Christ in Daniel: Ramifications of a Closer Look at Daniel 9:26

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INTRODUCTION

Despite minor differences concerning the details, the traditional Christian interpretation of Daniel 9:26 is that the מָשִׁיחַ (*māšîaḥ*) who is "cut off" (יִכָּרֵת) refers predictively to Jesus Christ being put to death by crucifixion, and the reference to the city and sanctuary being destroyed refers predictively to the destruction carried out by the Romans against Jerusalem in AD 70. Furthermore, these predictions are believed to have been made by the historic person of Daniel who authored the book bearing his name in the sixth-century BC. This was the near universal view of early church fathers and has been the prevailing Christian view throughout church history.

In contrast to the historic Christian interpretation of this verse, a Neoplatonic philosopher and skeptic named Porphyry (ca. AD 234 – ca. 305) asserted in a third-century AD work entitled *Against the Christians* that the book of Daniel was not written in the sixth-century BC but rather in the Maccabean age (second-century BC), with the purpose of encouraging the Jewish people who were being persecuted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Seleucid king who ruled over the land of Judah at that time. Porphyry's presupposition was that predictive prophecy was not possible and that only someone living in the second-century BC could have had knowledge of all the events recorded in the book of Daniel. The rise of German higher criticism in the 18th and 19th centuries built on the thesis of Porphyry, the result being a denial of Danielic authorship and a basic adoption of Porphyry's Antiochene interpretation.

Today, in the scholarly literature treating the book of Daniel, the consensus opinion is that Daniel 9:24-27 finds its fulfillment in the events associated with the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC). In this author's estimation, probably no less than ninety percent of scholarly journal articles over the past thirty years presume a late date of the book of Daniel (typically about 165 BC) by one or more authors other than Daniel of the sixth-century BC.[1] Those who adhere to the Antiochene theory of the book not only dismiss predictive prophecy but downplay or totally disregard the messianic predictions of the book, and in general interpret the details of chapters 7, 8, 9 and 11 in light of the Syrian ruler Antiochus IV and the Maccabean

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[1] For a discussion of the book's authorship, redaction history and literary structure from the viewpoint of critical scholarship, see this author's "The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel," *BSac* 160 (2003): 269–82.

uprising against him. Consequently, the references to the מָשִׁיחַ (*māšîaḥ*) in Dan 9:25 and 26 are explained in ways other than about Jesus Christ, as traditionally held by Christian expositors.[2]

Although even conservative scholars admit that Antiochus IV is referred to in such passages as Dan 8:9-26 and 11:21-35, the historic Christian interpretation of the book of Daniel is that much of it extends beyond the time of Antiochus into the period of the Roman Empire with multiple references to Messiah Jesus, including features from both His first and second comings. In particular, the rather notoriously famous seventy-weeks passage in Dan 9:24-27 stands at the crux of the debate. Should these verses be interpreted in light of the events surrounding Antiochus IV as critical scholars have argued? The contention of this author is that the case for interpreting these verses in light of the Antiochene theory of the book needs careful reexamination, especially regarding Dan 9:26. In particular, the verb *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת), normally translated "destroy," needs closer attention to determine the appropriate lexical understanding it should have and the bearing this might have on the historical background in view. Some critical scholars (e.g., J. J. Collins) in their quest to defend a late dating of the book have attempted to argue that *šāḥaṯ* should be understood in the sense of "moral corruption." Their contention is that Antiochus IV *corrupted* (not "destroyed") the city and the sanctuary. However, I hope to show that this is not a legitimate lexical nuance *in this instance* and that a literal destruction of the city and sanctuary is in view. This conclusion naturally leads to the understanding that Dan 9:26 has the Roman destruction of AD 70 in view rather than a *corruption* of the city by the forces of Antiochus. This, in turn, has a bearing on our understanding of מָשִׁיחַ (*māšîaḥ*) in the passage as well as how best to interpret the other details of Dan 9:26.

THE CONTEXT FOR DAN 9:26: THE SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY

The "seventy-weeks" prophecy in Dan 9:24-27 is one of the most perplexing passages in all the Old Testament. Scholars have wrestled to no end in seeking to interpret the details of this passage, and especially how to identify the chronological periods by which they might calculate the fulfillment of events referred to.

In an earlier article in which I surveyed the first five hundred years of church history, I identified eleven early church fathers who commented, to one degree or another, on Dan 9:24–27.[3] Most of these took a messianic view of the seventy-weeks prophecy, though they tended to favor a messianic-historical position (meaning that the entire seventy weeks was fulfilled at some point in the first-century AD). Only a few opted for a messianic/eschatological position in which the seventy weeks would not be completed until some future point beyond the first century, such as the reign of antichrist or the second advent of Christ. This latter position is found in Irenaeus,

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[2] For a defense of the traditional Christian interpretation that the מָשִׁיחַ (*māšîaḥ*) in Dan 9:25 and 26 is a prophecy of Jesus Christ, see J. Paul Tanner, "Is Daniel's Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic? Part 2," *BSac* 166 (2009) 319–35.

