

Syntactic Comments on Daniel 8:9-12

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In Dan 8:9-12 the word *qéren* ("horn") occurs only in vs. 9, but is understood as a grammatical subject throughout the passage. The gender of this word is feminine. The ethos of the language, however, is such that the historical figures referred to by this symbol – unless specifically known to be feminine – will be considered masculine. This is called markedness. Masculine gender is the unmarked state of affairs in Hebrew, i.e., it is the assumption made in the absence of knowledge to the contrary. So there is a tension between the gender of the symbol and the assumed gender of what it symbolizes, which manifests itself as inconsistency in the gender of verbs found in the passage. Most of the verbs in vss. 9-12 are feminine the word for "horn" is feminine, but the first, sixth, and seventh verbs are masculine. Nor do these choices exhaust the range of possibilities. The verb *w^hūšlak* in vs. 11 is passive and therefore does not exhibit grammatical gender either way.

It is of great interest that at the beginning of vs. 9, the text says *yāšā' qéren-ʾaḥat* "a horn goes forth (horizontally)." The noun (*qéren* "horn") in this clause fragment is feminine, but the verb (*yāšā'* "goes forth") is masculine. This fact is important because it shows that there are not two different historical entities here – one the subject of masculine verbs, the other the subject of feminine verbs. At the beginning of vs. 9, where the subject is not understood from context as in vs. 11 but explicitly stated, it is clear that the genders are mixed. Here the angel is thinking of the "horn" in terms of what it represents, rather than its lexical properties as a word. So there is one grammatical subject for all of the verbs in vss. 9-12 and that subject is the little horn.

For purposes of illustration and clarity, I break out the clauses separately in tables 1 and 2 (below), with feminine verbs on one side and masculine verbs on the other. Having noted this illustration, bear in mind what was stated above, that the contrast is more apparent than real and that there is only one grammatical subject and one historical entity being referred to in this way. The one who is active throughout the passage is the little horn.

Table 1
Daniel 8:9-12 Clause by Clause Showing
Contrasts in Verbal Gender

Feminine	N/A	Masculine
		Daniel 8:9 ^{WTT} וּמִן־הָאֲחַת מֵהֶם יֵצֵא קִרְוֵי־אֲחַת מִצְעִירָהּ
וּתְגַדֵּל יִתֵּר אֶל־הַנֶּגֶב וְאֶל־הַמִּזְרָח וְאֶל־הַצִּבִּי:		
¹⁰ וּתְגַדֵּל עַד־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם		
וּתְפֹל אֶרֶצָה מִן־הַצְּבָא וּמִן־הַפּוֹכְכִים וּתְרַמֶּסֶם:		
		¹¹ וְעַד שָׂרֵי־הַצְּבָא הַגְּדִיל וּמִמֶּנּוּ (הַרִים) [הַרְרָם] הַתָּמִיד
	וְהַשְּׁלֶךְ מִכּוֹן מִקְדָּשׁוֹ:	
וְצָבָא תִּנְתֵּן עַל־הַתָּמִיד בַּפֶּשַׁע		
וּתְשַׁלֵּךְ אֶמֶת אֶרֶצָה		

Table 2
Daniel 8:9-12 Clause by Clause Showing
Contrasts in Verbal Gender
(Transliterated)

Feminine	N/A	Masculine
		ûmin-hā'aḥat mēhem yāšā' qéren-'aḥat mišš'îrâ
wattigdal-yéter ʾel-hannégeb w ^o el-hammizrāḥ w ^o el-haššébi		
wattigdal 'ad-š ^e bā' haššāmāyim		
wattapēl 'āršâ min-haššābā' ûmin-hakkôkâbîm		
wattirm ^e sēm		
		w ^e ad šar-haššābā' higdîl ûmimmennû (hērîm) [hûram] hattāmîd
	w ^e hūšlak m ^e kôn miqdāšô	
w ^e šābā' tinnātēn 'al-hattāmîd b ^e pāša'		
w ^e tašlêk 'met 'āršâ		