to be “shut up” and that no interpretation of it was to be given, it was more than the prophet could stand. Of this experience he says: “I Daniel 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.” Verse 27...

Every feature of Daniel’s previous vision [i.e., Dn8] had been fully explained by the angel except that part about the cleansing of the sanctuary – the part pertaining to the 2300-day period. ... the startling announcement concerning the 2300 days and the cleansing of the sanctuary was still a dark, deep mystery. This was the part that had been “shut up,” because, said the angel, “it shall be for many days.” It pertained to the distant future. But now Daniel is to be shown even this mystery. “I am now come forth, “ declared Gabriel, “to give thee skill and understanding...Therefore, understand the matter, and consider the vision.” ([Branson, 1950](#), 289-291)

One final question remains: precisely when can the 2,300-year period end and the sanctuary be restored: Daniel 8 states only that the time span stretches “to the time of the end” – it provides no starting point for this prophecy. The chapter ends abruptly as the aged prophet succumbs to emotional exhaustion (verse 27). Evidently he could not bear the bad news about the little horn. The angel Gabriel had to leave before his mandate to “give this man an understanding of the vision” was carried out. So Daniel did not yet comprehend the meaning of the vision concerning the 2300 days (verse 27)...

Daniel’s apprehension increases [in Dn9] as he remembers his vision received some ten years previously, when the angel Gabriel informed him of a long time of trouble ahead for the saints and their sanctuary. It had been predicted that “both the holy place and the host [were] to be trampled” until the 2300 days had expired; “then the holy place will be properly restored” (chap. 8: 13,14). Horrified at the atrocities that God’s people and His truth would suffer, the elderly prophet had temporarily succumbed. By the time he recovered, the angel had gone, leaving Daniel “astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it” (verse 27). ([Weber, 1985](#), pp. 42,44)

Daniel’s reaction [in Dn8:27] indicated strong concern and surprise. What do you think surprised him? Was it the extent of the wickedness that would arise in later years? Was it that God would permit such wickedness to increase and prosper? Was it the length of time that the sanctuary and the host (verse 13) would be trodden under foot. He does not tell us. No doubt the time element would be prominent in his thinking. But he would not know when to begin the calculation. He says that “none understood it,” which suggests that those with whom he had shared his vision could not explain the one element that Gabriel had not yet interpreted. ([Keough, 1987](#)

, p. 70)

The vision in Daniel 8 consists of the ram, the goat, the little horn, and the sanctuary being cleansed (the 2,300 days). The ram was interpreted, the goat was interpreted, and the little horn was interpreted (Daniel 8:19-25); the only part of the vision that wasn’t interpreted was the part dealing with the 2,300 days, the part Daniel said that he didn’t understand...

Gabriel’s reference then, in verse 26 to the vision of the “evening and morning” (which he stresses is “true”) points specifically to the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14. Daniel said that he didn’t understand it, that is, he didn’t understand the vision about the 2,300 days, which isn’t surprising because everything else in Daniel 8 had been explained. ([2003](#), p.75)

A casual reading of these statements is all that is needed to see the following assumptions being inherent in the samples above:

- The explanation in Dn8 is incomplete ([Assumption 5](#))
- Information had not been given in Dn8 ([Assumption 7](#))
- That the starting point wasn’t given by Gabriel ([Assumption 3](#));
- The three previous points occur because Daniel was sick before the explanation was completed ([Assumption 4](#));
- that the 2300 days begins with the beginning of the vision of ch8 ([Assumption 2](#));

- that the answer in v14 to the question of Dn8:13 refers to vs2-12 and not to vs10-12 (Assumption 2 and 1);

The Problems with the Method of this Assumption

In this section I am going to look at the following methodological problems for the SDA historicist's by:

- I. Examining the weakness in the techniques quoted in the examples quoted above;
- II. Examining the meaning of the text itself and secondly.

Having given a representative sample of statements from SDA historicist writers, I wish to now examine the weaknesses of those statements. I will examine the position of Cottrell, Questions on Doctrine, Smith. Then I will examine the various options of the phrase "there is not understanding," and the incongruity of the SDA historicist's explanation of the reason Daniel is appalled.

A. Cottrell's Method – Emendations

In a classical misquote and a misplacement of pieces of scripture from verse 26 into verse 27, we get this quote from Cottrell. It is typical of the desperate efforts of SDA historicists to try and increase the credibility of the argument:

Daniel specifically mentions that he did not understand "the vision of the evenings and the mornings," the 2300 "days"....([Cottrell, 1963](#), p.303)

Cottrell's comments are typical of many who freely emend the text to suit the theory rather than letting the text mold the meaning. Contrary to Cottrell's simplistic comments, the phrase "vision of the evening and the mornings" and the phrase "the 2300 days" are both absent in verse 27 where we have the concept of Daniel not understanding. It is a violation of every principle of interpretation to grab a bit of this text and a bit of that text and join them together to make them say what you want them to say. But it is even worse, after doing freehand emendations like that to then assert that this emendation is the proper intent of the text. Yet, this is what Cottrell does here. And this is the only way that SDA historicist's arguments on verse 27 can be established – by engaging in freehand emendation of vs 26 and 27.

