

Two Words for "Prince" in Dan 10-12

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Introduction

In the book of Daniel the English word "prince" is translated from two different Hebrew words--*śar*¹ and *nāgîd*. The one denotes a "representative of the king, official,"² the other a "minor leader," or leader "in a smaller domain."³ Three uses of these terms are of special interest here--Dan 10:21; 11:22; and 12:1. In Dan 10:21 the word translated "prince" is *śar*, in 11:22 it is *nāgîd*, and in 12:1 it is again *śar*.

Prince as *śar*

Dan 10:21; 12:1

In Dan 10:13 and 20 and Dan 12:1 the word "prince" (*śar*) is associated with the name Michael and in all three cases the context of its use has to do with the protection and well being of God's people.

Dan 10:13 "Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, . . ."

Dan 10:21 "(No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.)"

Dan 12:1 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise."

Parallels in Dan 8

The angel's use of *śar* in the expressions "'Michael, your prince'" and "'Michael, the great prince'" is reminiscent of two passages from chap. 8. The first is Dan 8:11, which contains *śar-haṣṣābā'* "the Prince of the host," and the second is 8:25 with *śar śārîm* "Prince of princes." To understand the references to Michael as "prince" (*śar*) in Dan 10 and 12 one must consider the parallel passages from Dan 8.

Dan 8:11 It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host [*śar-haṣṣābā'*]; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low.

Dan 8:25 When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes [*śar śārîm*].

The identity of this Prince is not given in chap. 8, but in chaps. 10 and 12. The "'Prince of the host'" (8:11) and "'Prince of princes'" (8:25) is to be identified with "'Michael, one of the chief princes'" (10:13), "'Michael, your prince'" (10:21), and "'Michael, the great prince'" (12:1). "'Michael, the great prince'" is the same as the "'Prince of princes.'"

Non-parallel uses

The word *śar* is used nineteen times in the Hebrew chapters of Daniel. Five examples have been introduced so far and all five refer to one historical figure. The remaining fourteen examples, translated variously in NIV as "prince," "chief," and "commander," have a variety of referents. With good angel-princes possibly in view, the term *śar* is used as the second part of the expression *śar-śārîm* "Prince of princes" in Dan 8:25 and again as the second part of the reference to Michael as *ʾaḥad haśśārîm hārîʾšōnîm* "one of the chief princes" in 10:13. Apart from these two examples, the term *śar* is used to describe a Babylonian "chief official" (1:7-11, 18),⁴ a number of pre-exilic Jewish "princes" (9:6, 8),⁵ and a Macedonian "commander" (11:5).⁶ Thus, it is not the word but the context of its use that determines what significance any given example of it will have.

Notable among the remaining uses of *śar* are "the prince of the Persian kingdom" (10:13),⁷ "the prince of Persia" (10:20),⁸ and "the prince of Greece" (10:20).⁹ The "prince of Persia" and "prince of Greece" are hostile figures contrasted with Michael, who eventually comes in person to counteract their influence. We might also speak of a prince of Rome when discussing the little horn of Dan 7, who opposes and is eventually defeated by the "one like a son of man."¹⁰ Evil has exerted itself through more than just two of the world empires in Daniel.

Prince as *nāgîd*

Dan 11:22

In Dan 11:22 there is a seemingly inconspicuous reference to "a prince of the covenant." Notice especially the terms "swept away," "prince [*nāgîd*]," and "covenant."

Dan 11:22 "Then an overwhelming army will be swept away [*yīššābērû*] before him; both it and a prince of the covenant [*nēgîd b'rit*] will be destroyed."

The parallels in Dan 9

Instead of going immediately to history to find a person who might fit a description such as this, it is essential that the exegete first consider any passages within the same book that use the same terms in a similar way. Then when a historical identification is made it will be based on all the available evidence.

Daniel uses the word *nāgîd* only three times--in 9:25, 26 and 11:22. The *nāgîd* mentioned in 9:25 is a different historical entity from the *nāgîd* in 9:26.¹¹ The only appropriate verbal parallel for the *nāgîd* of Dan 11:22 is "the Anointed One, the ruler [*māšîḥ nāgîd*]" in Dan 9:25.

The term primarily in view at this point is *nāgîd*, but the reason it is important is that it allows a comparison between two passages--Dan 9:25 and 11:22. Dan 9:25 cannot be taken in isolation from 9:26-27. All three verses are now quoted. Notice especially the terms "ruler [*nāgîd*]," "cut off," and "covenant."

