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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 14

**The meaning for HTK is best translated as “cut off”
rather than “determined.”**

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The Purpose of This Assumption

The meaning of the Hebrew word for “determined” in Dn9: 24 has, since the inception of the Advent movement, been an important issue. Even in the Millerite days debate was hot over this issue.

The issues in the debate were these: if the word rightly meant “decreed” or “determined” then this would mean that God simply “decreed” or “determined” that his covenantal grace would extend to Israel for another “seventy weeks”. There would be no support in the verb directly for the argument that the time period in Dn9 is an integral part of the time period in Dn8. True, it could be argued that God had “decreed” or “determined” that “70 weeks” of the 2300 ereb-boqer would be allotted to the Jews. But that was more remote idea than using a meaning like “cut off” to directly link it with the time period of Dn8. One would have to assume more by using the meaning of the verb as ‘decreed’ or “determined” than using the meaning of “cut off.”

And since the primary meaning of the verb quite rightly has the sense of “to cut,” it was felt that this was the correct meaning to use in Dn9:24. Thus, because the Advent movement argued for a very close relationship between the time periods of Dn8 and Dn 9 which was indeed, in their thinking, the true meaning of the text, they felt justified in supporting this meaning of the word.

Illustrations of the Use of this Method of Argumentation

Included below are some representative samples of the argumentation used throughout the years to support the standard meaning of “cut-off.”

William Miller

Towards the end of The Memoirs of William Miller by Sylvester Bliss, he looks at those who reviewed Miller’s views after 1844. Though Miller may have drawn his initial conclusions using just a Bible and a concordance, here we see Miller’s familiarity with the pertinent commentators on the relevant matters. Chapter 14 of Bliss’ Memoir’s of Miller outlines the ten major points of objection people had against Miller’s position and then the chapter proceeds to compare the differing views of the varying authorities

who were pro and con. Bliss makes an important comment on Miller's position, including the manner in which he connected the 2300 days with the 70 weeks:

Mr Miller laid no claim to *originality* in his position respecting any of the above points; but maintained that they were established opinions of the church., and being so, that his conclusions from such premises were well sustained by human as well as divine teachings. While his opponents attacked the view he took of these points, no one of them assailed the whole; but each admitted his correctness on some of the points; and, among them, the whole were admitted. (1853, p.185)¹

The sixth point covered by Bliss was the "Connection Between the 70 Weeks and the 2300 Days." He says:

This was a *vital* point in the chronology of Mr M to bring the end in 1843. The Rev. William Hales D.D., the most learned modern chronologer, says: "This simple and ingenious adjustment of the chronology of the seventy weeks, considered as forming a branch of the 2300 days was originally due to the sagacity of Hans Wood, Esq.,...and published by him in an anonymous commentary on the Revelation of ST. John, Lon, 1787." – *New Anal. Chron.*, vol 2, p544. He elsewhere calls it "the most ingenious of its class."

The argument which Mi Miller used in support of this point was based upon the literal meaning of the Hebrew word which in our version of Daniel 9: 24, is rendered "determined" – *cut off, or cut out*, – and the circumstances in which Gabriel appeared to Daniel, as stated in the ninth chapter, with the instruction given.

In the 8th chapter of Daniel is recorded a vision which was to extend to the cleansing of the sanctuary, and to continue 2300 days. Daniel had "sought for the meaning" of that vision, and a voice said; "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." Gabriel said to Daniel: "I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation; for at the time appointed, the end shall be;" and then proceeded to explain the symbols, but said nothing of their duration. At the close of the explanation Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; and he says he "was astonished at the vision, but none understood it."

Three years subsequent to that vision, Daniel – understanding "by books the number of years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem – set his face unto the Lord to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. He proceeded to confess his own sins and the sins of his people, and to supplicate the Lord's favor on the sanctuary that was desolate. While he was thus speaking, Daniel says;- "Gabriel, whom I had seen in *the vision* at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation; and he informed me and talked with me, and said, 'O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the "beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved; therefore understand the matter and consider *the vision*. Seventy weeks are *determined*,'" &c., "from the going forth of the decree to restore and build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince;" – after which Jerusalem was to be made desolate "until the consummation."-Dan. 9: 20-27.

¹ The points Bliss covers included: The fourth kingdom of Daniel 7th chapter; The Little Horn of the same; The Little Horn of the 8th; The Length of the Prophetic Periods; The Commencement of the Seventy Weeks of Dan.9th; The Connection with the 2300 days of Dan. 8th; The Rise of the Little Horn of the 7th; The Nature of Christ's Second Advent; The Return of the Jews; and finally, The Epoch of the Resurrection. (Ibid)

Dr Gill, a distinguished divine and scholar, rendered the word “determined” *cut off*, and is sustained by good scholars.

Hengstenberg, who enters into a critical commentary of the original text, says: “But the very use of the word, which does not elsewhere occur, while others, much more frequently used, were at hand, if Daniel had wished to express the idea of determination, and of which he has elsewhere, and even in this portion, availed himself, seems to argue that the word stands from regard to its original meaning, and represents the seventy weeks, in contrast with a determination of time (*en platei*), as a period cut off from subsequent duration, and accurately limited,” *Christology of the Old Test.*, Vol. 2, p.301. Washington, 1889.

Gesenius, in his Hebrew lexicon, gives *cut off* as the definition of the word and many others of the first standing as to learning and research, and several versions have thus rendered the word.

[Bliss footnotes here: “A Hebrew scholar of high reputation, makes the following remarks upon the word:’ The verb *chathak* (in the Niphal form, passive, *nethak*) is found *only* in Daniel 9: 24. No other instance of its use can be traced in the entire Hebrew Testament. As Chaldaic and Rabbinical usage must give us the true sense of the word; if we are guided by these, it has the signal significance of CUTTING, OF CUTTING OFF. In the Chaldee- Rabbinic Dictionary of Stockius, the word *chathak* is thus defined:- “Scidit, abscidit, conscidit, inscidit, excidit’ – *To cut*, cut away, cut in pieces, to cut or engrave, to *cut off*. Mercerus, in his ‘Thesaurus,’ furnishes a specimen of Rabbinical usage in the phrase *chathikah shelbasar* - ‘a piece of flesh,’ or ‘a cut of flesh.” He translates the word as it occurs in Daniel 9: 24 by *præcisa est* – WAS CUT OFF. In the literal version of the Arias Montanus it is translated ‘decissa est – WAS CUT OFF; in the marginal reading, which is grammatical correct, it is rendered by the plural, ‘decisæ sunt’ - *were cut off*. In the Latin version of Junius and Tremellius, *nechtak* is rendered ‘decisa sunt’ – *were cut off*.

“Again: in Theodotion’s Greek version of Daniel (which is the version used in the Vatican copy of the Septuagint as being the most faithful), it is rendered by ... - *were cut off*; and in the Venetian copy by ... – *have been cut*. The idea of *cutting off* is pursued in the Vulgate, where the phrase is ‘abbreviatæ sunt,’ have been shortened. Thus *Chaldaic and Rabbinical authority, and that of the earliest versions, -the Septuagint and Vulgate,* - give the SINGLE SIGNIFICATION OF CUTTING OFF TO THIS VERSE.” - End of Footnote-FB]

Such being the meaning of the word, and the circumstances under which the prophecy of the seventy weeks was given, Mr Miller claimed that *the vision* which Daniel was called on to consider, and respecting which Gabriel was to give him skill and understanding, was *the vision* of the 8th chapter; of which Daniel sought the meaning, which Gabriel was commanded to make him understand, but which, after Gabriel’s explanation, none understood; and that the seventy weeks of years – i.e., four hundred and ninety that were *cut off* – were cut off from the 2300 days of that vision; and, consequently, that those two periods must be dated from the same epoch, and the longer extend 1810 years after the termination of the shorter.