[3] J. Paul Tanner, "Is Daniel's Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic? Part 1," *BSac* 166 (2009) 181–200.

Hippolytus, and Apollinaris (all of whom were chiliasts). Not all of these, of course, commented on all the details of the passage. But we do have record that Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Theodoret of Cyrus all regarded the reference in Dan 9:26 as pertaining to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70.[4] Presumably others like Hippolytus and Origen did also in light of other comments they made about Dan 9:24-27, though they did not comment specifically about Jerusalem's destruction.[5]

Likewise, most Christian expositors in subsequent church history have understood the remark in Dan 9:26 about "the city and the sanctuary" to have reference to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. This has also been the dominant view in Jewish literature, especially after Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70, though rejecting any identification of Jesus as the מָשִׁיחַ (*māšîaḥ*). Several statements by Josephus imply that he viewed the fulfillment of the prophecy in the events leading up to AD 70 rather than in the Maccabean era.[6] Furthermore, the Jewish chronological work, *Seder Olam Rabbah*, composed about AD 160 (though it may have been supplemented and edited at a later period), attempted to construct a chronological record extending from Adam to the Bar Kokhba revolt of AD 132-135. *Seder Olam Rabbah* asserted that the seventy weeks were seventy years of exile in Babylon followed by another 420 years until the destruction of the second temple in AD 70.[7] This became the commonly accepted view in subsequent Jewish writings, including the Talmud and the consensus of Jewish rabbinical scholars (e.g., Rashi, AD 1040-1105).

THE ANTIOCHENE INTERPRETATION OF DAN 9:26

Critical scholars deny the legitimacy of predictive prophecy and typically argue that the book of Daniel was authored (or a final redaction was made) about 165 BC. In line with this, they deny

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[4] Clement, *Stromata*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1867; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 329; Tertullian, *Against the Jews*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Edinburgh, 1867; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 159-60; and *Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentary on Daniel,* trans. R. C. Hill (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 253-55.

[5] Hippolytus understood that the מָשִׁיחַ (*māšîaḥ*) in Dan 9:26 referred to Jesus Christ (Hippolytus, "Exegetical. On Daniel; Part 2.15," in *The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Edinburgh, 1867; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981). Origen, in discussing the prophecies of Antichrist, alluded to Dan 9:27, suggesting he took a futuristic view of the passage (*Contra Celsus*, book 6, chap. 46, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh, 1867; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 595.

[6] Although Josephus's comments are somewhat vague, this seems to be the most sensible interpretation of his remarks. See especially *The Jewish Wars* 4.5.2 (318, 323) and 6.2.1 (109–10), in *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987). For further discussion see William Adler, "The Apocalyptic Survey of History Adapted by Christians: Daniel's Prophecy of Seventy Weeks," in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, ed. James C. VanderKam and William Adler (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 210–16; Beckwith, "Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah's Coming," 532–36; F. F. Bruce, "Josephus and Daniel," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 4 (1965): 148–62; and Geza Vermes, "Josephus' Treatment of the Book of Daniel," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42 (1991): 149–66.

[7] *Seder Olam Rabbah*, chap. 28. See Heinrich Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology* (Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, 1998), 240–46.

that the book makes any prophecies of Messiah Jesus or any reference to the Roman Empire. This affects how they interpret Dan 2:36-45 (since for them, the fourth kingdom is the Hellenistic Empire, not Rome), Dan 7 ("one like a son of man" does not refer to Jesus Christ, whereas the "little horn" refers to Antiochus IV), Dan 9:24-27 (explained as events occurring during the reign of Antiochus IV), and Dan 11:36–12:12 (supposedly written about Antiochus IV, but—in their view—erroneously recorded). Although evangelicals readily admit that Antiochus IV Epiphanes is referred to in the book (e.g., Dan 8:9-14 and 11:21-35), they disagree with how critical scholars have imposed their Antiochene interpretation on the book.

Representative of commentaries by critical scholars who read Dan 9:24-27 through the lens of the Antiochene interpretation are those by O. Zöckler (Lange's), S. R. Driver, R. H. Charles, J. A. Montgomery (ICC), L. F. Hartman (Anchor), J. Goldingay (Word), J. J. Collins (Hermenia), C. A. Newsom (OTL), and P. R. House (Tyndale).[8] Naturally, there are a great many more critical scholars—too many to name here—who have taken the same position in journal articles.