(25) "Know and understand this: from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler [*nāgîd*], comes, there will be seven 'weeks,' and sixty-two 'weeks.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. (26) After the sixty-two 'weeks,' the Anointed One will be cut off [*yikkārēt*] and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. (27) He will confirm a covenant [*b^erît*] with many for one 'week,' but in the middle of that 'week' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And one who causes desolation will come on the wings of abominations until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." (Dan 9:25-27, margin)

In Dan 11:22 the "prince of the covenant [*n^egîd b^erît*]" is "destroyed." In Dan 9 an "Anointed One, the ruler [*nāgîd*]" (vs. 25) is "cut off"¹² (vs. 26) in confirming a "covenant" (vs. 27). Nothing could be added to either passage to make this threefold connection any more direct or forceful. Dan 11:22 is an abbreviated restatement of Dan 9:25-27. The same events and the same Prince are described in both passages. See table 1.

Table 1
Two Parallel Uses of *nāgîd*

Dan 11:22		Dan 9:25-27	
Hebrew	English	Hebrew	English
yīššābērû	"be destroyed"	yikkārēt	"be cut off"
nāgîd (const.)	"prince"	nāgîd (absol.)	"ruler"
b ^e rît	"covenant"	b ^e rît	"covenant"

Early interpretations of Dan 9

Demonstrating that Dan 11:22 is strongly parallel to Dan 9:25 is not the same as showing how both passages should be interpreted. As the matter stands now we only know that they should be interpreted in the same way. What that way is remains to be determined. Below I approach the problem of how Dan 9:25 should be interpreted from the perspective of how Dan 9:24-27 has been interpreted by the Christian church from earliest times.¹³ For centuries the church unitedly taught that Dan 9 was a messianic prophecy, i.e., the "Anointed One, the ruler" was understood to be Christ. Writing in the fourth century A.D. Eusebius states:

These facts may also serve us as proof of the fulfilment of another prophecy on the manifestation of our Saviour Jesus Christ. It is quite obvious that in Daniel the text defines the number of certain weeks [*hebdomadōn*], which I have treated of elsewhere, in so many words as "until Christ the ruler," and prophecies that after the accomplishment of these weeks the anointing among the Jews shall be destroyed. The fulfilment of this at the time of the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ is clearly demonstrated.¹⁴

Jerome, writing only a few years later, in the late fourth or early fifth century A.D.,¹⁵ expresses the same view of Dan 9.

And as for the angel's statement, "For he shall establish a compact with many for one week (variant: 'a compact for many weeks'), and in the midst of the week the sacrifice and offering shall cease," it is to be understood in this way, that Christ was born while Herod was reigning in Judaea and Augustus in Rome, and He preached the Gospel for three years and six months, according to John the Evangelist. And he established the worship of the true God with many people, undoubtedly meaning the Apostles and believers generally. And then, after our Lord's passion, the sacrifice and offering ceased in the middle of the week. For whatever took place in the temple after that date was not a valid sacrifice to God. . . .

There can be no question as to the close textual relationship between Dan 9:25 and 11:22, or as to what the Christian church originally taught about how to apply Dan 9:24-27. The only question that remains is whether the church in its earliest teaching on the subject was right.

Anointing, in both the Old and New Testaments, was always an act of initiation by which a person or object was set apart to do a special work. the word "Messiah [*māšîḥ*]" is of course related to the verb *māšah*, which means to "smear" or "anoint." What the Messiah set Himself apart to do by being anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism¹⁶ was to establish a covenant relationship between heaven and earth. He did this by sealing the covenant with His own blood. This is what Dan 11:22 means when it says, "a prince of the covenant will be destroyed." Both in Dan 11:22 and in 9:24-27 the reference is to Christ and, more precisely, to Christ at the time of His crucifixion.

The early church taught, and was correct in teaching, that Dan 9:24-27 is a prophecy of Christ. From this it follows that the church would be equally correct now in teaching that Dan 11:22 is a prophecy of Christ. The two are the same.

Non-parallel uses

There are not one but two examples of *nāgîd* in Dan 9. The first is "the Anointed One, the ruler [*nāgîd*]" (9:25), discussed above. The second is "the ruler [*nāgîd*] who will come" (9:26). Jacques Doukhan points out the contrast between them:

[T]he second *nāgîd* (or 'prince') comes against the first one—as his adversary, and also as his usurper. . . . In fact, the motif of a great conflict in Dan 9 between the two 'princes' pervades the whole book of Daniel and belongs to its basic theology.¹⁷

A counterpart to "the ruler who will come" in Dan 9:26 is "the invader" (lit. "the one who comes against him") in Dan 11:16. It is of interest that both figures remain unidentified within their respective passages.¹⁸ I suggest that the nondescript and somewhat mysterious fourth beast of Dan 7:7 is the same as "the ruler who will come" in 9:26, and that "the invader" in 11:16 is yet another reference to this same power--i.e., Rome.

covenant" (11:22), and "Michael, the great prince" (12:1).²⁰ The Being referred to from so many different perspectives in chaps. 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 is Christ--at various times before, during, and after His life on earth.