The same view was advocated by several English divines. Rev. M. Habershon says: “In this conclusion I am happy in agreeing with Mr Cunninghame, who says, ‘I am not aware of any more probable era which can be selected for the commencement of the 2300 years than that which has been chosen by some recent writers, who supposed this period to have begun at the same time with the seventy weeks of Daniel, or in the B.C., 457, and consequently that it will terminate in the year 1843.’” – *Hist. Dis.*, p.307.

The celebrated Joseph Wolf, though dating the seventy weeks and 2300 days from B.C., 453, commenced them at the same epoch. – *Missionary Labors*, p.259. And Dr. Wilson of Cincinnati, who is high authority in the Presbyterian Church in a discourse on “Cleansing the Sanctuary,” says, “I undertake to show that Daniel’s seventy weeks’ is the beginning or first part of the ‘two thousand

three hundred days allotted for the cleansing of the sanctuary; that Daniel's time, times, and a half² is the last or concluding part of the 2300 days."

Prof. Stuart, Dr Dowling, Prof. Chase, and others, who denied the year-day calculation when applied to the 2300 days, of course dissented from Mr Miller on this point. ...Of those who admitted the year-day theory, Dr. Hamilton, Dr Jarvis, Mr Hinton, and Dr Pond, denied any connection between the two periods. Dr Hamilton connected the 2300 days B.C. 784 and ended them with the era of the Reformation, A.D. 1516. The others did not hazard any opinion respecting the time of their commencement.

Mr Miller was supposed to be sustained on this point by Prof Bush, who did not consider him in any serious error respecting the time. And Mr. Shimeal said, "I trust it will not be deemed a violation of that mockery which becomes me, if for the reasons, here given, I withhold my assent from the conclusion of the Rev. Dr. Jarvis on this subject; which is that the seventy weeks form no part of the two thousand three hundred days." –p.34. (1853, pp.193-197)

From Bliss' viewpoint, Miller understood the "standard Protestant" position on the relationship between the 2300 days and the seventy weeks, and he also understood the position put forward by Hans Wood in 1787 and later by others – that the seventy weeks was "cut off" from the 2300 days. He presents the concept of the "cutting off" of the 70 weeks from the 2300 days as being a "vital" point in Miller's argument. Clearly then, Miller would have used this lexical argument, even though he does not raise the point in his printed lectures of 1836. Indeed, he may have felt these points were commonplace, and probably did not need defending continually. A similar opinion was held of the year-day principle at that time. Bliss quotes correspondence from Prof. Bush to Prof. Stuart on this matter:

I have in my own collection, writers on the prophecies, previous to the time of Mede, who interpret the 1260 days as so many years, and who are so far from broaching this as a new interpretation, that they do not even pause to give the grounds of it, but proceed onwards, as if no risk were run in taking for granted the soundness of the principle which *came down to them accredited by the IMMEMORIAL usage of their predecessors.*" –*Hierophant*, Vol 1, p.245.

If the old established principle of the year-day theory is wrong, then, said Prof. Bush, "not only has the whole Christian world been led astray for ages by a mere *ignis fatuus* of false hermeneutics, but the church is at once cut loose from every chronological mooring, and set adrift in the open sea, without the vestige of a beacon, light-house, or star, by which to determine her bearings or distances from the desired millennial haven to which she had hoped she was heading. (*Ibid*, p. 192)²

² If one was to read such works as [Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers](#), or other histories of the use of Daniel and the Revelation in the Christian Church, the one thing that is most striking is that each generation throughout the Christian era used the prophecies to make them fit something relevant in their own day. If a statistical analysis was done on this phenomenon, and the percentage of generally accepted prophecies of each generation that were correct I believe most would be shocked at the uselessness of the majority of effort that is wasted on interpreting prophecy relative to the times in which one lives.. We would see that far from setting the church "loose from every chronological mooring, and set adrift in the open sea, without the vestige of a beacon, light-house, or star, by which to determine her bearings or distances from the desired millennial haven to which she had hoped she was heading," as Professor Bush intimates, most of these beacons, anchors, light-houses and stars have been proven invalid, even though they invigorated the church at the time. In many ways, the prophetic application of predications to one's own day is a baleful

We may therefore conclude that Miller endorsed the view that the word for “determined” in Dn9: 24 could rightfully be translated “cut off” and could be applied to the alignment of the first part of the 2300 days with the 70 weeks.

In lecture III on “Christ’s Second Coming” in his 1836 publication, he had this to say: The title of the pertinent section is “*The time or length of the vision, the 2,300 days*”. When Miller says *the vision*, he is also meaning the 2,300 days. He says on p.52 “this vision is two thousand three hundred days long, that the days are to reckoned years:”

What do we learn from the above passage? [Miller had just quoted [Dn9:21-27-FB] ... We learn that the angel Gabriel was sent to instruct Daniel and make him understand *the vision* (1836, p.48)

He then explains the portions of the seventy weeks and asks the question:

All that may be true, says the objector; but where have you proved that the seventy weeks were four hundred and ninety years? I agree I have not yet proved it, but will now do it. (Ibid)

He then explains the fulfillment of the various periods during the 490 years and concludes:

If this calculation is correct, and I think no one can doubt it, then the seventy weeks was fulfilled to a day when our Saviour suffered on the cross. Is not the seventy weeks fairly proved to have been fulfilled by years? And does not this prove that our vision and the 2300 days ought to be so reckoned? Yes, if these seventy weeks are a part of *the vision*. Yes. Well, what can a man ask for more than plain positive testimony, and a cloud of circumstances agreeing with it. But one thing remains to be proved. When did the 2300 years begin?... Let us begin it where the angel told us, from the going forth of the decree to build the walls of Jerusalem, 457 years before Christ.... (Ibid, p.49)

In his summary of the lecture, he recaps his logic as follows, without even looking at the concept of “cutting off” the seventy weeks from the 2300 days:

1. “this vision is two thousand three hundred days long, that days are to reckoned years;
2. “we learn by the instruction of Gabriel, that the seventy weeks were a part of *the vision*, and that Daniel was commanded to begin the seventy weeks at the going forth of the decree, to build the streets and walls of Jerusalem... exactly 490 years to a day, before the crucifixion of Christ..
3. “We think the proof is strong that *the vision* of Daniel begins 457 years before Christ, take which from 2300 leaves 1843, after Christ, when *the vision* must be finished.”
4. In conclusion, he reasons: “Let me ask you two or three questions. Does not the Angel say to Daniel, ix, 23, “Therefore understand the matter and consider *the vision*? Yes. Does not the angel then go on and give his instruction concerning the 70 weeks? Yes. Do you believe the bible is true? We do. Then if the bible is true, Daniel’s 70 weeks are a part of *the vision*, and 490 years were accomplished when the Messiah was cut off and not for

exercise, which, in itself sets the church adrift without a mooring. This, of course, does not refer to the general principles of Christological eschatology.

himself. Then 1810 years afterwards *the vision* is completed....But it is very reasonable to suppose it begun with the 70 weeks; for the Angel said it would establish *the vision*, that is make it sure; for if the 70 weeks were exactly fulfilled at the death of Christ, then would the remainder be in 1810 years after, which would be fulfilled A.D. 1843, as we have before shown.” (Ibid, p.52)

What is remarkable in this logic is the way Miller uses his peculiar definition of “the vision” to overcome all difficulties. The reference in Dn9:23 to vision is automatically seen to refer to the 2300 days, since, in Miller’s view, there is only one vision in the book of Daniel, given three different ways, and that vision is 2300 years long. Admittedly Miller has to appeal to logic and common sense to tie the beginning of the 2300 days to the beginning of the seventy weeks but he covers that by saying that the angel had come to explain the 2300 days (that is, *the vision*) and so his conclusion, given his reasoning, is obvious.

