

Daniel 10: Tug-of-War

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 10 is a chapter which is often misunderstood in its significance. People find it tempting to jump over this chapter in their rush to move from the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 to the Kings of the North and South of Chapter 11. And yet it holds the key to some serious concepts. Daniel receives encouragement from heaven as he finds himself poised on the brink of the fulfillment of prophecy. He can understand where he is in the course of prophetic history. And he takes time and uses energy to make the outcome more certain.

THEOLOGICAL TOOLS

When did this struggle take place and what was it about? As we delve into the meaning of what is happening in Daniel 10 it becomes evident that it is directly related to Daniel 9. In each case, there is a period of intense prayer followed by a direct revelation from God. Daniel is very active in seeking answers to his difficulties. In each case we see that there is a period of fasting and prayer (Daniel 9:3; 10:2,3).

Daniel was very concerned that Israel seemed to be missing out on an opportunity for something great. In the mind of Daniel, it was time for the people of God to be free again. It was time for them to return to their homeland. But there are a few challenging details to understanding what is going on here.

Daniel 10:1 sets the date for this experience as the THIRD year of Cyrus, the king of Persia. But how can this be? In Daniel 1:21 it states that Daniel continued until the FIRST year of Cyrus. Daniel 1 sets the boundaries of Daniel's experience in Babylon. His time in Babylon started with the rule of Nebuchadnezzar and continued until the FIRST year of Cyrus. That was the whole time of his work in Babylon. And yet we find that he is receiving more information from God during the THIRD year of Cyrus. To make it even more interesting, 2 Chronicles 36:22, 23 indicates that in the FIRST year of Cyrus there was a proclamation that the house of God should be built again. Ezra 1:1,2 also lists this event as happening in the FIRST year of Cyrus. So what was happening? Why was Daniel so anxious in Daniel 10? The answer to these questions is very similar to the answer we found when we compared Daniel 1:1 with Jeremiah 25:1.¹

¹See the discussion on this in the notes of the first section of this syllabus entitled, *The Book of Daniel*.

Darius the Mede was the leading force in the attack on Babylon (Daniel 5:31). Cyrus was the general who was serving under him. Darius is the one who is referred to as the king in Daniel 6:1,6,9 (etc.). He is the king who unwillingly has to send Daniel to the den of lions. But he is not alone. There is a kind of co-regency that existed with Darius the Mede as the primary king and Cyrus the Persian as the secondary king. When Darius died a couple of years later, Cyrus consolidated the kingdom under his rule. From this point forward, Persia became the dominant power. This was the side of the bear that was raised up in Daniel 7:5 and the horn that was a little higher in Daniel 8:3,20.

But to better understand the way things worked in dating the years of the reign of a king, it is important to understand two ancient motifs, or customs, or ways of thinking. They are:

1. Kingship comes only after victory.²
2. The first regnal year brings release from bondage.

We need to take a brief look at each of these in order to see what is going on in Daniel 9 and in Daniel 10.

1. Kingship comes only after victory.

When a king takes the throne, it is a kind of conquering of chaos. It is like the sun which begins its rule over the day by driving back the forces of darkness. This victory of the dawn over the chaos of darkness is repeated in the experience of the king who drives back the forces of chaos as he subdues the enemies of the crown.

When a king who is already on the throne gains a decisive victory which enhances his crown or realm or empire, he will often re-establish himself on the throne. This sometimes means that he will take a new throne name. It sometimes means that he will begin to renumber the years of his reign (start a new count of his regnal years).

One example of this takes place in the reign of Mentuhotep of the Eleventh Dynasty of Egypt. It was only in comparatively recent times that Egyptologists began to recognize that Mentuhotep I, II and III were not three different rulers. Instead, there was only the one Mentuhotep who ruled as a single monarch for 51 years. "Three separate royal titularies, previously attributed to three distinct Pharaohs all bearing the name Mentuhotep, turned out to belong to one sovereign, each titulary reflecting a different stage in his career. This Pharaoh ruled during momentous events which increased his sovereignty from a small portion of Egypt, to control over Upper Egypt, finally gaining suzerainty over both upper and Lower Egypt ("Uniter of the two Lands")."³

²Taken from class notes by Douglas Waterhouse from his Daniel class in 1983.

³Douglas Waterhouse here is referring to the report of Sir Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (Oxford, 1961), 120.

In 539 B.C. Darius (Cyaxeres II), who had been on the throne since 560 B.C., encountered a new stage in his career by becoming ruler over Babylon. Thus he began to renumber his regnal years. In like manner, Cyrus, who had been vassal king of Persia, was elevated to share the royal powers of the Medo-Persian throne of Darius the Mede, as a result of his stunning victory over Babylon. Hence, Cyrus also began a new era of regnal years in 539 B.C. Victory had brought new "crowns" for Darius and his nephew Cyrus. But such a state of affairs was brief. Within about two years of the fall of Babylon Darius died (PK556; *Cyropaedia*, lib. 8, where Xenophon says that Cyrus reigned after the death of Cyaxares seven years). Hence, the year 537 B.C. marks the accession year of Cyrus as the sole ruler of the Empire; his first regnal year as sole sovereign falling in 536-5 B.C. The cuneiform records, however, continue to speak of the 3rd regnal year of Cyrus in 536 and his 4th year in 535 etc. So too in Daniel 10:1 where 536 B.C. is spoken of as "the third year of Cyrus."⁴

It could be charted as follows:⁵

	539 B. C.	538 B. C.	537 B. C.	536 B. C.	535 B. C.
Regnal years of Darius	Accession year	1	2		
Graph of Rule of Darius	[-----	-----	-----] x		
Regnal years of Cyrus:	Accession year	1	2	1	2
Graph of rule of Cyrus	[----- (as King or	----- sole Regent)	-----] [-----	(as -----	co-regent) ----->
Total years of Cyrus	Accession year	1	2	3	(4)

⁴This is quoted from the notes from the Daniel class by Dr. Douglass Waterhouse, 1983 under the section, "The Crisis of Dan 10:13".