One has to make a number of assumptions to get to the conclusion that the 2300 days is meant in v.27 where it refers only to the "vision." The first major assumption is that there is only one "mar'eh" in Dn8. The next assumption is that this *mar'eh* is the "vision of the evening and the morning referred to in v.26." The third assumption is that the statement in v.26 refers us to the *mar'eh* in v.16. The fourth assumption is that the *mar'eh* in v.16 refers to the dialogue between the two holy ones in vs.13-14.

I have discussed in Assumption 1 the invalidity of the assertion that only one aspect of the vision can be referred to as *mar'eh* –that being, the time period of the 2300 days. I have also discussed in Assumption 1 how the use of the *mar'eh* in v.16 refers to

the whole vision, as indicated by the scope of Daniel's explanation when he obeys the command given him in v.16.

B. Question on Doctrine's Method.

And from Questions on Doctrine:

One feature seen in the overall *chazôn* was the "two thousand and three hundred days" of Daniel 8:14. This special scene is referred to as "the vision [*mar'êh*] "of the evening and the morning" (verse 26).... It will be remembered that according to Daniel 8:26,27, it was the *mar'êh* "of the evening and the morning" that Daniel did not understand. It was not the vision as a whole, for all but the scene of the evening and the morning had been explained. ([Seventh-day Adventists, 1957](#), p.271)

QOD does exactly the same as Cottrell here and asserts erroneously that "It will be remembered that according to Daniel 8:26, 27, it was the *mar'êh* 'of the evening and the morning' that Daniel did not understand." This quote has assumed that the phrase "the vision" in verse 27 is identical to the phrase "the vision of the evening and the morning" in verse 26. The astute reader will immediately notice how QOD has done what Cottrell has done and freehandedly pasted the phrase "the vision of the evening and the morning" with what Daniel "did not understand." They have assumed that the word "vision" in verse 27 is really the equivalent of the phrase "the vision of the evening and the morning." The juxtaposition of these two phrases is established only through a cursory mention of the similarity of the time nomenclature in verses 26 when compared with vs. 13-14. That, it seems to their way of thinking, is all that is needed to establish a connection between these two phrases credible enough for the Biblical scholarly world to endorse as legitimate. The phrase "of the evening and the morning" and the clause "which was spoken" was added to the word "vision" for a reason. Gabriel has used these markers to identify a part of the vision that would not be recognised otherwise if just the word "vision" was used. Consequently, the word "vision" here in verse 27, by itself, cannot refer to the same limited scope that the reference in verse 26 refers to because verse 27 does not have the markers. This means her can only take the use of *mar'eh* from verse 16 to guide our judgment on how the word by itself is to be interpreted. Needless to say, it is flawed.

The second point that is typical of so many SDA historicists' comments in this area is the statement by QOD that: "It was not the vision as a whole, for all but the scene of the evening and the morning had been explained." This statement is wrong on a number of counts.

- a. Everything had not been explained from the vision (see Assumption 1);
- b. Things in the explanation were not even in the vision (Assumption 1);
- c. This assertion is based on the assumption that the vision does not start from when the sanctuary is polluted. If the vision did start then, the start date for the 2300 days IS given in Dn8 (Assumption 2);
- d. Daniel did not say it was only a portion of the vision;

- e. The word *mar'eh* used in v.27 and in v.16 and the usage in v16 is indicated by vs 18-26 to mean vs.2-14. Thus, this would mean that the vision he did not understand was the vision proper. He uses the word generally here.
- f. There is no mention of the word “portion” or “part” anywhere in the text. The *whole* vision is implicated here in v.27. This then means more than just the mechanical explanation of the vision. (A skilled prophet as Daniel was had no problem in that regard. This is further evidenced by the amount of the vision that Gabriel *leaves out* of the explanation deeming it unnecessary to deal with them.)
- g. The argument used by SDA historicists that v27 does not mean the whole vision since it had been all explained except one point, indicates that they do not take the statement “there was not understanding” literally. If they did, then it would have to apply to the whole vision. They could not say, “there is only 99% understanding,” since that is not what the text says. Yet, although the text says “there was no understanding,” SDA historicists say there was *just about* full understanding. This same argument could be turned on its head and I can equally assent that *all* the basic symbols of the vision were explained, and yet Daniel still said, “There was not understanding.” This can be said because there are deeper issues here in the revelation than the rudimentary questions about the meaning of the symbols in the vision. So taking this same argument used by SDA historicists to support their assertion that most was explained, I assert that all although the deeper issues were untouched, all the basic symbolism in the vision was explained.

C. Smith's Method.

Looking at Smith's statement again, we have:

We have seen that Daniel, at the close of that chapter, says that he did not understand the vision. Some parts of that vision were at the time clearly explained. It could not have been those parts which he did not understand. We therefore inquire what it was that Daniel did not understand, or what part of the vision was left unexplained. In that vision four prominent things are brought to view: the ram, the he-goat, the little horn, and the period of 2300 days. The symbols of the ram, the he-goat, and the little horn were explained, but nothing was said respecting the period of time. This must therefore have been the point that he did not understand. The other parts of the vision were of no avail while the application of this period of 2300 days was left in obscurity. (1944, p.201f.)