The typical explanation by critical scholars is that the מָשִׁיחַ (*māšîaḥ*) in Dan 9:26 is a reference—not to Messiah Jesus—but to the high priest, Onias III, who was murdered about 171 BC. Of greater relevance to this paper is their treatment of the statement in Dan 9:26 that "the people of the prince who is to come shall <u>destroy</u> the city and the sanctuary" (NIV). Since Antiochus IV Epiphanes did not destroy Jerusalem or the temple during his evil reign over the Seleucid Empire (175 – 164 BC), they are forced to explain away this statement. They attempt to do this by imposing some sort of alternative meaning on the word translated "destroy" (Heb שָׁחַת, *šāḥat*) as though it should be understood in this context in a *non-physical* way, or they play down what is meant by "destroy."[9] Supposedly, justification for this interpretation comes from the fact that the verb שָׁחַת (*šāḥat*) carries the nuance "to corrupt" in certain OT passages.

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[8] O. Zöckler, "Daniel," in vol. 7: *Ezekiel, Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, 12 vols; translated, enlarged and ed. J. Strong, and aided by G. Miller (1870. Repr.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1960); S. R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel*, 5th ed. CBC (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1922); R. H. Charles, *The New-Century Bible: The Book of Daniel* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1913); J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1927); L. F. Hartman and A. A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1978); J. Goldingay, *Daniel,* WBC 30 (Waco, TX: Word, 1989); J. J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993); C. A. Newsom, with B. W. Breed, *Daniel A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014); and P. R. House, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale OT Commentaries, ed. David G. Firth (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018).

[9] An exception to this is O. Zöckler. He accepted the nuance of "destroy" for *šāḥat* (שָׁחַת) but limited the intended meaning to *the intention* of the "coming prince." Supposedly, this prince (Antiochus IV) was approaching Jerusalem "to cause destruction to the city and the sanctuary," i.e., he was a ruler "coming at the head of his army in a *hostile character*" (201). S. R. Driver also accepted the nuance "destroy," but felt that what Antiochus IV did—though he did not literally destroy Jerusalem and the temple—was to *essentially destroy* them in light of what has been recorded in 1 Maccabees. He wrote (140-41), "The allusion is to the soldiery of Antiochus Epiphanes, who set Jerusalem on fire, and pulled down many of the houses and fortifications, so that the inhabitants took flight, and the city could be described as being 'without inhabitant, like a wilderness' (I Macc. i. 31, 32, 38, iii. 45)." His interpretation, however, comes short of a full physical destruction of the city and sanctuary.

Representative of critical scholars who treat the verb שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*) in this way is J. A. Montgomery (ICC) who writes, "The word translated 'destroy' ישחית, is generally taken in the physical sense, so 8²⁴, 11¹⁷, but there was little destruction effected by the Greeks in the Holy City; it may then be understood in its moral sense, 'corrupt.'"[10] Notice the *reasoning* for Montgomery's preference for *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת) meaning "in a moral sense, 'corrupt'" in 9:26. He favors this, because (presuming that predictive prophecy is not possible) 9:26 must have Antiochus IV in view. Since Antiochus did *not* physically destroy Jerusalem and its temple—so he argues—another lexical meaning must be true for *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת). He does this despite the fact that the overwhelming normative usage of the Hipʿil of *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת) means "to destroy," that it has this meaning (as he himself acknowledges) elsewhere in Daniel, and that the nuance of "physical destruction" makes perfect sense in 9:26 *unless* one has already made up his mind that the verse <u>must</u> be fulfilled in the days of Antiochus IV.

Collins—who understands the "prince" (נָגִיד, *nāgîḏ*) of Dan 9:26 to be Antiochus IV—states, "The Syrians did not demolish Jerusalem, but they made it desolate by the corruption of the cult."[11] Inconsistently, he favors the nuance of "corrupt" for שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*), despite the fact that he renders it "destroy" in his translation of the verse. R. H. Charles took a similar position: "With the supercession and death of Onias III began the ruin of the city and sanctuary through the Hellenizing parties in Jerusalem."[12]

Goldingay took a different view of the "prince" (נָגִיד, *nāgîḏ*) of Dan 9:26 though favoring the nuance "corrupt" for שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*). He writes, "Presumably the 'leader to come' (נגיד הבא) is also a representative of the high-priestly line, one who follows Onias. The reference will then be to Onias' successor Jason (Bevan), who both corrupted and devastated—the two possible senses of ישחית—the people of Jerusalem (see 2 Macc 4–5)."[13]

Hartman attempted a different tactic. Although he accepted a non-physical destructive nuance for שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*)—translating it "ruin" rather than destroy—he also rearranged the verse so as to relocate the word "city" in the sentence, thereby not including it in what was destroyed/ruined. He translated Dan 9:26, "After the sixty-two weeks an anointed one will be cut down, when the city is no longer his; and the soldiers of a prince will ruin the sanctuary."[14] As for "ruining the sanctuary," Hartman attempts to argue that this was fulfilled in a plundering of the temple:

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[10] Montgomery, 383.

[11] J. J. Collins, 357.

[12] R. H. Charles, 108.