It is interesting to read Miller’s lectures on the evidence concerning 1843 and notice that he establishes the relationship between the seventy weeks and the 2300 days *without any reference to the meaning of “determined.”* The word “cut off” is not even used in the section in the lecture. That no one else felt Miller’s definition of *the vision* as applying to all three visions was worth perpetuating probably explains the death of this particular line of logic with its author.

Uriah Smith quotes Miller’s co-worker Josiah Litch’s view on the meaning of “determined” as “cut off.” (see the section on [Uriah Smith](#) below) This shows Miller would have been familiar with Litch’s argument but Miller does not spell it out in his printed lectures of 1836. He, in all probability, had done it in other published articles or lectures but not in this particular apologetic of his beliefs. Bliss says Miller was familiar with the position of “all the standard Protestant commentators” in the area of his theories and as well, he used “the best historians” he “could consult” in confirming his historical details. (Bliss, 1853, p. 76) Therefore, one would assume Miller’s familiarity with Litch’s argument since it was not a novel one, as Froom has established.³

Bliss gives another example of Miller discussing the relationship of these two time periods in an anecdotal snippet;

As Mr Miller’s opinions respecting the nearness and nature of the millennium became known, they naturally elicited a good deal of comment among his friends and neighbours, and also among those at a distance. Some of their remarks, not the most complimentary to his sanity, would occasionally be repeated to him.

Having heard that a physician in his neighbourhood had said, “Esquire Miller,” as he was familiarly called, “was a fine man and a good neighbour, but was a monomaniac on the subject of the advent,” Mr M. was humorously inclined to let him prescribe for his case.

One of his children being sick one day, he sent for the doctor, who, after prescribing for the child, noticed that Mr Miller was very mute in cone corner, and asked what ailed him.

“Well, I hardly know, doctor. I want your to see what does, and prescribe for me.”

³ See [Froom](#) Vol 3. Whether it is correct is another issue, which the central issue of all this research..

The doctor felt of his pulse, &c., and could not decide respecting his malady; and inquired what he supposed was his complaint.

“Well,” says Mr. Miller, “I don’t know but I am a monomaniac; and I want you to examine me, and see if I am; and if so, cure me. Can you tell when a man is a monomaniac?” The doctor blushed, and said he thought he could. Mr Miller wished to know how.

“Why,” said the doctor, “a monomaniac is rational on all subjects but one; and, when you touch that particular subject, he will become raving.”

“Well,” says Mr Miller, “I insist upon it that you see whether I am in reality a monomaniac; and if I am, you shall prescribe for and cure me. You shall, therefore, sit down with me two hours, while I present the subject of the advent to you, and if I am a monomaniac, by that time you will discover it.

The doctor was somewhat disconcerted; but Mr Miller insisted, and told him, as it was to present the state of his mind, he might charge for his time as in regular practice. The doctor finally consented; and at Mr Miller’s request, opened the Bible and read from the 8th of Daniel. As he read along. Mr Miller inquired what the ram denoted, with the other symbols presented. The doctor had read Newton, and applied them to Persia, Greece, and Rome, as Mr Miller did.

Mr Miller then inquired how long the vision of those empires was to be.

”2,300 days.”

“What!” said Mr Miller, “could these great empires cover only 2300 literal days?”

“Why,” said the doctor, “those days are years, according to all commentators; and those kingdoms are to continue 2300 years.”

Mr M. then asked him to turn to the 2d. of Daniel, and to the 7th; all of which he explained the same as Mr Miller. He was then asked if he knew when the 2300 days would end. He did not know, as he could not tell when they commenced.

Mr Miller told him to read the 9th of Daniel. He read down till he come to the 21st verse, when Daniel say “the man Gabriel,” whom he had “seen in the vision.”

“In what vision?” Mr Miller inquired.

“Why,” said the doctor, “in the vision of the 8th of Daniel.”

“Wherefore, understand the matter and consider the vision.’ He had now come, then, to make him understand that vision, had he?”

“Yes,” said the doctor.

“Well, seventy weeks are determined; what are these seventy weeks a part of?”

“Of the 2300 days.”

“Then do they begin with the 2300 days?”

“Yes,” said the doctor.

“When do they end?”

“In A.D. 33”

“Then how far would the 2300 extend after 33?”

The doctor subtracted 490 from 2300, and replied 1810.

“Why,” said he, “that is past.”

“But,” said Mr Miller, “there were 1810 from 33; in what year would that come?”

The doctor saw at once that the 33 should be added, and set down 33 and 1810, and adding them, replied 1843.

At this unexpected result the doctor settled back in his chair and colored; but immediately took his hat and left the house in a rage.

The next day he again called on Mr Miller, and looked as though he had been in the greatest mental agony.

“Why, Mi Miller,” said he, “I am going to hell. I have not slept a wink since I was here yesterday. I have looked at the question in every light, and the vision must terminate about A.D. 1843; and I am unprepared, and must go to hell.”

Mr Miller calmed him, and pointed him to the ark of safety; and about a week, calling each day on Mr Miller., he found peace to his soul, and went on his way rejoicing, as *great a monomaniac* as Mr Miller. He afterwards acknowledged that, till he made the figures 1843, he had no idea of the result to which he was coming. (1853, pp.95-97)

In this extract Miller relies on common assumptions prevalent in the community handed down through the Bible commentaries of the day, like that of the Newtons (Sir Isaac Newton and Bishop Newton), in order to bring the doctor to the same conclusion that he himself had arrived at. And again, we see Miller achieving his goal without resorting to a definition of the word “determined” or “cut off.”

Uriah Smith:

Should it be asked why our translators render the word “determined” when it so obviously signifies “cut off,” a sufficient answer would be that they doubtless overlooked the connection between the eighth and ninth chapters; and considering it improper to speak of a period of time as cut off, when nothing was given from which it could be cut off, they gave the word its topical instead of its literal meaning. (1876a, p.509)

Uriah Smith thought this was such an important point when he wrote *Looking Unto Jesus* that he devoted a whole chapter to prove the point. This material was also published in 1876 in the *Review and Herald*, Feb 17, cf., [Gordon, 1983](#), pp.509f), I quote:

“DETERMINED” MEANS “CUT-OFF.”