We can see Smith's classic mistake in this quote. This error is ubiquitous in SDA literature. His mistake is the assumption that what is explained is understood and the converse, what is not explained is thereby not understood. Here it

is from Smith: “Some parts of that vision were at the time clearly explained. It could not have been those parts which he did not understand.” We therefore inquire what it was that Daniel did not understand, or what part of the vision was left unexplained.”

He then goes through all the sections of the vision and decides that the only part unexplained is the 2300 days. Therefore, this is the part that Daniel does not understand. This approach assumes all the assumptions I have listed, starting with the assumption that the start for the 2300 days is not given in Dn8. And so the chain of assumptions is used again to support another assumption. On the other hand, I have shown in Assumption 1 that there were many things in the vision not explained in the explanation, and there were things in the explanation not present in the vision.

D. The Use of the words for “Vision” in verse 26 and 27.

1. The use of *mar’ê* in verse 26

In verse 26 Gabriel uses two grammatical devices to define the meaning of “the vision” he is referring to. The first one is a genitival relationship, using the construct state for *mar’eh*. This is all very regular. The second is the use of a relative pronoun “*sher*” to signal the clause. This again is very regular.

Qualification 1 “Of the evening and the morning.”

If the phrase was only “the *mar’eh* is true” there would be no indicators as to what the angel was intending. We could only take his usage of *mar’eh* from v.16 and compare it to what he explained in vs.18-26 and conclude that he was referring to the whole vision – the *hazôn*. The intent of the statement then would be that the whole vision is true.

The fact that the angel *never* chose to include a more specific qualification to the word vision in v27 clearly shows that he intended exactly what he said. He did not want to refer specifically to vs. 13-14 by adding the appropriate markers as he did in verse 26. He wished to infer something different, just as he did in verse 16. This puts to rest the esoteric concept that in Dn8, the word *mar’eh* refers specifically to vs.13-14 in and of itself. If that had been the case, Gabriel would not have needed to add any more items in the questions.

If the phrase in verse 26 was just “the vision of the evening and the morning,” in my mind, this would lead to ambiguity in what the angel was referring to. It could mean either the conversation in vs. 13-14 about the length of the events seen which evoked the conversation between these two beings, or it could mean the actual events themselves as delineated in vs.10-12.

Qualification 2 “Which was spoken.”

This clause defines the section of the vision being referred to as the one that was contained in speech, as opposed of the vision of the evening and the morning that was seen. **The vision of the evening and the morning that was seen** was the *object* of the discussion in vs. 13-14 and it was the scene written in vs.10-12. The vision of **the evening and the morning that was spoken** is the actual discussion of the two personages about what they had just seen. That which as spoken is also vs.16-26, but that was the present conversation Gabriel was engaged in, so it would be reasonable to discount vs.16-26 from that which v.26 refers to.

2. *Mar'êh* in verse 27.

Verses 27.

What does *mar'eh* in verse 27 refer to?: It could refer to the whole vision. The second one is that this verse refers to the *mar'eh* in Dn8:13-14. This is the standard SDA historicist's position. The third one is that it refers to the explanation of the vision in the *mar'eh* of Gabriel in vs16-26. Goldstein takes an interesting position:

How interesting too, that the *mareh* of Daniel 8:14, unlike the rest of the *hazôn*, constitutes an audition, something that Daniel *hears*, as opposed to something he *sees*, as in the rest of the vision. Read Daniel 8; the *mareh* of the 2,300 days is revealed in words, not in visible symbols. In Daniel 9, when Gabriel returns and gives him the explanation, he doesn't give Daniel a vision of rams, goats, little horns etc.; he gives him something to hear, an audition, as with the *mareh* of chapter 8. (2003, p.78)¹

What is interesting about this statement? He defines the elements of a *mar'eh* as demonstrated in Dn8:13, 14 and Dn9:24-27, yet he fails to see that those very elements are present in Dn8:16-26. It is not only vs.13-14 that were spoken, but vs.16-26. And remember that Dn9:21 indicates that Dn8:16-26 is a *hazôn*-vision as well.

Furthermore, the word in Dn8:27 is the same as in v16. Verse 16 has the command to "understand the vision." Verse 27 has similar comments but in the opposite direction. He was appalled at the vision and did not understand it. When one looks at what Gabriel makes Daniel understand from the explanation in verses 18-26, it is clear that he is explaining the *hazôn* of verses 2-12. And Dn9:21 calls vs16-26 a *hazôn*, therefore, as is implied in the statement in verse 26, the whole revelation is a *hazôn*.

As a further consideration, in [Assumption 1](#), I point out how the use of *mar'êh* here could apply to the appearance of himself in his own vision. And this whole experience of Daniel's is actually the experience of the Daniel-in-the-vision, and not the Daniel-having-the vision. From this perspective then, the *hazôn* in vs. 2-26 and/or the *hazôn* in vs.2-14, is also a *mar'êh* because Daniel is having a vision of himself watching these things. Therefore, in the absence of any qualifiers for the word in v.27, we must take the widest meaning for the word, and include the entire revelation.²

3. The use of *hazôn* in verse 26.

The pertinent text in v.26 where the word *hazôn* is use is "wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days." What does the verse here refer to? Does it mean the whole revelation in the whole chapter? Does it mean only vs.3-12? Does it mean vs.3-14?