Discussion

The primary focus of attention in the present paper has been on two verses that frame chap. 11 between them (10:20; 12:1) and on the verse that occurs at the center of chap. 11 (vs. 22). Michael in Dan 10:20 is called *šar*. The same term is used in 12:1. Midway between these two references is the "prince of the covenant" in 11:22, where the term used is *nāgîd*. I now point out one reason why it is significant that two terms are used to describe one and the same Prince.

The word *šar*, used in Dan 10 and 12, implies a relatively greater status and is left unqualified. The word *nāgîd*, used in Dan 11:22, implies a relatively lesser status and is qualified by adding *b^ᶜrît* "covenant." The addition of *b^ᶜrît* explains the change from *šar* to *nāgîd*. Before His life on earth the pre-existent Word ". . . was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning" (John 1:1). He is with God now. (See Heb 1:3.) But the mission of placing the ancient covenant promises on a stable, permanent, and legally sound basis²¹ required Him to leave His former surroundings and come to earth. So Michael--the only One in the universe "who is like God"--laid His glory aside, took on human flesh, and became a man. Paul writes:

. . . when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, (5) to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. (Gal 4:4-5)

Because Christ came so humbly as a man, it was easy for some to assume that what they saw was the whole story concerning Him. This has never been the case. Christ during His life on earth was a Prince--consistent with His divinity, but is described as a lesser Prince or *nāgîd*--consistent with His humanity and with the unassuming way He lived and died on earth.

The covenant of which Christ is "prince" (Dan 11:22), or "mediator" (Heb 8:6), united heaven and earth. By virtue of His divinity He would be able to approach God on man's behalf, and by virtue of His humanity He would be able to approach man on God's behalf. If either component of Christ's divine-human nature had been missing or defective He would not have been able to mediate a covenant relationship at all between such disparate parties, and none would have been forthcoming. This is one way to approach what happened. But consider that if we define "covenant" to mean the basis for a relationship, then Jesus Christ, as the basis on which any ongoing relationship between God and man is predicated, is not only the Mediator of a covenant; He is Himself the Covenant.²² Heaven and earth are joined in Him and on no other basis.

Both *nāgîd* and *b^ᶜrît* are crucially important terms--because of their meaning and because of their location within Dan 11. The word *šar* is important in turn because of its meaning, relative to *nāgîd*, and because of its location within Dan 10-12, relative to *nāgîd*. Such facts cannot be fully appreciated without understanding that the structure of the last three chapters of Daniel is broadly chiasmic in nature--a matter taken up in another paper.²³

Note: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. The present research is based on Frank W. Hardy, "An Historicist Perspective on Daniel 11" (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1983), pp. 85-91, 126-29.

¹The term *śar* is translated "official" in Dan 1:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 18; "prince" in Dan 8:11, 25; 9:6, 8; 10:13, 13, 20, 20, 21; 12:1; "commander" in 11:5. Another Old Testament word sometimes translated "prince" is *nāśîʿ*. It can refer to a clan head or "leader," as in Num 2:3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 25, 27, 29; 7:11, 11, 24, 30, 36, 42, 38, 54, 60, 66, 72, 78; 34:18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28. In Ezek 46:2, 4, 8, 12, 16, 18 *hannāśîʿ* is translated "prince," but refers to the officiating high priest. The word *nāśîʿ* does not occur in Daniel.

²Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *Lexicon in Veteris testamenti libros*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), pp. 929-30.

³*Ibid.*, p. 592.

⁴Hebrew *śar hassārîsîm* ("chief official").

⁵Hebrew *śārēnû* ("our princes").

⁶Hebrew *ûmin-śārāyw* ("but one of his commanders"). The person referred to is universally agreed to be Seleucus I Nicator 312-281 B.C.

⁷Hebrew *w'śar malkût pāras* ("prince of the Persian kingdom").

⁸Hebrew *śar pāras* ("prince of Persia").

⁹Hebrew *śar yāwān* ("prince of Greece"). For the "prince of Persia" and "prince of Greece" as evil angel-princes that seek to influence the leaders of Persia and Greece, rather than referring to that leadership itself, see C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 1 (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1981), pp. 260-61.