First Witness – “Seventy weeks are *determined*,’ literally, ‘*cut off*.’ Hebraists all admit that the word determined, in our English version, does signify ‘*cut off*.’ *Not one* has disputed it,” [Footnote: Josiah Litch, *Midnight Cry*, I vol iv, No.25, on Dan. 9:24]

Second Witness – “Seventy weeks have been cut off upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin-offerings, and to make atonement for iniquity, and to bring everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision and the prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Dan.9:24. [Footnote: Whiting’s translation]

Third Witness.- Gesenius, the standard Hebrew lexicographer, thus defines this word in his Hebrew lexicon: “*Nechtak*: Properly, to cut off; tropically, to divide; and so to determine, to decree.”

Fourth Witness. – The Chaldeo – Rabbinic Dictionary of Stockius, defines the word *nechtak* as follows: “*Scidit, abscondit, conscidit, incidit, excidit* – to cut, to cut away, to cut in pieces, to cut or engrave, to cut off.”

Fifth Witness. –Mercerus, in his ‘Thesaurus,’ furnishes a specimen of rabbinical usage in the phrase, *chatikah shel basar*, “a piece of flesh,” or “a cut of flesh.” He translates the word as it occurs in Dan 9: 24, by “*praecisa est*,” *was cut off*.

Sixth witness.- Arias Montanus in a literal version of the text translates it “*decisa est*,” *was cut off*; in the marginal reading, which is grammatically correct, the rendering is in the plural, “*decisae*,” *were cut off*.

Seventh Witness. – In the Latin version of Junius and Tremellius, “*necisa* (*the passive of chathak*) is rendered “*decisoe sunt*,” *were cut off*.

Eighth Witness. – Theodotion’s Greek version of Daniel (which is the version used in the Vatican copy of the Septuagint, as being the most faithful), renders it by HEBREW , *were cut off*; and the Venetian copy by HEBREW, *have been cut*.

Ninth Witness. –In the Vulgate the phrase is, “*abbreviate sunt*,” *have been shortened*.

“Thus Chaldaic and Rabbinical authority, and that of the earliest versions, the Septuagint and Vulgate, give the single signification of *cutting off* to this verb.”

Tenth Witness. – Hengstenberg, who enters into a critical examination of the text, says: “But the very use of the word, which does not elsewhere occur, while others, much more frequently used, were at hand if Daniel had wished to express the idea of determination, and of which he had elsewhere, and even in this portion, availed himself, seems to argue that the word stands from regard to its original meaning, and represents the seventy weeks in contrast with a determination of time (*en platei*) as a period cut off from subsequent duration, and accurately limited.’ [Footnote Christology of the Old Testament, vol ii, p. 301. Washington, 1839]

This translation is further vindicated by Professor N.N.Whiting, from whom a quotation has already been given, in the following language: “As the period of 2300 days is first given, and verses 21 and 23, compared with Dan 8:16, show that the ninth chapter furnishes an explanation of the vision in which Gabriel appeared to Daniel, and of the ‘matter’ – (the commencement of the 2300 days) – the *literal* (or rather, to speak properly, the *only*) signification demanded by the subject-matter, is that of ‘cut off,’” [Footnote. *Midnight cry*, vol iv, no 17.]

No further nor better evidence could be required on this point. Beyond question the seventy weeks are cut off from some other period; and just as evidently that other period is the 2300 days of chapter

8. Should it be asked why our translators rendered the word “determined” when it is so obviously signifies “cut off,” a sufficient answer would be that they doubtless overlooked the connection between the eight and ninth chapters; and considering it improper to speak of a period of time as cut off, when nothing was given from it could be cut off, they gave the word its tropical instead of its literal meaning.

In connection with this point, testimony from prominent writers on the prophecies, who have acknowledged the connection between Daniel 8 and 9, will be of interest. The following is an extract from an article in the *Advent Shield*, which reads:-

“ We call attention to one fact which shows that there is a *necessary* ‘connection’ between the seventy weeks of the ninth chapter, and something else which precedes or follows it, called ‘*the vision*.’ It is found in the twenty-fourth verse: ‘Seventy weeks are determined [or, cut off] upon thy people...to seal up the vision,’ etc. Now there are but two significations to the phrase ‘seal up.’ They are, first, ‘to make secret,’ and, secondly, ‘to make sure.’ We care not now in which of these significations the phrase is supposed to be used. That is not the point now before us. Let the signification be what it may, it shows that the prediction of the seventy weeks necessarily relates to something else beyond itself, called ‘the vision,’ in reference to which it performs this work, ‘to seal up.’ To talk of its sealing up itself is as much of an absurdity as to suppose that Josephus was so much afraid of the Romans that he refrained from telling the world that he thought the fourth kingdom of Daniel was ‘the kingdom of the Greeks.’ It is no more proper to say that the ninth chapter of Daniel ‘is complete in itself,’ that it would be to say that a map which was designed to show the relation of Massachusetts to the United States, referred to nothing but Massachusetts. It is no more complete in itself than a bond given in security for a note, or some other document to which it refers, is complete in itself; and we doubt if there is a schoolboy of fourteen in the land, of ordinary capacity, who would not on reading the ninth chapter, with an understanding of the clause before us, decide that it referred to something distinct from itself, called the vision. What vision it is, there is no difficulty in determining. It naturally and obviously refers to the vision which was not fully explained to Daniel, and to which Gabriel calls his attention in the preceding verse- *the vision of the eighth chapter*. Daniel tells us that Gabriel was commanded to make understand that vision (chapter 8:16). This was not fully done at that interview connected with the vision; he is therefore sent to give Daniel the needed ‘skill and understanding,’ to explain its ‘meaning’ by communicating to him the prediction of the seventy weeks.” [Footnote...*Advent Shield*, 1844.]

“We claim that the ninth of Daniel is an appendix to the eighth, and that the seventy weeks and the 2300 days, or years, commence together. *Our opponents deny this.*” [Footnote...*Signs of the Times*. 1843]

“The grand principle involved in the interpretation of the 2300 days of Dan 8:14, is that the seventy weeks of Dan. 9:24, are the first 490 days of the 2300 of the eighth chapter.” [Footnote...*Advent Shield*, p.49]

“If the connection between the seventy weeks of Daniel 9, and the 2300days of Daniel8, does not exist, the whole system is shaken to its foundation; if it does exist, as we suppose, *the system must stand.*” [Footnote...“Harmony of Prophetic Chronology,” p.33.]

Says the learned Dr. Hales, in commenting upon the seventy weeks, “This chronological prophecy was evidently designed to explain the foregoing vision, especially in its chronological part of the 2300 days.’

The question is thus authoritatively decided.

It has now been proved that, (1) that there is the clearest connection between the eighth and ninth chapters of Daniel; (2) that the seventy weeks are consequently a part of the 2300 days; (3) that these

weeks are cut off from those days; (4) that, consequently, where the seventy weeks begin, there the 2300 days begin. (1898, pp. 172-177.

[Note: It will be noticed that Smith took the material of the witnesses quoted above from Bliss, who in turn quoted from a “Hebraist of high reputation”, without naming his source. (1853, quoted above). –FB]

Smith makes this comment in his Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation:

Cut off from the 2300 Days. – But how does this language show any connection with the 2300 days, or throw any light upon that period? We answer: The language cannot be intelligently referred to anything else. The word here rendered “determined” signifies “cut off,” and no other period is given in the vision here referred to from which the seventy weeks could be cut off, except the 2300 days. How direct and natural, then, is the connection. “Seventy weeks are cut off.” Cut off from what? The 2300 days, most assuredly....Seventy weeks then, or 490 days of the 2300, were allotted to Jerusalem and the Jews. The events which were to be consummated within that period are briefly stated. (1944, pp.202f.)