¹ What Goldstein fails to realize in this admission is that he is intimating that the word *mar'eh* in Dn9:24 can quite rightly refer to vs.24-27. That is to say, when Gabriel is saying, "Consider the vision," he is referring, not to Dn8:14, but to Dn9:24-27.

² Another perspective to consider, is the idea that Daniel-having-the-vision, is seeing a *mar'eh* of himself having a vision in vs.3-12 (cf. v2), and then he sees a *mar'eh* of Gabriel till the end of the chapter. This would define the whole revelation as a *mar'eh*, as well as a *hazôn*-vision.

These points are discussed more fully in the paper on [Assumption 1](#), but briefly. Dn8:1 calls the whole revelation a *hazôn*. Dn8:15 applies *hazôn* to vs. 2-14; and Dn9:21, like Dn8:1 calls the section of the chapter where Gabriel is present (i.e., vs 16-25) a *hazôn*. Thus, the whole of the chapter is called a *hazôn* up to v.27. In my view then, when Gabriel says, “Shut the vision,” I understand Gabriel to mean that the whole revelation is to be “shut.” This would include vs.2-26 and would undoubtedly come with short scribal comments at the beginning and the end of the document as was customary. Therefore, what was effectively shut was the whole chapter, as we have it.

E. The Meaning of “There was not Understanding.”

1. The Possibilities: Who did not have understanding?

It should be observed in the writings of Daniel that when he talks of understanding in relation to his visions, he usually is referring to himself. One need only read Dn7:28; Dn10:1,2 ad 12: 8,9 to see that the experience Daniel commits to writing is the advancement of his own understanding as illuminated by the revelations. Ultimately it cannot be decided whether this statement means either of these two options, but I tend to favour the first.

1. It could mean that Daniel did not understand, and him alone.
2. It could mean that others, including Daniel did not understand.³

2. Means the 2300 days were not understood.

We are told that the word *mar'êh* links the 2300-days to verse 26; and verse 26 uses the terms “evening morning” which is linked to v13,14⁴. This linking then is used to argue that it was the 2300-days that he did not understand. My argument is that the link between the *mar'eh* “that was not understood” and the *mar'eh* of “the evening and the morning” is too remote to say they are the same. But given that, even if it refers to the whole vision, the issues that would trouble him the most are the new items that have been revealed in Dn8. And these new items in the vision are the ones that are encompassed by the 2300-day period of oppression by the little horn.

3. Means other things beside the 2300 days were not understood.

The *mar'êh* in verse 27 is seen to be linked to v16, which is the thing the man told Gabriel to explain to Daniel. From the explanation, we can see Gabriel covers everything from v3-12. Therefore, the *mar'êh* in both v16 and v27 refers to the whole vision of vs2-14.

Another real possibility is the *mar'êh* in verse 27 applies to all the vision, including the explanation of vs 16-26, since Dn9:21 calls these verses a

³ Some SDA authors intimate here that he consulted with his friends and they also failed to understand the import of the vision.

⁴ See Shea, 1981, p.235f.

hazôn, and *hazôn* and *mar'êh* are virtually synonymous here, it would include everything that the Daniel-in-the-vision saw, which was v2-26.

The understanding of the 2300 days does not mean the message of the vision is a pleasant one.

4. Some Examples of what it could mean:

Could be why could God allow it happen to Israel again?

This would be a source of many disconcerting thoughts. There is no clue in the vision as to whether the nation of Israel is faithful to God at the time of the invasion of the little horn power, or whether they have abandoned their covenant with God again. It does not touch this issue at all. This would be one of the key issues Daniel would be looking for, given his knowledge of the writings of Jeremiah and the scriptures. He understood the principles behind the exile. Was it going to happen for the same reason again at the time of the end?

Ellen White's comments on the topic:

As the terrible persecution to befall the church was unfolded to the prophet's vision, physical strength gave way. ([1888](#), p. 325)

Notice the following writers who take a lead from White. First, from Shea:

Perhaps the particular part of the of the instruction from the *mar'ê* that Daniel did not understand and that shocked him so much was how the little horn power could trample down God's host, his sanctuary, and its sacrifice under foot for so long a period of time as the 2300 evening-mornings mentioned in this connection. ([1981a](#), p.236)

From Weber:

Horried at the atrocities that God's people and His truth would suffer, the elderly prophet had temporarily succumbed. By the time he recovered, the angel had gone, leaving Daniel "astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it" (verse 27). ([Weber, 1985](#), pp. 42,44)

From Smith:

In view of the long period of oppression and the calamities which were to come upon his people, Daniel fainted and was sick certain days. ([1944](#), p.191)

From Questions on Doctrine:

The dread prospect of the terrible persecution to come upon the people of God evidently caused the aged prophet suddenly to faint and become ill (verse 27). ([Seventh-day Adventists, 1957](#), p.269)

1. Lack of understanding more than just a date

There is no hint that Daniel's lack of understanding was due to the absence of a starting point. The statement in v27 concerning his lack of understanding is very similar to an identical statement in Dn12:8. In that statement his query relates to another time

period – “the time, times and a half.” (v6) His query concerning the “end of these things” (12:8) was not a query concerning the end point of the period, but rather the outcome, the things beyond the end of earthly history when God intervenes directly into the affairs of men. This information was however not given to Daniel.