[13] J. Goldingay, 262.

[14] L. F. Hartman, 240. For Hartman, the "anointed one" is the high priest, Onias III. Hartman's translation of the MT (linking "the city" [הָעִיר] with "no longer his" [וְאֵין לוֹ] is most doubtful. First, this would ignore the athnach that follows לוֹ and separates it from הָעִיר. Second, the *waw* on וְהָעִיר would be too awkward to link this

In 169 B.C., on his return from a successful campaign against Ptolemy VI of Egypt, Epiphanes put down an insurrection at Jerusalem, where he massacred many people and plundered the Temple (1 Macc 1:20-28; II Macc 5:11-16). … The reference may also be to the plundering of the Temple in 167 B.C. (I Macc 1:29-35; II Macc 5:22-26).[15]

Following this brief survey of how several notable critical scholars have translated and understood the verb שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*) in Dan 9:26, we shall now review Antiochus's assault on Jerusalem and then proceed to a careful lexical study of the verb in the MT to see if it has the flexibility assumed by critical scholars.

ANTIOCHUS'S ASSAULT ON JERUSALEM

Information about Antiochus's assault on Jerusalem and the temple is attested in 1 and II Maccabees (especially 1 Macc 1:29-40, 3:45); and in Josephus. Although there was killing of many Jews, plundering, some destructive activities and a defiling of the temple, there is no record of a wholesale destruction of the city or the temple at that time.

Selective verses from 1 Maccabees 1:

> [29] Two years later, the king sent a Mysarch against the towns of Judah, and he came against Jerusalem with a strong army. [30] Treacherously he addressed the people in peaceful terms, so that they trusted him, and then he hit the city hard with a surprise attack, killing many Israelites. [31] He plundered the city, set fire to it, and destroyed *(καθεῖλεν –"demolished," LSM, 849)* its buildings and the walls around it.[16]

> [36] It was an ambush against the temple, and continually a wicked adversary against Israel. [37] They shed innocent blood around the sanctuary and defiled the temple.

1 Maccabees 3:45:

> [45] Jerusalem was uninhabited like a desert; none of her offspring went in or out. The temple was trampled, as foreigners were in the Akra, lodging place of the gentiles. Joy departed from Jacob, and flute and lyre ceased.[17]

Josephus (*Antiquities*, 12.5.251-52):

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with the preceding וְאֵין לוֹ. Most every English translation and commentator understands "the city and the sanctuary" to be the compound direct object of the verb יַשְׁחִית.

[15] Ibid., 252. C. A. Newsom (306) takes essentially the same view as Hartman regarding the plundering of the temple and identifies the leader of the assault on Jerusalem as Apollonius the Mysarch, an official serving under Antiochus IV. For details of the atrocities of Apollonius, cf. Dov Gera, *Judaea and Mediterranean Politics 219 to 161 B.C.E.* in Brill's Series in Jewish Studies, vol. VIII, ed. D. S. Katz (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 223-27.

[16] J. A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 41. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 205.

[17] Ibid., 256.

> And when he had pillaged the whole city, some of the inhabitants he slew, and some he carried captive, together with their wives and children, so that the multitude of those captives that were taken alive amounted to about ten thousand. (252) He also burnt down the finest building; and when he had overthrown the city walls, he built a citadel in the lower part of the city, for the place was high, and overlooked the temple, on which account he fortified it with high walls and towers and put into it a garrison of Macedonians.[18]

What we know from the limited historical resources we have is that the forces of Antiochus IV carried out a number of travesties against Jerusalem and the Jewish temple, including *some destruction* of certain parts of the city and parts of the city walls.[19] Yet these were of a limited nature; they did not destroy the city at large and certainly not the temple, for a fortified compound (the Akra) was built near the temple complex to house a Seleucid garrison.

A LEXICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VERB שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*)

The verb שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*) occurs 142 times in the Hebrew MT. Though not attested in the Qal stem, *šāḥaṯ* occurs primarily in the Piel stem (39x) and the Hiphil stem (95x). Less frequently, it occurs 6x in the Niphal and 2x in the Hophel. Both BDB and HALOT acknowledge that *šāḥaṯ* can have various nuances: destroy, ruin, annihilate (or exterminate), and corrupt (or act corruptly).[20] The nuance "to destroy" is dominant in both the Piel and Hiphil stems. Neither lexicon, however, suggests what they believe would be the most appropriate nuance in the case of Dan 9:26.

In Conrad's lengthy discussion in *TDOT*, he states that "the general meaning seems to be 'destroy, ruin.'"[21] He adds,

> In light of Arabic evidence as well as syntactical and semasiological considerations regarding the Hebrew piel and hiphil, however, one can also deduce a basic transitive meaning of 'destroy, ruin suddenly, unexpectedly. . . .
> Evidence associated with the piel and hiphil as the predominant conjugation stems suggests that the verb signifies an act of ruthless destruction subjecting the object to

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[18] F. Josephus, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, transl. and ed. W. Whiston (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987).