⁵Remember that the B. C. dates begin in January. The other dates begin in the spring.

2. The first regnal year brings release from bondage.

In ancient times, many societies had the concept of things happening in cycles. Each year, winter brought death. Spring brought new life. The inauguration of a new king's reign was thought of as a "recreation" when the cycle of time would begin again".⁶ An example of this can be seen when Evil-Merodach [Amel-Marduk] became the king of Babylon. He released a very notable prisoner, Jehoiachin--king of Judah (2 Kings 25:27).



490 Years including
time of kings



490 years for
a second chance

This would explain the intensity of Daniel's prayers. In Daniel 9:1, Daniel has special prayer for God to act so that His people can be released from captivity. This would be about 538 B.C. He had been studying about the 70 years of captivity (Daniel 9:2) that had been predicted by the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11,12). He recognized that the captivity had gone on for about 67 years. Even though this was a little short of the 70 years of captivity, he could see the excellent opportunity for God to act. The new king on the throne would normally bring the opportunity for release from captivity. He was begging for God to act (Daniel 9:3-19). At that time, God had given him more information about events that should come to pass. He was given information about the 70 weeks of years which were cut off from the longer time of the **מַרְאֵה** [mar'eh] or appearance of Daniel 8:14. But this time period was nothing new. Israel was already at the end of another period of 70 weeks of years. Since the kings of Israel had not been faithful. Since Israel had not been following God, they were not keeping the Sabbatical years. During a period of 70 weeks of years, this would mean that they had missed 70 Sabbatical years. These were all made up in one lump of time after 420 years of missing

⁶Taken from the same notes by Dr. Waterhouse.

the Sabbatical years. As a result, the captivity is described as fulfilling the Sabbatical years that had been missed (2 Chronicles 36:20,21).

As can be seen, during the first 490 year period, Israel was unfaithful. But there was another 490 time period in which they would have the chance to make the record right. At the end of this time period, the Messiah would come. But He would be rejected and the Israel of God would take on another kind of meaning (see below on syllabus section on Daniel 11b).

When Darius died in 537 BC, Daniel quickly recognized that prophecy was going to be fulfilled. He could see that the first regnal year of Cyrus as the sole ruler would fall 69 years after the captivity. This would give the chance for the people to be released from captivity by the time they were at the end of the 70 years. Once again, Daniel begged God to make it happen (Daniel 10:2,3). This is called the third year of Cyrus (which was true) but it was also another first year of Cyrus. New beginnings bring new opportunities. And this time God came to show Daniel how things would fit together.

And so, the 70 years would end in 536 B.C. The Israelites would be allowed to go back to their country. This would be the first step in a multi-phased process that would eventually lead to rebuilding the temple and the wall in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, there would be more delays and more commands to return and to rebuild. But the process had been started.

It is worth mentioning that the period of Daniel's fasting is called **שלושה שבועים ימים** [sh^eloshah shabu'im yamim] "three weeks of days"--if we translate the phrase literally.⁷ This is one more hint that the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24 could be something other than weeks of days--namely, weeks of years.

And so this is a crucial period of time for Daniel. His people are on the brink of a new beginning. According to prophecies, they should be returning from captivity. But nothing is happening. They are still in Babylon.

It is interesting to look at the comments of Ellen G. White about the matter. I prefer to state things from a historical and biblical basis first, and then to see what she

⁷Technically, the phrase does not place *weeks* in what is called the construct form. It would not automatically be translated "weeks of days." But these words are in apposition to each other, literally written, ". . . weeks days . . ." In such cases (as in Genesis 29:14 and 41:1) this is understood to mean complete time periods. As such, it can be translated "weeks of days" in a literal sense (though it is in apposition and not in the construct state). See *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, E. Kautzsch, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 424.

may have to say. She actually does indicate that such an arrangement takes place as what has been described above. She states:

Daniel's prayer had been offered "in the first year of Darius" [Daniel 9:1], the Median monarch whose general, Cyrus, had wrested from Babylonia the scepter of universal rule. The reign of Darius was honored of God. To him was sent the angel Gabriel, "to confirm and to strengthen him." Daniel 11:1. Upon his death, *within about two years of the fall of Babylon*, Cyrus succeeded to the throne, and the beginning of his reign marked the completion of the seventy years since the first company of Hebrews had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar from their Judean home to Babylon.⁸

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT / PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Prayer does make a difference. It changes us, and it brings changes around us. Daniel was begging God to act on behalf of the people of Israel. And in response to his prayers, things were happening behind the scenes. (See above for more details.)

After Daniel had been fasting and praying, he received the assurance, "Don't be afraid." He was then shown that supernatural powers were at work (Dan 10:2, 3, 12ff.).⁹ God's answer, though it came, was delayed by spiritual warfare. There are times when we do not understand why it seems that our prayers are not answered. Or we may realize that they are answered, but we do not understand the delays. At such times, we can realize that God is working on our behalf. But it is very likely that there is supernatural warfare which is bringing the delays.

⁸Ellen G. White, *The Story of Prophets and Kings: As Illustrated in the Captivity and Restoration of Israel* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917), 556, 557.

⁹These comments and the ones which immediately follow are taken from a class presentation given by Jonathan Chitwood on 5 January 2006.