1a. An example that “no understanding” could mean he understands the broad outline of the vision.

A1. This example illustrates the point that Daniel’s lack of understanding is not necessarily tied to the things he has heard (cf., 12:8), but can also refer to the implications of the things he heard or saw. In other words, the vision he saw raised more questions and perplexities than what it answered for the prophet. After receiving a so-called “complete” vision – with a full interpretation – Daniel says that his “cogitations much troubled him.” (Dn7:28)⁵ Why would that be if the interpretation was complete? Because Daniel was an intelligent man, and his analysis of his visions went beyond the mere details of the vision with its interpretation to the deeper implications of the vision.

It would not have been the four beasts that upset Daniel, because he already knew about the four kingdoms from the dream in chapter 2. It would not be the concept of the judgment of God on the nations because Daniel already knew that. The thing that especially struck Daniel in chapter 7 was the fourth beast and in particular, the little horn power: “the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.” (v.21) The information that he got in the explanation was: “he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. (v.25)

Now Daniel had been given the reassurance throughout the vision that the saints would inherit the earth: Notice verse 18 “But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever,” and in verse 27 “and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

Yet in spite of these assurances, Daniel still says, “my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me” (v.28). So what would unsettle him? Primarily, the ordeal faced by the people of God at the hands of this of this horn power. The Adult Sabbath School Quarterly for the first quarter, 1987, takes a similar view:

After receiving the vision recorded in chapter 7, Daniel had troubled thoughts (Dan 7:28). No doubt, the concept of a blasphemous power wearing out the saints upset him. (See verse 25). Naturally, he would ask, Why does God allow this? But he was wise enough to keep the matter to himself. He did not want to spread seeds of doubt or spread discouragement. Two years after the vision of the four beasts his concerns were still unsolved...([Keough, 1987](#), p.64)

⁵ Note Smith’s comment on the completeness of the interpretation in Dn7: “The vision of Daniel 7 was explained to Daniel by ‘one of them that stood by,’ probably an angel; but we have no information as to what angel, nor is there anything in that vision which needed further explanation.” ([1944](#), p.197)

. Notice the comments by Nichol, “A revelation of the future history of the saints greatly astonished and saddened the prophet.” (1976, p. 834) In this chapter [ch.7], Daniel is shown for the first time the future forebodings for the people of God. This is new. And I believe it is this that troubles him. But that is not all the information given to Daniel on this topic.

A2 To the disturbing facts revealed to Daniel in the revelation recorded in ch7 – that the horn power of the fourth world empire would “speak great words against the most High,” “wear out the saints of the most High” and “to think to change times and laws” (7:25) – is added in the revelation in ch8, the fact that this horn power would “magnify himself to (marg. against) the prince of the host,” that “by him [the horn power] the daily sacrifice was taken away,” and that “the place of his sanctuary was cast down.” Dn8:11

A3 Assuming that Daniel was familiar with the writings of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the relation of this perplexing revelation to other revelations given by God concerning the post-exilic promise of restoration of covenantal privileges and responsibilities posed questions concerning God’s willingness to let Israel suffer invasion again, or questions concerning a future national apostasy by post-exilic Jews. What would be the cause of these dreadful details of the future of Daniel’s people? As can be seen from these thoughts, there is more involved in the visions and interpretations than the mere details. **There is nothing in v26, 27 to even hint that Daniel’s perplexity is related to the starting point for the 2300 days.** There is evidence however, that Daniel’s lack of understanding is related to the vision of the evening and the morning in v26 which refers to v14, which in turn refers to the dreadful events predicted in vs10-12. Also similar statements in Dn8:27 and 7:28 lend support to the position that the visions raised similar perplexities for the prophet.

Why should the people of God and their prince be destroyed?

Dn7 has the enemies “wearing out the saints of the Most High.” Dn8 adds detail to that. He is going to “cast some of the stars to the ground to the ground and trample on them.” He is going to destroy the people of God and make a stand against their prince. Furthermore, he will overtake the land then abuse the worship system of the Israelites. It is not clear in Dn8 whether the Prince of the host is overcome by the horn power or not. It is unclear. Dn12 makes it clear that he does.

This is different from what Daniel experienced from the Babylonians. They only destroyed the city and the sanctuary. They did not set up a parody of the sanctuary system in the place the Israelites considered sacred. The enemy referred to in this chapter will do things differently than the Assyrians, the Babylonians or the Persians. He is going to indulge in satanic activities against the people of God. He is going to practise “craft” and will be successful in achieving his malevolent designs. And God will not intervene. He will let it happen.

This will be different from what Daniel is familiar with. There are no conditions here. There is no deal: “If you follow me and are obedient to my ways, I will deliver you.” Here again we have a change in the way Israel’s relationship with God impacts on the outcome on the way Israel was to be delivered from her enemies.

