

## Dan 12:6 - Does *ʿad-māṭay* Refer to a Period of Time?

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### The data

There are 27 examples of the expression in the Old Testament – with (*ʿad-māṭay*) and without *maqṣef* (*ʿad māṭay*).<sup>1</sup> In 26 of these cases it is a cry for relief of some sort. The contexts for its appearance are uniformly negative, with the exception of Neh 2:6 which is neutral. This verse in NIV says:

Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time. (Neh 2:6, NIV)

The other 26 references are as follows: Exod 10:3, 7; Num 14:27; 1 Sam 1:14; 16:1; 1 Kgs 18:21; Ps 6:4; 74:10; 80:5; 82:2; 90:13; 94:3; Prov 1:22; 6:9; Isa 6:11; Jer 4:14, 21; 12:4; 23:26; 31:22; 47:5; Dan 8:13; 12:6; Hos 8:5; Hab 2:6; Zech 1:12.

There is a question about Dan 8:13, which appears in this list, since one part of what is included in the 2300 evening-morning time period is Christ's high priestly ministry in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, and this is clearly good. But along with Christ's *tāmîd* is the rebellion against the *tāmîd*, and that is just as clearly something bad. The vision itself is neutral. So although one part of what's included is good, and one part is neutral, one part is bad, and that fact illustrates the point I'm making.

### The point at issue

It would be possible to claim that since Dan 12:6 uses the expression *ʿad māṭay* and since the emphasis is on the end of the period, the reference cannot be to the period itself but only to what follows it. However, the sense of Hebrew *ʿad-māṭay* is not the same as *māṭay* by itself. It does not simply mean, "When?" but rather, "Up to what point?" or, "Until when?" In either case, "Until when?" (or just "When?" for that matter) is not the same as "After." See fig. 1.

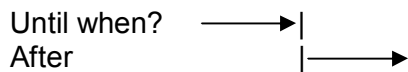


Fig. 1. "Until when?" extends from an earlier time up to a reference point, while "After" starts at the reference point and extends beyond it.

In Dan 12:6 the expression *ʿad-māṭay* shows a number of things. (a) It shows that the period in question is one of adversity. *ʿad-māṭay* is consistently used to inquire about the end of an unfortunate state of affairs. The hardship that God's people endured during the Middle Ages

<sup>1</sup> Exod 10:3, 7; Num 14:27; 1 Sam 1:14; 16:1; 1 Kgs 18:21; Neh 2:6; Ps 6:4; 74:10; 80:5; 82:2; 90:13; 94:3; Prov 1:22; 6:9; Isa 6:11; Jer 4:14, 21; 12:4; 23:26; 31:22; 47:5; Dan 8:13; 12:6; Hos 8:5; Hab 2:6; Zech 1:12.

provides a perfect context for this expression in history, for which a New Testament sequel is found in Revelation in connection with the fifth seal. "They [souls under the altar] called out in a loud voice, 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?'" (Rev 6:10, NIV). The timeframe for this passage is the same that we find in Dan 12:8 and Rev 6:10.

With respect to Dan 12, there are two supporting considerations beyond what has been mentioned so far: Hebrew *ʿad-māṭay* always asserts that a period will have an end (because of *māṭay*, "when?"), also asserts that the end on which it focuses is preceded by a period or process leading up to the end (because of *ʿad*, "until"). Both elements (along with an implied starting point) are present in the expression *ʿad-māṭay* and so both must be allowed to contribute to the meaning of the phrase. Saying "Until when?" includes both "When?" and "Until." Neither factor can be removed without doing violence to the author's intent and the substance of what he wrote. Hebrew *ʿad māṭay* never refers to an isolated moment of time, as *māṭay* by itself would. So let us take the text as it reads.