James White:

“Understand the matter, and consider *the* vision; *Seventy weeks* are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city.” The word here rendered, determined, (*chathak*) signifies, literally, cut off. Gesenius in his Hebrew Lexicon defines it thus” Properly, *to cut off*; tropically, to divide; and so, to determine, to decree.” The earliest versions, the Septuagint and Vulgate, give the single signification of “cutting off” to this verb....Seventy weeks are said to be cut off from something; but there is no period given from which they can be taken, but the 2300 days of chap. viii. The seventy weeks must therefore be the first part of the 2300 days, and the date of these weeks must determine the date of those days. To deny this is to lay the word of God open to the serious imputation of gravely telling us that a certain period of time is cut off, but giving nothing from which it can be taken, and also of informing us that momentous events are to transpire at the end of the 2300 days, but furnishing no conceivable point from which to date them.

In view of this conclusive testimony that the seventy weeks are a part of the 2300 days, is it strange that strong confidence should have existed on this point? (1863, p.205)

J.N.Andrews

In most of the relevant writings reproduced in Gordon’s Pioneer Articles, J N Andrews simply regurgitated the standard argument. Here is a sample of his argumentation concerning the use of “determined” or “cut off:”

DETERMINED” IN VERSE 24, MEANS CUT OFF.

“ ‘Seventy weeks are *determined,*’ literally ‘*cut off.*’ The Hebraists all admit that the word determined, in our English version, does signify ‘*cut off.*’ Not one has disputed it.” – Josiah Litch. *Midnight Cry*, Vol. IV, No.25.

“Thus Chaldaic and Rabbinical authority, and that of the earliest versions, the Septuagint and Vulgate, give the single signification of ‘cutting off’ to this verb. Should it be inquired why a tropical sense has been attributed to it, such as ‘determining’ or ‘decreeing,’ it may be answered that the reference of the verse (in which it occurs to Dan. Viii, 12, was unobserved. It was therefore

supposed that there was no propriety in saying ‘seventy weeks are cut off,’ when there was no other period of which they could have formed a portion. But as the period of 2300 days is first given, and verses 21 and 23, compared with Dan. Viii, 16, show that the ninth chapter furnishes an explanation of the vision in which Gabriel appeared to Daniel, and of the ‘matter’ (the commencement of the 2300 days)- the literal (or rather, to speak properly, the only) signification demanded by the subject matter, is that of ‘cut off.’” – Prof. Whiting. *Midnight Cry*, Vol. IV, No. 17.

“Seventy weeks have been cut off upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin-offerings, and to make atonement for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.” Dan. ix, 24. Whiting’s Translation.

The facts which are set before us in the above, from Litch and Whiting, should not be forgotten.

The word rendered “determined.” [verse 24] literally signifies “*cut off*.”

“The vision” which Gabriel came to explain, contained the period of 2300 days; and in the explanation he tells us that “seventy weeks have been *cut off*” upon Jerusalem and the Jews. This is a demonstration that the seventy weeks are a part of the 2300 days. Hence the commencement of the seventy weeks is the date of the 2300 days. And the fact that the seventy weeks were fulfilled in 490 years, as all admit, is a demonstration that the 2300 days from which this period of 400 days was cut off is 2300 years. (1852, p. 264)

In the next extract from the *Review and Herald*, we read Andrews arguing this position with Sylvester Bliss, editor of the *Herald*, an Advent publication with differing views to that of the *Review and Herald*, which was the Seventh-day Adventist publication. Bliss apparently denied the relation between the 70 weeks and the 2300 days as endorsed by Seventh-day Adventists and published in the *Review and Herald* and Andrews takes him to task:”

But that the *Advent Herald* should deny the connection of the 70 weeks and the 2300 days is that which causes us the greatest surprise. If this is to be considered as its future position, we think its conductors should no longer claim to be the advocates of the peculiar views of Wm. Miller. Whoever wrests from Mr. Miller. Whoever wrests from Mr. Miller the view that the 70 weeks are the first 490 days of the 2300, robs him of the great argument by which he aroused the world on time, and without which he would have been able to effect but little. – As the *Herald* chooses to deny the connection of these two periods, rather than to admit that we may have been mistaken respecting the Sanctuary, we would respectfully present the following questions for its consideration:

Was not Gabriel commanded to explain to Daniel that vision in which the 2300 days was given? Did not Gabriel on that occasion explain every part of the vision to Daniel, with the exception of the Sanctuary and the 2300 days? Does not Daniel say, however, at the close of the chapter, that he was “astonished at the vision but *none* understood it?” If *none* understood it, had Gabriel fulfilled the divine mandate, “Make this man *understand* the vision?” Did not that charge still rest upon him, accomplished only in part? Was not Daniel in Chap. ix earnestly seeking God, with reference to the Sanctuary? Does not the man Gabriel whom he had seen in the vision of Chap. viii, in answer to his prayer, say to Daniel, “I am now come forth to give thee *skill* and *understanding*?” Does not he then charge him to *understand* the matter, and to *consider* the vision? Is not this a clear and unanswerable testimony, that Gabriel has now come to complete the charge given him in chapter viii, which was, “Make this man to understand the vision?” Does he not begin his explanation with the subject of time? Is not the phrase “Seventy weeks are *cut off* upon thy people &c””? Have you not proved this point at length from the testimony of such men as Dr Gill, Hengstenberg, Gesenius, and many other scholars of high standing, and also from the Septuagint and the Vulgate? What are

the 70 weeks “cut off” from? From nothing? Or from indefinite space? As the great period of 2300 days had been given in the vision of chapter viii, is it not certain, when Gabriel comes to finish the explanation of that vision, and testifies that 70 weeks are *cut off*, that they are cut off from the only period which had been given, viz., the 2300 days? Is there then the least ground for a reasonable doubt that the 70 weeks are the first 490 days of the 2300? And as the commencement of the 70 weeks in B.C., 457 – the termination of 69 of them in A.D. 27, of 69 and a half in the Spring of A.D. 31, and of the whole period in A.D. 34 – is established beyond all controversy, can there be the least question that 1810 days (the number left after cutting off 490) would extend to the Autumn of 1844 and no farther? (1853, p. 292)

In the next extract of Andrew’s, written many years after these two, he makes the following comments:

The word *determined* does not express the full sense of the Hebrew word used by the angel. The word spoken by the angel was “cut off.” The translators, not seeing the propriety of such a word in this place, for they did not note the fact that the ninth chapter is the key to the eighth, and so thought nothing of the long period in that chapter, could not understand how the seventy weeks could be said to be cut off, and so they departed from the literal meaning, and said that the seventy weeks were “determined,” that is, appointed upon thy people and thy city. But with the prophet, the case was different. The angel had bidden him “consider the vision.” And nothing was more natural when told that seventy weeks were cut off than that he should recur to the long period revealed to him without a date in that vision.