- In the times of Isaiah and Hezekiah, the arrangement was simple: Trust in the Lord and the Lord will deliver you from having these Assyrians ruling over you.”
- In the times of Jeremiah and Daniel, it was a case of “Submit to the enemy, and acknowledge his sovereignty over you and you will be spared from being violated and destroyed as a city and a people.”
- In the time of the end, it is irrelevant whether Israel is faithful to God or not. The enemy was going to be allowed to sport not only with the people of God and their property, but also with their worship service – the ultimate insult to the national psyche of the people – since the worship service represented to them their relationship to God, the universe, each other and their own souls. To sport with what would insult the very core of the people. And this prophecy states that this enemy will be allowed to do this until he comes to his end.

The tone of the prophecy is one of fatalism. That is to say, regardless of the faithfulness of the people of God, this enemy is going to destroy the people of God. This is different from the unctious from the old covenant spoken in the Torah. Why should this be? What is the purpose of going through the whole drama of rebuilding the national icons and enticing the people back to Palestine, when everything that is done is going to be destroyed yet again. The very things experienced by Daniel and his peers at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar are going to be repeated, but this time there is nothing the people of God can do to prevent it. God has decreed it to occur and it will happen. No national repentance, no total national holiness will avert this crisis. How can one avoid it? By not returning to the Holy Land? By not making yourself a target? But then that would be a violation of the will of God and the loss of the land to which the whole national identity is rooted.

How could anyone in Babylon understand this? It is outside the scope of the concepts of the Torah. It is outside the parameters, not only of the early prophets but also the exilic prophets as well. There was nothing in the scriptures that Daniel had access to that could help him understand this concept. This prophecy was pushing the barriers of God’s purposes in the earth beyond anything known up to that time. It was fearful news. It put a cloud over all the hope that was in the promise of the return to Palestine after the seventy years of exile.

Some of the questions this vision engenders include:

- Why does it happen?
- Is it Israel’s sins again?
- Is this exile for nothing?
- Will posterity forget the experiences of the exiles and fail to learn the lessons they had to learn under suffering?

- What is the relationship between the covenant with Moses and the way God allows evil to rule Israel?
- What about the other visions of Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel and their visions for the future? Are they irrelevant?
- This vision seems to be at odds with the future painted by the writings of these prophets. What is the correct view? Can there be any harmony between this vision and the other prophets?
- Why does no other prophet talk about this issue?

It will be noticed that the central issues that I have focused on revolve around the activities of the little horn power. One could say from that, that in reality I am saying that it is the *mar'eh* of the 2300-days that is the focus of attention in v27 when Daniel says there was no understanding on the matter. That in essence is correct, but for different reasons than those stated by SDA historicists.

The *mar'eh* in v.27 is unqualified and must remain so. It is understood to mean its fullest sense, in accordance with v16 –the whole vision. It does not focus on the time period of the pollution of the sanctuary. But the significant part (vs10-12) of the first part of the vision (vs. 2-12) that got the attention of the two personages, also takes up the lion's share of the explanation in vs18-25. So, in saying the whole *mar'eh*, *Daniel* does in essence, focus on the activities of the little horn, because *that* is the focus of the vision. The information of the three kingdoms was known. That is not new, and the angel does not dwell on them in the explanation. He focuses on the activities of the horn power perpetuated during the 2300 evenings-mornings, and in saying the *mar'eh* by itself, he is saying that the theme of the vision concerns the activities of the horn power. This is further confirmed when he uses the title "The vision of the evening and the evening." It is the activities that occur within the time frame of this period that are the theme of this vision and what cause angst for Daniel.

Daniel's Lack of Understanding and Dn12:8

It will be noticed in Dn12:8 that Daniel hears that when the power of the people of God is totally broken, the end will come. The very next statement is that Daniel did not understand. Here this association occurs again; between God allowing evil to pulverise the people of God until a set time and Daniel's lack of knowledge. Why does that happen? The very next thought Daniel wants us to know is that he did not understand. My assertion is that it is this issue that plagues Daniel in Dn8, and it continues to plague him after the visions have finished. It is the one question that remains unanswered by Daniel's revelations.

Daniel's lack of understanding cannot relate to the outcome for the people of God because he has been told many times, both in Dn2, Dn7 and Dn12 that the saints will inherit the earth. Daniel understood these. His lack of understanding relates to something else. I assert that the juxtaposition here in Dn12 with Daniel's lack of understanding and the utter pulverisation of the Jews by the last evil power here in verse 8 is the key to this lack of understanding, both here and in Dn8>

5. Does not mean he did not understand the vision. SDA historicist authors say he understood all except the start of the 2300days (Therefore, they do not take the statement literally.) Cf Dn12:8.

There are many statements of SDA historicists indicating that all was understood in Dn8 except the start to the 2300-days. Here one quoted earlier:

One feature seen in the overall *chazôn* was the “two thousand and three hundred days” of Daniel 8:14. This special scene is referred to as “the vision [mar’êh] “of the evening and the morning” (verse 26).... It will be remembered that according to Daniel 8:26,27, it was the mar’êh “of the evening and the morning” that Daniel did not understand. It was not the vision as a whole, for all but the scene of the evening and the morning had been explained. ([Seventh-day Adventists, 1957](#), p.271)

Therefore, the statement that he did not understand the *mar’êh* in verse 27 means that he did understand everything except one point. Therefore, they do not take verse 27 to mean the whole vision, they understand it to mean just the “*mar’êh* which was spoken,” referring to vs13-14.