¹⁰John J. Collins, in "The Son of Man and the Saints of the Most High in the Book of Daniel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974):50-66, suggests identifying Michael in chaps. 10 and 12 with the "one like a son of man" in chap. 7: "Accordingly it seems most likely that the figure of the one like the son of man represents the archangel, Michael, who receives the kingdom on behalf of his host of holy ones, but also on behalf of his people Israel" (*ibid.*, p. 64).

¹¹On the identity of the second prince, notice that both "the prince who comes" in Dan 9:26 and "the one who comes against him" in Dan 11:16 remain unidentified and mysterious. The same is true of the fourth beast of Dan 7 (see vss. 7, 19, 23). I suggest that in each case the reference is to Rome.

¹²Compare Dan 11:20, where an individual "will be destroyed [*yīššābēr*], yet not in anger or in battle." From this text it is clear that a nonviolent death can be described by the verb *šābar*. The violence associated with the death of the "prince of the covenant" in 11:22, where the Hebrew word is the same, is therefore implied by context rather than the author's choice of words.

¹³See the Appendix to Hardy, "The Day-Year Principle in Dan 9:24-27," *Historicism* No. 3/Jul 85, pp. 48-50. See also John G. Gammie, "A Journey Through Danielic Spaces: The Book of Daniel in the Theology and Piety of the Christian Community," *Interpretation* 39 (April 1985):147.

¹⁴Kirsopp Lake, trans., *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History*, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1926), 1:54-55.

¹⁵Archer, *Jerome's "Commentary"*, p. 102.

¹⁶Christ was not baptized to receive cleansing from sin. He had no sin to be cleansed from. Instead He was baptized to give us an example and to show that He was beginning His earthly ministry. Thus, Christ's baptism was not when He first committed Himself to save

mankind, or the point at which He first received the Holy Spirit. Instead it marked the point at which His prior commitment, informed by the Holy Spirit, came to be put into action by three and a half years of public ministry on earth.

¹⁷Doukhan, "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9: An Exegetical Study," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Theological Studies*, eds. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshar (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), p. 264.

¹⁸It is also informative that no opposing counterpart to "the invader" (*habbā' 'ēlāyw*) appears in Dan 11:16 or the immediately surrounding verses. The phrase in which this term occurs goes on to say: "The invader will do as he please; no one will be able to stand against him."

¹⁹Collins, "Son of Man," p. 64.

²⁰To this list could be added the "man dressed in linen," described in Dan 10:5-6. From the description given it is clear that more than a man is involved and, while Gabriel is probably the one who narrates the vision, 10:13 states that he has been joined by "Michael, one of the chief princes" in 10:13. I would suggest that both beings appear to Daniel in this final vision of the book and that, of the two, the one described in vss. 5-6 is Michael. Another possible reference to this same Being is "the one desired by women" in Dan 11:37 (cf. Isa 4:1).

²¹The experience of Israel amply demonstrates that a better basis than human will power would be required in order to give God's covenant with mankind any stability at all. Before Moses could even offer the Hebrews a choice between blessings and cursings in Deut 28 they had broken the covenant dramatically on at least two occasions--in Exod 32 by making the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai, and in Num 25 by indulging in cultic immorality with the Moabite women around them. Prominent at a later time were the religious innovations of Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 12. These eventually led to the downfall of Israel. Nor were innovations confined to the northern kingdom. "During the reign of King Josiah, the Lord said to me, 'Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense,' declares the Lord" (Jer 3:6-10). Thus, the covenant relationship between God and His people was broken repeatedly, one might even say routinely. If a stable covenant relationship was to be achieved, there would have to be a better basis for it than an ongoing cycle of sin and repentance, and that "only in pretense" (*ibid.*, v. 10). This is why God sent Christ, the Prince or Mediator of a covenant "founded on better promises" (Heb 8:6)--not to turn us loose with impunity but to finish the otherwise impossible task of drawing us to Himself and keeping us there. See Jer 11:4-5; 31:33-34.

²²The law of God is a covenant, broken by sin against God. But the matter does not begin and end with theological definitions. Notice that in Col 2:14 the law is said to be nailed to the cross, while in the gospels (Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:33; John 19:18; in light of Luke 24:39-40; John 20:20, 25-27) the object nailed to the cross is Christ's person. To point out a connection among these passages is both legitimate and instructive. The law codifies Christ's character and Christ in turn embodies the principles of the law. We sometimes speak of a broken law (Exod 32:19); on the cross we find broken flesh. It is impossible to separate these two factors (Matt 26:39, 42, 44).

²³See Hardy, "Notes on the Chiastic Structure of Dan 10-12," in this issue of *Historicism*.