[19] Regarding the walls, Goldstein remarks (213), "To destroy the walls completely would have been an unnecessary and arduous task. Surely the Mysarch only made large breaches in them, since portions of the walls standing in his time still exist. See below, NOTE on vss. 33–40."

[20] BDB, 1007; HALOT, 1469-72.

[21] J. Conrad, "שָׁחַת *šāḥaṯ*," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. xiv, eds. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H-J Fabry, 583-95 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 583.

complete annihilation or decimating and corrupting it so thoroughly that its demise is certain.[22]

Conrad also has a particularly helpful analysis of the verb when used in a context of war and power politics, a situation quite relevant to the case of Dan 9:26. He writes,

> Destructive and extirpative action occurs above all in war, and the verb is associated with this theme with particular frequency. One adversary advances ruthlessly against the other with the goal of completely overcoming and beating him, of annihilating him as an independent entity . . . .[23]

In the conclusion to this section of his article, Conrad comments on Dan 9:26: "The figure of the *nāgîḏ* in 9:26 whose (military) 'people' will destroy, i.e., proceed with military force against Jerusalem and its sanctuary, is probably also to be identified with Antiochus IV." Obviously, Conrad accepts the typical conclusion of critical scholars that Antiochus IV is in view. Yet his understanding of the nuance of *šāḥaṯ* in this case must not be overlooked. He acknowledges that *šāḥaṯ* means "destroy" by military might, but he waters down the implication (they merely "<u>proceed</u> with military force"). Yet the text says they will "destroy the city and the sanctuary," not merely proceed against it with a destructive intention. In studying the actual usage of the verb, one must be careful to observe whether such subtleties as Conrad has suggested are actually attested.

In Dan 9:26, *šāḥaṯ* appears in the Hiphil stem (יַשְׁחִית, *yašḥîṯ*).[24] The verb also appears *transitively*—with a specific direct object (the city and the sanctuary).[25] In conducting an analysis of usage of *šāḥaṯ*, it is important that we observe whether or not a direct object accompanies the verb (whether transitive or intransitive), whether or not the object (if present) is tangible or intangible, and finally whether or not the action implied by the verb is *internal* or *external*. Regarding the latter, McKoon and Macfarland have addressed the importance of this issue and what it contributes to lexical semantics in terms of how verbs are used to describe events:

> Intuitively, an internally caused change of state is a change of state for which the means of bringing about the change-of-state event is conceptualized as residing in the entity undergoing the change. . . . An externally caused change of state is conceptualized as

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[22] Ibid., 584.

[23] Ibid. 585.

[24] *BHS* editor suggests that in place of יַשְׁחִית (Hipʿil impf.), we should probably read יִשָּׁחֵת (Nipʿal impf.), even though the latter only has the support of one MS and S. Also, both LXX^O and LXX^θ translated שחת in Dan 9:26 with active verbs (LXX^O by φθερεῖ, and LXX^θ by διαφθερεῖ).

[25] וְהָעִיר וְהַקֹּדֶשׁ should be understood as the direct object of יַשְׁחִית, even though the two nouns are not preceded by the sign of the accusative. Normally a direct object that is definite will be preceded by the sign of the accusative (אֵת or אֶת־), but this is not always the case with the verb שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*). Note Deut 9:26 and Jer 11:19.

coming about because of something external to the entity that undergoes the change of state.[26]

If the traditional translation and understanding of Dan 9:26 is understood in the sense of destroying the city and the sanctuary, then this would be a case of an "externally caused change of state" verb used transitively.

<u>Usage in the Piel Stem</u>

Of the 39 times that *šāḥaṯ* occurs in the Piel stem when followed by a direct object, it carries the meaning "to destroy" in at least 26 instances. It can also mean "destroy" in cases where there is no direct object (e.g., 2 Sam 14:11; Jer 5:10). Significantly, whenever it occurs with a direct object <u>and</u> a city (or fortified stronghold) is in view, it always carries the nuance of physical destruction (Gen 13:10; 19:13, 29; 1 Sam 23:10; 2 Sam 24:16; Jer 48:18; Lam 2:5; Ezek 26:4 [the walls of Tyre]; Ezek 43:3). The nuance "to corrupt" is attested in the Piel in six instances. In four of these, there is no direct object for the verb, as the action of the verb is strictly *internal* (Exod 32:7; Deut 9:12; 32:5; Hos 9:9). In these cases, reference is made to people who *acted corruptly* or who *corrupted themselves*, and the action of the verb is not *external* (imposed upon an external object).