Daniel 12:8,9 illustrates a similar incident. Daniel seeks information about events beyond the parameters set by God for Gabriel to explain. He is not given the answer. Does that mean then that he did not understand the vision revealed to him? In Dn10:1,2 we read Daniel saying when he came to write up this experience later that he did indeed understand the revelation. Therefore, the fact that the prophet has questions and problems to solve, in no way indicates that he thereby does not understand the “mechanical” interpretation of the symbols of the vision.

F. How can you be appalled / disheartened from something you do not understand? Cf. verse 27

The normal situation for feeling disheartened or appalled at something is that you usually feel that way about something that you understand but unfortunately carries a negative message for you. But in the case of a prophet like Daniel, one may be disappointed for not being given an interpretation, but how rarely would one be disheartened or appalled to the point of having to spend some time recuperating before continuing normal duties. This response in Dn8:27 is something deeper than the mere lack of an understanding of a time period. Look at the issue in Dn12:8,9. Here is the lack of understanding. There is no record of Daniel becoming sick because something was not explained to him. So, for Daniel to feel that way about something he does not understand is out of the ordinary.

My answer is that he was disheartened because he did not understand the vision in one sense – that of the implications of the revelation (–but he did understand the vision in another sense – of understanding the symbols of the vision). How can we tell that he understood the symbols of the vision? The simplest answer to this is to say that that is what the SDA historicists say. They say all was understood except the start date for the 2300 days. But the *real* evidence that he did understand the symbols is the amount of interpretation that did *not* need to be given for aspects of the vision. (See [Assumption 1](#) for the study outlining this.) The angel knew exactly what needed a comment on, and that is what he gives Daniel. The explanation including the start date

is given in Dn8. The angel focuses in vs18-26 only on the gaps and fills them. In some cases there are explanations given for things that are not given in the vision. All this proves that Gabriel is moulding his message to make *this* man understand the vision. He is catering for gaps in Daniel's knowledge, not everyone who will read this in later days.

The SDA historicist's answer is that he was appalled or disheartened because he could not work out the start date for the 2300 days, and by saying that, they trivialise the deeper issues that are implicit in the vision. There were much deeper issues at stake here, and to say that it was merely over the starting date for the 2300-days is to miss the larger issues entirely.

Summary of the First section.

A. In the first section of this paper, I examined the position of SDA historicist writers, pioneer and contemporary, and their understanding of the phrase "there is not understanding."

- I looked at Cottrell's method of emending the text and concluded his suggestion was unsatisfactory;
- I looked at the method adopted by Questions on Doctrine it had a whole baggage of assumptions associated with its position, it could not be endorsed;
- I then looked at Smith's method, and noted he did the same method of QOD and insinuated a collection of assumptions into his definition of the phrase.

B. Then I looked at the choice of Hebrew words for "vision" in vs.26 and 27. I concluded:

- The careful grammatical structure in v.26 to define *mar'eh* there had to limit its reference to v.13-14.
- The use of *mar'eh* in v.27 fails to include any qualifiers as used in v.26a and so the same conclusions for that word cannot be made for the occurrence for it here. Here it should be taken in its widest sense and applied in the first instance to vs13-26, on the basis that v.13-14 is unquestionably a *mar'eh* vision, and v.16-26 is also a *mar'eh*-vision of Gabriel.
- The command to "shut the *hazôn* –vision in v.26, without any qualifiers as we find in v.13, refers to the whole revelation, since Dn9:21 applies *hazôn* to vs.16-26, and v.13 calls the vs.3-12 a *hazôn*; and Dn8:1 calls the whole revelation a *hazôn*.

C. I then looked at the varieties of meanings for the statement "there was not understanding." This included:

- Who did not have understanding?
- It could mean the 2300 days were not understood?
- It could mean other things beside the 2300 days were not understood.

D. I then looked at some examples of what it could mean, including:

- He could not understand how God could allow it to happen to Israel again.
- His lack of understanding could involve more than just a date.
- His statement of lack of understanding could mean that he did understand the broad outline of the vision.

E. I then looked at the contradiction of the text saying it did not understand the vision, when in fact, SDA historicists say he understood all of the vision, with the exception of one thing. One does not need the start of the 2300 days to be able to understand the rest of the vision. The start of the time period is just a small part of the understanding and the rest of the revelation is not dependent upon us understanding the exact time of commencement of the time period. The text in v.27 does not say he understood *all except* the start of the time period. It says he did not understand *any* of it.

F. I also looked at the contradiction of being appalled and sickened by the fact of not being able to understand something.

The Translation of Dn8: 27.

Having covered the first point of the paper, this second part of the paper will look at the translation of the text and see its implications.

Here is the BHS text of Dn8: 26, 27:

וְאַתָּה סָתַם הַחֲזוֹן כִּי לַיָּמִים רַבִּים׃
 27 וְאַנִּי דָּנִיֵּאל נִהְיֵיתִי^a וְנִחַלִּיתִי יָמִים וְאַקֹּם וְאַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־מְלַאכְתּוֹ
 הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאַשְׁתַּוְּמָם עַל־הַמַּרְאָה^b וְאֵין מִבֵּין׃ פ

A literal translation of v.27 would read: “And I Daniel was faint and sick, days, and I rose and I did the work of the king and I was desolated/disheartened over/concerning the vision and there was not understanding.”