This shorter period being cut off from that long period gives us the key to the reckoning of that period from which it is cut off. When we ascertain the date of the seventy weeks, we have also ascertained the point from which the twenty-three hundred days are to be reckoned. And this date the angel gives us next. (1874, p. 360)

How Andrews was able to obtain information such as the processes by which the translators some centuries before Andrew chose the word “determined” above “cut off” is not explained in his article. My guess he is merely making an unverifiable speculation here. Smith regurgitates the same line of supposition as Andrews two years later in 1876 (quoted above). Indeed, as this paper will show it is not necessary to decide between “determined,” or “cut off.” Both can be relevant.

Recent Changes in SDA Publications on this Subject.

Recent work by Shea (1981, 1982 and 1986) have added considerably to the efforts of the thought-pioneers in the SDA church. His comments on the meaning of htk summarises the present position in the most frank manner:

The following extract is his summary comment.

The verb “cut off.” The verb used by Gabriel in his first statement about the 70 weeks is a passive (Niphal) form of the root hatak (“seventy weeks are determined upon thy people”). This root means either “to cut off” or “to determine, decree.” Because this is the only passage in the OT where the word occurs, its meaning here has been disputed.

The meaning of “determine, decree” has been derived from Mishnaic Hebrew that dates a millennium later than Daniel’s time. However, even in Mishnaic writings the term was more commonly used with the meaning of “cut off.”

It is a recognized principle of Semitic philology that the extended meanings of Semitic verbs develop from concrete meanings in the direction of abstract concepts. Thus, it is sound to infer that the root meaning of this word involved the concrete idea of cutting. The abstract ideas of determining or decreeing are the later development from this root idea. In Daniel's time, therefore, this word already meant "to cut." Whether the extended meaning of "decree, determine" had developed by then, cannot be determined at present due to a lack of comparative evidence.

The only significant comparative material, from Ugaritic Canaanite of the thirteenth century B.C., lends some support to the idea that this root's basic verbal notion was that of cutting, not decreeing or determining. Thus, these three lines of evidence – (1) root meaning over extended meaning, (2) the case of a Ugaritic cognate, and (3) the predominant meaning in later Mishnaic sources – all favour (but do not fully prove) that this verb should be translated "cut off" here. Its apparent meaning emphasizes the idea that the 70 weeks were understood to be cut off from the 2300 days mentioned in the preceding prophecy.

SUMMARY

These two prophetic time periods of the 70 weeks and the 2300 days (chaps. 8-9) can be related directly. They are linked by prophetic terminology (*mar'eh*), their locations in the literary structure of Daniel (the juxtaposition of the time units), their start in the same historical period (Persia), and by the opening verb used with the time period of the second prophecy (*hatak*, "cut off"). Supplementary support for the meaning of *hatak* can be derived from its location within this prophecy as follows: From a literary viewpoint this word for "cut" (*hatak*) is balanced by another verb for "cut" (*karat*), that occurs in verse 26a. The word used for "decree" in this prophecy (*haras*) in verses 26b, 27b is balanced by its homonym "moat" (*harus*) in, verse 25c. Those interested in further information on the relations between chapters 8 and 9 may consult my more detailed study of this subject in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*. 13 (1986,p. 107-8).

Shea' position in 1982 is virtually identical:

If there is a relationship between the prophecies of Dan 8 and 9 in general, and between the 2300 days and the 70 weeks in particular, then we might expect that the opening verb of the latter prophecy might tell us something about that relationship. This verb, *nechtak*, is a third person singular masculine form in the Niphal, or passive, conjugation from the root *hatak*, which has been taken, on the basis of the evidence from Mishnaic Hebrew, to mean either "cut off" or "decide, determine, decree." However, it has been difficult to determine with finality which of these two meanings should be employed for this verb in Dan 9: 24 because it is a hapax legomeon in the OT.

The question probably should be raised here—is this really the only occurrence of *hatak* legomeon in the OT? The reason that this question comes up is that M. Dahood has proposed in his recent commentary, *Psalms 11* (pp. 14-15), that *yahteka* in Ps 52:7 should be interpreted as coming from this root. By drawing a parallel from the Ugaritic evidence discussed below, Dahood has translated this verb as "unchild." However, an examination of this verb in its context reveals that this interpretation is incorrect.

In Ps 52:7 *yahteka* occurs in a bicolon as the middle member of a series of three verbs that refer to the harmful things that will happen to the wicked person. *Kaph* is the final consonant of all three of these verbs, not merely the one in question, which indicates that it functions here as the second person singular pronominal suffix "you," which refers to the wicked person who was to suffer the fate represented by these three verbs. Therefore, on the basis of parallels within this bicolon, the final *Kaph* in *yahteka* cannot be taken as part of the root of this verb, and it should be taken instead as coming from *hata* (to take away).

The other argument against this proposal of Dahood is that no negative particle accompanies this verb in Ps 52:7. On the basis of the Ugaritic parallels Dahood has cited, this verb here should mean “to child,” and “to unchild,” which it could mean only if it were negated. Since the meaning of “to child” would be a beneficent act to the persons who otherwise were to suffer here, such a meaning does not fit into this context. Thus Dahood’s proposal to find the root *hatak* in Ps 52:7 has not been successful, and must be rejected, which leaves the occurrence of this verb in Dn 9:24 still standing alone as a *hapax legomeonon*.

Because *hatak* only in Dan 9:24 in biblical Hebrew, we must draw upon comparative extra-biblical evidence relating to this root for further support for whatever meaning is selected for it in that passage. As far as cognate languages are concerned, *hatak* does not occur in Old South Aramaic, but the information available relating to it from such sources merely supplements what we can learn about it from Mishnaic Hebrew, which subject is discussed in more detail below. One occurrence of this root has been proposed in Akkadian, but the identification of the verb in question as coming from *hatak* is not certain. That fact narrows our search for *hatak* in extra-biblical materials down to two sources, Ugaritic and Mishnaic Hebrew.

Because Mishnaic Hebrew is in the same linguistic continuum as biblical Hebrew, and because Hebrew, and because it provides evidence more directly relevant to the use of this verb in the context of Dan 9:24, it probably should be given more weight in our discussion. Insofar as the number of occurrences is concerned, *hatak* is used more often in Mishnaic sources in the sense of “cut” than it is in the sense of “determine.” *Hatak* is used as a verb in at least ten Mishnaic passages, where it refers to cutting off parts of the bodies of animals according to the dietary laws. It is also used in connection with circumcision, for cutting a lamp wick, and for a miner cutting out ore. On two other occasions it refers to the lips or mouth cutting off words and to cutting into two parts a verse of Scripture being read.

As a verb with the less-frequent meaning of “decide or determine,” *hatak* is used twice to refer to the action of a judge in deciding a case and once for deciding the affairs of state. *Hatak* occurs as a noun in Mishnaic sources at least 18 times with the meaning of “that which is cut off”; whereas it occurs only once with reference to the law as given in the form of decisions. Thus the more common verbal meaning and the very common nominal meaning of *hatak* in Mishnaic Hebrew have to do with the idea of cutting.

Although the frequencies of the meanings with which this word is used in late Hebrew do not decisively determine the final meaning that should be used for it in Dan 9:24, they do carry some weight in the discussion of that meaning there. This point can be illustrated by reference to the words most commonly used in biblical Hebrew for cut (*karath*) and determine (*haras*). In the case of *karath*, which means, “cut,” it did come to be used at least once in late biblical Hebrew for “decree” (Est 2:1). *Haras*—the common biblical word for “determine”—occurs with the infrequent meaning of “cut” as early as the Pentateuch (Lev 22:22).