In two cases, the nuance "to corrupt" is attested where the verb is followed by a direct object:

> Ezek 28:17 "you <u>corrupted</u> (שִׁחַתָּ) your wisdom by reason of your splendor" (context: lamentation for the "king of Tyre")

> Mal 2:8 "you have turned aside from the way . . .; you have <u>corrupted</u> (שִׁחַתֶּם) the covenant of Levi" (context: rebuke of the Levitical priests for *violating* proper priestly duties and procedures)

> > Observations: In both these cases, although the verb has a direct object, that object is intangible (not a physical object). In the case of Ezek 28:17, the subject had corrupted an intangible attribute of his character. In the case of Mal 2:8, the priests were guilty of *violating* the responsibilities of the covenant that had been entrusted to them as Levitical priests.

The verb *šāḥaṯ* is used in Jer 12:10 where the NASB, NIV and NET use the translation "ruin" (but is translated "destroyed" by the NRSV, NKJV and ESV).

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[26] Gail McKoon and Talke Macfarland, "Externally and Internally Caused Changed of State Verbs," *Language* 76:4 (2000), 833. Cf. Saundra K. Wright, "Transitivity and Change of State Verbs," *Berkeley Linguistics Society* 28 (2002), 339-350.

"Many shepherds <u>have</u> <u>ruined</u> (שִׁחֲתוּ) my vineyard."

In this context, *šāḥaṯ* is used *metaphorically* for foreign invaders who were desolating and destroying the land of Judah (the following verses, Jer 12:11-12, make clear that physical destruction is in view).

In two other cases (Prov 23:8; Amos 1:11), *šāḥaṯ* is translated in an unusual way ("wasting" and "cut off") but would not be relevant in regard to Dan 9:26.

Usage in the Hiphil Stem

The dominant stem in which *šāḥaṯ* occurs is the Hiphil stem (95x). It is used most often (52x) of destroying something in general (most often of destroying people), and in a further ten times, the destruction is specifically of a city or stronghold (Gen 18:28 [2x]; 18:31, 32; 19:13, 14; 2 Sam 20:15, 20; Jer 6:5; Lam 2:8). It can also be used (5x) of destroying or "felling" soldiers in battle (Jud 20:21, 25, 35, 42; 2 Sam 11:1). It is used once of destroying or "ravaging" the land (1 Sam 6:5). It is used in Lev 19:27 of "harming" (physically destroying) one's beard, and in 2 Chron 34:11 of allowing one's house to fall into disrepair. In four instances, it is used for musical indication (Ps 57:1; 58:1; 59:1; 75:1). In five instances, it is used of destroying something intangible, such as one's inheritance (Ruth 4:6), a person's reputation through slanderous speech (Prov 11:9), a peace agreement (Dan 11:17), the termination of a kingly line (2 Chron 21:7), or of God destroying the pride of a people.

In fourteen instances, *šāḥaṯ* in the Hiphil carries the nuance of "corrupting." However, in most of these cases (12x out of 14), there is no direct object (the verb is used intransitively) and what is in view is a person or people "acting corruptly," i.e., where one's moral conduct is in view.[27] In the other two instances, there is a direct object but one that is *intangible* ("corrupting one's way or one's deeds" – Gen 6:12; Zeph 3:7). What is significant is that in all cases where *šāḥaṯ* carries the nuance of "corrupting," the action is always *internal*, not one of corrupting an external tangible object.

Usage in the Passive Stems: Niphal and Hophal

šāḥaṯ occurs six times in the Niphal stem, but never with a direct object, and never in the sense of *corrupting* an external object such as a city or temple. In Gen 6:11, 12, it is used to describe people who were (by their behavior) corrupt, and in Ezek 20:44 it occurs as a participle used adjectively to describe the nation's *corrupt deeds*. The other three instances describe the state of an object as "ruined" or "spoiled" (Exod 8:20 Jer 13:7; 18:4). All cases involving the Niphal are *descriptive*, not actions imposed upon external objects.

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[27] *šāḥaṯ*, meaning "to act corruptly" or "be corrupt" is witnessed in Deut 4:16, 25; 31:29; Judg 2:19; Isa 1:4; Jer 6:28; Ezek 16:47; 23:11; Ps 14:1; 53:2 [Eng 53:1]; 2 Chr 26:16; 27:2.

Similarly, the two cases in the Hophal stem are participles used adjectively, i.e., they are *descriptive* of something, either of a "polluted" well (Prov 25:26) or "blemished" animals (Mal 1:14).