There are some Apparatus Criticus notations in the text:

- Next to the 3rd word *nihyêthî* (that is translated “fainting”), we have “^a” footnote. The Apparatus says concerning this word: “>G⁶, dttg?” Amplified, this cryptic statement means: “this word is missing from Origen’s Septuagint and is perhaps a dittography?” That is to say, the clause “I fainted” could be a dittography, a repetition of the following

word (As I have done here). Granted, there is a close similarity between them and the similarity in meaning, this option is a very plausible comment.

This would render the text, “And I Daniel was sick, days, and I rose and I did the business of the king ...”

- b. The second comment ^{“b”} against “*mar’êh*” says: “ Ms – ‘-ah.’” This cryptic comment means that some manuscripts have *mar’ah* instead of *mar’êh*. The use of *mar’ah* occurs in Dn10:7, 8, 16, as well and refers specifically to the contents of a vision as opposed to the method of revelation – a *hazôn*-vision. ⁶ In chapter 10, it referred specifically to the vision of the dazzling personage. He was the sum and substance of the “vision,” and what he says and does is included as well. Would it apply in Dn8? Is it a viable alternate? Could it be applied to just the angel Gabriel? That is a possibility, using the paradigm by Shea and others for the meaning of *mar’êh*.⁷ That means the word in v27 would be referring to verses 16-26. This would mean that the explanation of the vision by Gabriel made him feel appalling. It could also apply to seeing himself in vision (cf vs2-3), which would in turn mean that v27 would be referring to the whole vision, as there is no qualifying clause to limit the meaning of *mar’ah* to vs 13-14 as was done in v26, where a qualifying adjectival clause limited the word from meaning the whole vision to just the section that was spoken.

But given that the word is not used in Dn8 at all, but *mar’êh* is used, and used more than once, and used nearby, in verse 26, it is possibly a better choice for *mar’êh* than it is for *mar’ah*.

Summary of comments on the Translation of “there was not understanding.”

- Probably accept the suggestion that the word *nihyêthî* is a dittography and not include the idea of fainting;
- The choice as to whether we should see this word as *mar’êh* rather than *mar’ah* leans more toward choosing the former. This then, allows us to consider its usage with other occurrences of the same word in the chapter.
- Therefore, the lack of understanding in v.27 is a general statement applying to the whole vision, not just to vs.13-14, as is done in v.26. This coincidence of the meaning of *mar’êh* referring to what is also called a

⁶ The Apparatus Criticus in BHS suggests that *mar’ah* in Dn10:7 (the first one of the two in that verse), v.8 and v.16 should be *mar’eh*. The comment at Dn10:7 is: “T–eh ut l. 8.27, id 8^a, 16^c” which expanded means “The Targums reads *mar’eh* at this verse, as it reads (ut lectio) in Dn8:27. This should also apply for the occurrence of *mar’eh* in the first part of 10:8 and the third part of 10:16.”

⁷ See Assumption 1 for extended discussion on this.

hazôn correlates to the same usage in Dn10-12 where the revelation there is called at the same time a *mar'eh* and a *hazôn*.

Conclusion

- The use of *mar'eh* in v26 applies to vs 13-14 and not to the full vision, since it is qualified by the clause “which was spoken.” Only vs 13-14 were spoken. The rest in vs2-12 was seen.
- If v26 did not have “which was spoken,” it could refer to either vs10-12 or to vs13-14. It is this clause which limits the statement to vs.13-14.
- The admission that v26 refers to v13-14 does not, in any way, mean that *mar'eh* in verse 27 means the same thing. The unqualified use of *mar'eh* here must be considered as the same usage occurring in vs16, which vs 18-26 indicates that it means the whole vision.
- Thus, the unqualified incidents of *mar'eh* here are for all practical purposes here, synonymous with the meaning of *hazôn*.

The Assumption Chain used in this assumption

The basis of the assumption that Daniel’s lack of understanding is because he did not understand the starting point for the 2300 days, presupposes the following:

- The explanation in Dn8 is incomplete ([Assumption 5](#))
- Information had not been given in Dn8 ([Assumption 7](#))
- That the starting point wasn’t given by Gabriel ([Assumption 3](#));
- The three previous points occur because Daniel was sick before the explanation was completed ([Assumption 4](#));
- that the 2300 days begins with the beginning of the vision of ch8 ([Assumption 2](#));
- that the answer in v14 to the question of Dn8:13 refers to vs2-12 and not to vs10-12 ([Assumption 2](#));
- The previous assumption depends on the assumption that the two different words for “vision” in Dn8 mean different things ([Assumption 1](#)).

And as has been asserted in the papers on these assumptions, they have no basis in fact.

In conclusion, the occurrence of *mar'eh* in Dn8:27 saying Daniel was shocked by the *mar'eh* and did not understand it, refers to the same thing as the *mar'eh* in verse 16. Gabriel’s explanation following v.16 shows that he understood

this to mean the whole vision of vs.2-14. This of course includes the start for the 2300-days To say that what he did not understand in this vision was the starting point of the 2300-days invokes a whole chain of assumptions, the papers to which argues they are invalid.

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