Working from the principle of Semitic philology, that the extended meanings of roots developed from concrete concepts in the direction of abstract concepts, we must posit “cut” as the original Proto-Semitic connotation of all three of these verbs *karath*, *haras*, and *hatak*. Thus from the action of cutting came the idea of cutting a decision and finally just deciding. Note that in Hebrew one does not “make” a covenant; one “cuts” a covenant. A similar development can be traced for the English words decide, determine, and decree, which originally derive from Latin roots meaning, respectively, “to fall,” “to end,” and “to divide.”

The biblical evidence is, therefore, that *haras* early developed the specialized idea of deciding. On the other hand, the meaning of *karath* was not extended from the idea of “cut” to the idea of “determine, decide” until a very late date in terms of the linguistic spectrum with which we are concerned, and then it appears only infrequently with such an nuance. The frequencies of the

meanings with which *hatak* occurs in Mishnaic Hebrew put it in mid-position between *karath*, which means predominantly “cut,” and *haras*, which means predominantly “decide.”

The more-frequently attested root *gazar* appears to have undergone a similar development. It is attested as a verb and noun in biblical Hebrew 33 times. In all but two of these occurrences, the exception being Job 22:28 and Est 2:1, this root carries the connotation of “cut.” However, in Mishnaic Hebrew the idea of “decide, determine” appears to predominate. Therefore, insofar as this root concerned there was a shift from one of these poles of meaning to the other through the course of time between the biblical and Mishnaic periods.

But *hatak* does not occupy the exact mid-position between *karath* and *haras*, either the greater frequency of its appearance with the meaning of “cut” in Mishnaic sources shifts it off center in the direction of *karath*. If the pattern that the development of *gazar* followed provides any parallel for *hatak*, then the idea of “cut” probably predominated even more in the period prior to the Mishna, for which we do not have any sources.

We may summarize this discussion thus far by suggesting that *hatak* originally derived from the idea of “cut” and that idea still predominates in its use in Mishnaic Hebrew. Given the general pattern of the development of the parallel word *gazar* followed, we may suggest that the idea of “cut” probably predominated even more in Daniel’s time than in the Mishnaic period. However, this conclusion does not completely exclude the possibility that Daniel could have used this word with the less-frequent meaning of “decide, determine,” which may (or may not) have come into use by his time. Unfortunately, our late Mishnaic sources do not provide sufficient evidence with which to decide this question with finality.

That being the case, we may look with some interest at the occurrence of *htk* that have been published in the texts from ancient Ugarit, which was destroyed in the 13th century B.C. Of some 16 such occurrences, *htk* appears clearly as a verb in only one case. At the end of the myth concerned with the battle between Baal and Mot, it is used in connection with some action that Shapsh (Hebrew Shemesh), the sun god, took toward the gods. 2 The context preceding the line in which this verb occurs is broken away, and unfortunately the significance of this verb here is not clear. A verbal meaning has been proposed for this word in two other instances, but the case for such an interpretation is not clear. Thus, for any definite information about the meaning of this word in Ugaritic, we are left with its occurrences as a noun. In this case it is clear that it can mean either father or son, although the latter meaning appears to predominate. It is used for the son of any one of several masculine deities in the myths, and it is used for the son of the earthly human king Keret in an epic.

Discarding dubious suggestions for doubtful meanings, we are left with *htk* in Ugaritic as a noun meaning either father or son. Since this unvocalized word in the alphabetic cuneiform texts was applied to these two of persons, it is generally accepted by scholars who have commented on it that two different participle vocalizations must have been involved, with the active participle *hatiku* (Hebrew *hotek*) referring to the father and the passive participle *hatuku* (Hebrew *hatak*) referring to the son. From identifying the forms involved in this way, the next question is—what was the meaning of the root that was modified in this way?

Two main suggestions have been made along this line. One is to take *htk* in the sense of “beget;” hence, two parties involved here are identified as the father as the “begetter” and the son as the “begotten.” This meaning is simply derived from parallels to this word in context without further elucidation from cognate materials. As noted, M. Dahood has interpreted this root, in a somewhat similar vein, to mean “to (un-) child.” On the other hand, cognate evidence has been drawn upon to support an interpretation of *htk*, which applies it specifically to the rite of circumcision that the father performed upon his son. Thus the father was the circumcisor (active participle) and the son was the one circumcised (passive participle). It is interesting to note, in this connection, that this verb was used on one occasion in Mishnaic Hebrew in the context of circumcision.

However, it is open to question just how widespread circumcision was among the residents of Palestine outside of Israelite circles. The practice is known from Egyptian tomb reliefs, and also from circumcised ceramic phalli from Palestine, but this does not necessarily mean that circumcision was a general practice in Palestine. It is also open to question whether the gods would have circumcised their sons, as the occurrences of this word in the myths would indicate, even if such a practice had been incumbent upon their human subjects.

If father and son are not (dis-) connected by *htk* in the sense of cutting by way of circumcision, could this relationship be maintained through some other avenue of meaning for this root? Mishnaic Hebrew suggests one possible explanation here. In three passages of the Mishna a passive form of this verb is used to refer to a body, a head, and a hand of a foetus that are already recognizable as well-shaped (or not) because of the features that were “incised” into them. From this one could suggest that it is the recognizable features common to father and son that have been impressed or incised upon the appearance of the latter that have led to the use of this word here that basically means cut.

In such a case the son is referred to as a “chip off the old block” in the modern English idiom. Rather than making the application of *htk* so specific as in this case, one might also see it on the more general sense of the son being cut off the family stock represented by the father, i.e., a gap cleaved between the two generations although they are made out of the same substance.

It is generally accepted that the use of *hatak* in Dan 9:24 must be determined from its Mishnaic meaning, which comes only from sources that were written down in their present form from the better part of a millennium later than Daniel’s time in the 6th century B.C. One could take the opposite approach and see this biblical reference as closer to the meaning found in Ugaritic sources, which come from the better part of a millennium earlier than Daniel’s time.

Applying such a parallel to *nehtak* in Dan 9:24 could suggest the picture of the 2300 days in Dan 8 as the father of the 70 weeks in Dan 9. If one were to consider this possibility, it is interesting to note that the verb in Dan 9:24 is in the Niphal, or passive, just as a passive participle has been suggested for this form under consideration in Ugaritic. The verb in Dan 9:24 also occurs in the singular, not in the plural, to go with 70 or with weeks, so that the 70 weeks were treated as a unit or a collective singular, and the son in our Ugaritic sources is always singular.

Thus there are some ways that one can conceivably relate the later meaning of “cut” to the father-son situation posed by the use of this word in Ugaritic, but it is difficult to see how “determine” could be applied to such a relationship in any sense of the word. While the information about *htk* from Ugaritic is not strongly determinative for interpreting its use in Dan 9:24, one might see it as pointing in the direction of “cut” more than in the direction of “determine” for that interpretation. (1981, p.241-246)

THE INITIAL VERB AND SUBJECT OF DAN 9:24 IN RELATION TO THE REST OF THE PROPHECY OF DAN 9:24-27.

We return here to the question of why the verb *hatak* was used to introduce the action of this prophecy in connection with its subject, the 70 weeks. It was suggested above that information available about *hatak* from two lines of extra-biblical evidence favors translating this verb with the meaning of “cut off” here in preference to the meaning of “determine, decree.” Those two lines of evidence were merely suggestive, however, not conclusive. In that discussion we noted that the common word in biblical Hebrew for “cut” was *karath* and the common word for “determine, decree” was *haras*.