THE GREEK SEPTUAGINT TRANSLATIONS

Though neither of the two Greek traditions we now have for Daniel follow the Hebrew text perfectly, they did not translate Dan 9:26 in the sense of "moral corruption." Rather, these translations support the notion that the Greek translators understood *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת) in the sense of *physical destruction*.[28]

(1) Old Greek – "And after seven and seventy and sixty-two weeks, an anointing will be removed and will not be. And a king of nations <u>will demolish</u> (φθερεῖ, *phtherei*) the city and the sanctuary along with the anointed one."[29]

(2) Theodotion – "And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointing will be destroyed, and there is no judgment in it. And it <u>will destroy</u> (διαφθερεῖ, *diaphtherei*) the city and the sanctuary along with the leader who is to come."[30]

LEXICAL SEMANTICS AND A NEED FOR CAUTION

In a previous section of this paper, the survey results were summarized for the 142 times that *šāḥaṯ* is used in the Hebrew MT. The purpose was to ascertain if there was any justification for translating *šāḥaṯ* in Dan 9:26 in any way other than physical destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its temple to Yahweh. Can it be understood to mean that Antiochus IV Epiphanes *corrupted* the city and sanctuary without destroying it (as critical scholars maintain)? To answer this question involves a proper understanding of lexical semantics . . . not only the lexical meaning of words but how they are used in various contexts and syntactical situations. One must be careful not to *mishandle* linguistic evidence in the task of exegesis. Hence, one cannot simply take out a concordance, identify all the possible nuances of meaning for a given word, and then think it is legitimate to assign any one of those nuances *willy-nilly* to the use of the word in a specific context. As Louw has said, "A word does not have a meaning without a context, it only has possibilities of meaning."[31] In his book, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, James Barr has pointed out the fallacies of assigning meaning to terms when careful attention is not paid to the

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[28] The Greek translations given here are those provided by the CCAT program at the Univ. of Pennsylvania. Available at <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/40–daniel–nets.pdf>.

[29] The verb φθείρω (*phtheirō*) has a basic meaning "to destroy things." Very rarely it can mean "to corrupt," but in regard to one's moral behavior (e.g., acting corruptly by bribery) or corrupting the morals of others (LSJ, 1928).

[30] The compound διαφθείρω (*diaphtheirō*) has a basic meaning "to destroy utterly." It can have a rarer secondary nuance "in moral sense, *corrupt, ruin* (LSJ, 418), but this does not apply to tangible objects like cities and buildings.

[31] J. P. Louw, *Semantics of New Testament Greek* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 40.

literary and syntactical context in which such terms occur. In this work, he spoke of what he called "illegitimate totality transfer:"

> The error that arises, when the 'meaning' of a word (understood as the total series of relations in which it is used in the literature) is read into a particular case as its sense and implication there, may be called 'illegitimate totality transfer.'[32]

Closely related to this is the error of "illegitimate identity transfer" which occurs when a meaning in one context is said to be the meaning in all contexts.

If one takes Barr's points to heart, then the issue of *lexical semantics*—how the meaning of the lexical units correlates with the structure of the language or syntax—becomes very important. The main point here is that simply because a word has a certain nuance of meaning in one context does not mean that it automatically becomes a *valid option* in another context. For this reason, a proper lexical review of שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*) must include not only identifying the legitimate nuances the word may have but the appropriate syntactical context for each of those nuances.

CONCLUSIONS FROM A LEXICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VERB שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*)

The present study is concerned with the correct meaning that the verb שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*) should have in the case of Dan 9:26 specifically. Given that the word occurs 142 times in the OT, there is sufficient data from which to draw reliable conclusions. In both primary stems (the Piel and Hiphil), the word ordinarily means "to destroy." Other secondary nuances of meaning are possible, including that of "corrupt." However, careful attention to lexical semantics, I contend, does not warrant the meaning of "corrupting the city and sanctuary" in the case of Dan 9:26. What has a bearing on the proper lexical meaning is (1) the use of the verb both with and without a direct object; (2) in cases where a direct object is present, whether it appears as a tangible (physical) object or something intangible; and (3) whether or not the *action* of the verb is internal or external. Does it describe the internal character of the subject (descriptive of its state or attribute) or is it describing the *causative action* on an external object?

A study of usage—both in the Piel and Hiphil stems—shows that whenever the nuance of "corrupt" (or "acting corruptly") is in view, it does not apply to cases where a direct object of a tangible (physical) nature is present. In most of these instances, the nuance of "corrupt" occurs without any direct object at all, and hence the action of the verb is not *externally causative* but rather internally descriptive of the subject. In such cases, the moral conduct of the one being described is in view. Either people were said to "be corrupt" (e.g., Ps 14:1) or they "acted corruptly" (e.g., Deut 4:16). [Verses like Gen 6:12 and Zeph 3:7, in which one corrupts his way (or his deeds), are functionally equivalent and likewise internally descriptive of the subject.]

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[32] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), 218.

Furthermore, whenever a city or fortified stronghold is used as the object of the verb שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*), it always has *physical destruction* in view, not merely a corrupting influence upon it. Finally, in all other cases where the Hiphil of שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*) takes a direct object that is intangible (not an actual physical object), the nuance of "destroy" is inherent (e.g., in Prov 11:9, the statement "with his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor" means that he ruins his neighbor's reputation as a result of slanderous speech).