It is important to note that both of these common verbs occur in the prophecy of Dan 9:24-27. *Karath* is used in the Niphal, or passive, form in v 26 for the fate of the Messiah. *Haras* occurs late

on in v 26 and again in v 27, also in the Niphal, or passive, referring to the fact that the fate of desolation was “decreed” upon the city and its sanctuary. Thus both of these common verbs occur in the passage, and they both occur in the Niphal, or passive conjugation. At the beginning of this passage, however, we find an uncommon (hapax) verb that appears to manifest both meanings, and it also occurs in the Niphal, or passive, conjugation.

It should also be noted that this passage of prophecy, like so much prophecy elsewhere in the OT, was written in poetry. One feature employed not infrequently in such poetic passages is paronomasia, or word play. These word plays commonly take on the form of two words that sound alike but have different meanings or involve a root that has two or more meanings that are played upon. I would suggest that a similar phenomenon could be at work here. Daniel did not choose to use the common word that meant “cut” or the common word that meant “decree,” both of which occur later in the same prophecy, perhaps because he chose to use a word that conveyed both meanings at the same time.

In passing it may be noted that there is at least one instance of word play in this passage. The only occurrence of the noun *harus* with meaning of “moat” in the OT is in Dan 9:25. The same consonants make up the verbal root *hrs* (to decree), which has been discussed above and which occurs twice in Dan 9:26-27.

In the first instance, therefore, this word was used as something that had to do with the construction of the city, and in the other instances it had something to do with its destruction. The juxtaposition of *sebi* and *seba* at the end of 8:9 and the beginning of 8:10 could also represent a somewhat different sort of word play.

Other instances of word play probably are to be expected in Daniel, but no exhaustive search has been made for them. If such a word play was intended with the use of *hatak* also, we do not need to choose between the meanings of “cut” and “decree” for it; we may accept them both. In that case the 70 weeks were first “cut off” of the 2300 evening-mornings, and then they in turn were “decreed” or “determined” upon God’s people.

One might also turn the question of the translation of this verb around and look at it from the opposite direction. If there are as many connections between the prophecies of Dan 8 and 9, as have been suggested above in our study, one might naturally expect that the 70 weeks were directly related to the 2300 days in such a way, and look for an expression of such a relationship in this initial verb. (1981, p247, 248)

Other SDA authors on the topic

Clifford Goldstein

Goldstein echoes these ideas:

Now again, Daniel 8 and 9. After making a direct reference to the 2,300 evenings and mornings, the angel immediately gives Daniel a shorter time prophecy, the seventy weeks, juxtaposing one against the other. What’s the immediate implication? Of course, that the seventy-week prophecy is part of or should be taken from, the larger one of 2,300 days....That the seventy-weeks are cut off from, or taken out of, the 2,300 days is made even more apparent by the verb *chathak* (sic) itself.

And though “cut off” is the basic meaning of *chathak*, “decreed” shouldn’t be ignored either. Perhaps *chathak* was used – as opposed to a word that meant exclusively to “cut off,” or to a word that meant exclusively “decreed” (both are available in Hebrew) – in order to bring out both ideas, that of cutting off and decreeing. The seventy weeks, *cut off* from the 2300 days, are *decreed* upon the Jewish nation to fulfill certain requirements. (2003, p.80)

Gerhard Pfandl

While Bible versions generally translate the passage as “seventy weeks are determined for your people,” Bible scholars acknowledge that the root meaning of the Hebrew word *chathak*, here translated “determined” or “allot to.” The word appears only in Daniel 9:24 in the Hebrew Bible, though it occurs in later Jewish writings predominantly as “to cut off.” The 70 weeks are cut off from the 2300 years in Daniel 8:14 as a time period “assigned to the Jews with respect to their role as God’s chosen people.” [Inserts footnote: “*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol.4, pp.851, 852”]

SDA Ministerial Association 1961

The SDA Ministerial Association went down in print in 1961 under the leadership of General Conference President R. R. Figuhr as saying this on the meaning of the word “determined in Dn9:24:

The Significance of the Expression “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people” The problem with the word “determined” is that it is variously rendered in the different English translations. Several translations, such as the King James Version, give “determined.” The Revised Standard Version, Jewish Publication Society, and Moulton give “decreed.” Others give “destined” or “fixed” or “ordained.” Some even give “divided” or “shortened.” The Hebrew word is *chathak*, and this is the only place of its use in the Hebrew Bible. We should take cognizance of this fact in our interpretation of this word. We have been charged with recognizing only one meaning, namely, “cut off,” and the idea in the criticism is that this has been a convenient way for us to make a connection between Daniel 9 and Daniel 8. We should investigate this criticism fairly and adequately, to see what justification we have for using the expression “cut off.” The fact is that the Hebrew lexicons differ as to which English translation really has priority, but generally they give “cut” or “cut off- first mention. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, in their Hebrew and English Lexicon, give “to divide, to determine, to cut, cut off, to decide.” Kohler and Baumgartner, in their *Lexicon in Veretis Testamenti Libros*, give “to cut, to decide.” Gesenius gives “to determine, to destine.” The Students’ Hebrew Lexicon gives “cut, sever,” “decide.” The Harkavy Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary gives “cut,” “decide.” In the light of this, it can be seen that the term “cut off” has considerable basis for its use. In a matter of this kind, however, why not recognize the various aspects of the meaning of the Hebrew word *chathak*. Is it not true that the 70-week period was “allotted” to the Jewish people to accomplish the things mentioned in the prophecy (Daniel 9:24)? Was not this period appointed by the Lord for this very purpose? Seeing that it is a specific period, can we not also recognize that God “determined” this period of time for His people? The word also means “cut off,” as we have just seen, but why not recognize all facets of the meaning of the word in our interpretation? By so doing we gain rather than lose. (1961, pp.27-28)

The Conclusion

As can be clearly seen from Shea’s work, the evidence is not a clear-cut answer in favour of “cut.” Shea postulates “we do not need to choose between the meanings of ‘cut’ and ‘decree’ for we can accept them both.” (1981a, p.248). He then explains how this can be harmonized:

- The 70 weeks are first “cut off” of the 2300 evening-mornings, and

- Then the 70 weeks are, in turn, “decreed” or “determined” upon God’s people. (*Ibid*)

It should be said however, in fairness to Shea, that in making a decision regarding the translation of *htk*, he prefers to use the sense of “cut off” (cf., [Shea, 1986b](#), pp. 229-230).

As will be seen in my discussion in the next Assumption, although I disagree with the proposal that the meaning of *htk* constrains a relationship of the 70 weeks time period with that of the 2300 days, I do agree with Shea’s position concerning the possibility that the verb can rightly include both ideas of “cut” and “decree” in Dn 9:24. I will argue that instead of a relationship between the 70 weeks and the 2300 evening-mornings” –**the correct conclusion is that the 70 weeks were first “cut off” from an unlimited future-time of covenantal grace and favour**, and then they, in turn, were “decreed” or determined” upon God’s people as a time of probationary favour for them as a nation.

At the very least, his candid remarks about the uncertainty of the precise translation of *nehtak* is significant, and probably the best way to end my comments on this paper.

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