The bottom line is that if the verb שָׁחַת (*šāḥaṯ*) in the Hiphil stem has the nuance of "corrupt," it will not take a tangible (physical) direct object, and the action of the verb will be internally descriptive of the subject instead of being *externally causative*. When *šāḥaṯ* in the Piel stem has the nuance of "corrupt" and takes a direct object (used transitively), that object will be intangible (non-physical in nature).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR AN INTERPRETATION OF DAN 9:26

Dan 9:26 indicates that a "people (of the prince that will come) will destroy the city and the sanctuary." The word translated "destroy" is the Hebrew verb *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת) in the Hipʿil stem. The translation "destroy" is the normative (most frequent) meaning of the word, i.e., the translation that one would normally expect. Consistent with this, both LXX^O and LXX$^\theta$ translated *šāḥaṯ* with a Greek word meaning "destroy" (not "corrupt"). Furthermore, virtually all English versions today have likewise opted for the translation "destroy."[33]

A survey of the lexical usage of *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת) was made to determine the semantic range of the verb and the syntactical situations that would be expected for the various nuances of meaning. Although the nuance "to corrupt, act corruptly" is a valid option in the Hiphil stem, that nuance is limited to certain syntactical situations where there is no tangible (physical) direct object, and in such cases the action of the verb will be internally descriptive of the subject instead of being *externally causative* (corrupting an external tangible object). On the other hand, in all cases where a city or stronghold appears as the object of the verb acting transitively (Gen 18:28 [2x]; 18:31, 32; 19:13, 14; 2 Sam 20:15, 20; Jer 6:5; Lam 2:8), the meaning is always that of physical destruction, not moral corruption.

The result of these findings is that Dan 9:26 has the *physical destruction* of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple in view. Not only is the idea of "corrupting" the city and sanctuary an illegitimate option, but there is nothing in the usage of *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת) that would suggest a downplaying of the destruction, such as "they intended to destroy it," "they partially destroyed it," or "they ruined it by plundering the temple." Furthermore, the verb *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת) applies to <u>both</u> entities, the city

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[33] The following English versions translate *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת) in Dan 9:26 as "destroy": NASB, NET, NIV, NRSV, ESV, NLT, NKJV, HCSB, LEB, ASV, and the Jewish Tanakh (1985).

and the temple, and the meaning must remain the same regarding both. It would not be legitimate to interpret this, "they intended to destroy the city, and they ruined the temple by plundering it." Likewise, it cannot be taken to mean "they partially destroyed the city" because that cannot be said to be true of the temple. How you understand *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת) in regard to the first object, "the city," must be how you understand it in regard to the second, i.e., "the temple."

Since Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Seleucid soldiers did not destroy Jerusalem and the temple during his reign, the Antiochene theory of Dan 9:26 as embraced by critical scholars is false and should be rejected. Such scholars have leveled numerous attacks against the book so as to deny Danielic authorship and to pass it off as a *forgery* written in the second-century BC, and most of their accusations have been adequately answered by evangelical scholars holding to the inspiration of Scripture. However, the implications of a correct understanding of *šāḥaṯ* (שָׁחַת) in Dan 9:26 has not received enough treatment. This may very well be the "Achilles heel" of the Antiochene theory of the book. The only historical situation that fits is the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in AD 70. That implies that Dan 9:26 is predictive prophecy, not *vaticinium ex eventu* (prophecy after the fact). And if Dan 9:26 is predictive prophecy, then that opens the door that other statements in Daniel are as well, especially regarding Israel's Messiah ("one like a son of man") who will rule over God's kingdom.[34]

A more defensible interpretation of Dan 9:26 is that this verse looks beyond Daniel's day to the time when the land of Judah was under Roman rule in the first-century AD. Although space does not allow me to give a full defense of my interpretation here (that must await my forthcoming commentary[35]), I have argued elsewhere that the term מָשִׁיחַ (*māšîaḥ*) in Dan 9:26 refers not to the high priest, Onias III, but to Messiah Jesus (see footnote 2 above). His being "cut off" is a reference to His crucifixion for the sins of the world after "sixty-two weeks" of years that follow the first "seven weeks" of years (i.e., after 7 + 62 "weeks" of years = 483 years) from the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Then, he is said to "have nothing" (וְאֵין לוֹ, *wᵊʾên lô*), which I understand to mean the *kingdom realization* promised Him in Dan 2:44-45 and 7:13-14. The full realization of that promise must await His second coming.

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[34] For a defense of "one like a son of man" (Dan 7:13) having its fulfillment in Messiah Jesus, see my recent article, "Daniel 7:13-27; The Glorious Son of Man," in *The Moody Dictionary of Messianic Prophecy*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, 1127-38 (Chicago: Moody Press, 2019).

[35] J. Paul Tanner, *Daniel*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary, eds. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, forthcoming 2020).