

WRESTLING WITH THE PRINCE OF PERSIA: A STUDY ON DANIEL 10

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There are a number of issues in Dan 10 and its relations with what follows in Dan 11 and 12 that have not as yet been resolved by commentary studies on this chapter. One obvious problem for modern interpreters is the question of what constituted Daniel's grave concern recorded here. Why was he mourning and fasting? Is there any direct or indirect historical evidence from extra-biblical sources that might shed light on the contents of this narrative?

Furthermore, this chapter contains some rather specific dates. Does a chronological study of these dates contribute to a better understanding of the chapter? If Dan 10 can be dated specifically, and Dan 11 is intimately connected with it, that connection might provide a more specific date for the latter passage as well.

These are among the issues that merit examination in Dan 10, and it is my purpose here to offer some suggestions for their solution.

1. *The Date of Dan 10*

It will be appropriate to deal first with the chronological setting of Dan 10, both as to calendar year and the day of the month and day of the week. This will provide a basic and helpful guide for evaluation of the political situation envisaged in that chapter.

The Calendar Year

According to the date given in Dan 10:1, the events described in this chapter occurred in the 3d year of Cyrus. If the writer of this dateline was using a standard Persian-Babylonian system of dating, that calendar year would have extended from the spring of 536 B.C. to the spring of 535 B.C., since the Persians conquered Babylon in the fall of 539 B.C. In that case, the New Year, beginning with Cyrus' 1st full official year of rule in Babylon, would have fallen

into the spring of 538 B.C., and the successive New Years of 537 and 536 B.C. would have marked off his 2d and 3d regnal years.

There is, however, another way in which to interpret this date, based on the possibility that the author employed his own Judahite fall-to-fall year with which to calibrate this 3d year of Cyrus. Since Babylon was conquered *after* the fall New Year of 1 Tishri in 539, Cyrus' 1st year of reign there would, according to this system, not have begun until the fall of 538. This, in turn, means that Cyrus' 3d regnal year referred to in the dateline of Dan 10:1 would have started in the fall of 536. The first month of that 3d year is also mentioned in Dan 10:4. Thus, the difference between these two calendars would imply that according to the Babylonian spring calendar, the first month of Cyrus' 3d year (in vs. 4) would have been Nisan in the spring of 536, whereas according to the Judahite fall calendar, it would have been Nisan in 535.

In which way should this date of Dan 10 be interpreted—according to the Babylonian spring calendar or the Judahite fall calendar? The manner in which this question is answered obviously makes the difference of a year as to when these events occurred.

I personally favor interpreting this date according to the Judahite fall-to-fall calendar year, for four main reasons:

1. The fall calendar was in use in Judah down to the time when this kingdom was brought to an end by Nebuchadnezzar's conquests. Several lines of evidence support this conclusion. The first of these is that the dates in Nebuchadnezzar's Chronicle can be correlated much more satisfactorily with the dates in 2 Kgs 23-25 if the latter are interpreted according to a fall calendar.¹ Two further passages which support the use of the fall calendar in the late Judahite monarchy are 2 Kgs 22 and Jer 36. Josiah's reform is referred to in the former passage, and the recital of events connected with it culminated with the celebration of the Passover in the same 18th year in which the reform began. The use of a spring calendar here would restrict all of these activities to a period of two weeks, while a fall calendar would allow a more reasonable period of six months for their accomplishment. Jer 36 tells the story of Jeremiah's having some of his prophecies written down in the 4th year of

¹S. H. Horn, "The Babylonian Chronicle and the Ancient Calendar of the Kingdom of Judah," *AUSS* 5 (1967): 22-25.

Jehoiakim and then having them read in the temple on a fast day in the 9th month of the 5th year. Since these events appear to have taken place over a relatively short period of time, a fall calendar fits them better than a spring calendar. Other texts could be cited for the use of a fall calendar earlier in the history of Judah,² but these three lines of evidence attest to its use right up to the time of the exile.

2. It seems logical to interpret Daniel's date according to the fall calendar from Judah inasmuch as evidence shows that other Jews in exile continued to reckon time according to their own customs. Ezekiel is the classic case in point. More than a dozen dates appear in Ezekiel, but they were all recorded according to the old Judahite system of numbering months, rather than by the Babylonian system of naming months. The years were also numbered according to the years of the exile, not according to those of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. The date in Ezek 40:1 in particular gives evidence of its calculation from the fall New Year.

3. Information from Nehemiah provides a third main reason for believing that Daniel utilized the fall calendar in his reckoning. Nehemiah lived in the land of exile and was employed in the service of a Persian king there; but in spite of these direct connections at court, Nehemiah wrote down the dates in his biblical book according to his own Jewish system of the fall calendar. The dates in the first two chapters of Nehemiah run in succession from Kislev (the ninth month) in Artaxerxes' 20th year to Nisan (the first month) of that same 20th year. The only way to explain these dates without emending the numbers is to take them as evidence for Nehemiah's use of the fall calendar. This reckoning was for a Persian king, as is also the case of Daniel's Cyrus.

4. The book of Daniel itself provides a fourth basic reason why a fall calendar should be applied to the date in Dan 10. The entry of Nebuchadnezzar into Judahite territory for the first time is dated in Dan 1:1 to the 3d year of Jehoiakim, a datum which commentators commonly take as being in error. Nebuchadnezzar could not have entered Judah any earlier than a time following the battle

²These texts have been conveniently collected by D. J. A. Clines in his study, "The Evidence for an Autumnal New Year in Pre-exilic Israel Reconsidered," *JBL* 93 (1974): 22-40. Clines argues against these texts, but in my opinion the evidence from the texts is stronger than Clines' arguments against them.

that was fought at Carchemish in Syria in 605.³ Since Jehoiakim came to the throne after Josiah's death in 609, commentators commonly hold that to be historically accurate, this date should refer to Jehoiakim's 4th year, not his 3d year. Proper interpretation depends, of course, upon how the different calendars and methods of reckoning the regnal year are applied to these dates. Since the brief reign of Jehoahaz spanned the summer of 609 while Pharaoh Necho was in the north,⁴ Jehoiakim was not installed upon the throne of Judah by Necho until after the fall New Year of 609. Both the Jews and the Babylonians employed accession-year reckoning at this time, which means that Jehoiakim's 1st full official year did not begin until the fall of 608. His 3d year thus spanned the period from the fall of 606 to the fall of 605. If Nebuchadnezzar's troops first entered Judah in the summer of 605, after fighting their battle at Carchemish in the late spring of that year, then the dates from Nebuchadnezzar's Chronicle fit together quite satisfactorily with the date that appears in Dan 1:1. The use of a fall calendar to satisfy this date in Dan 1:1 suggests that the same calendar should be applied to the date in Dan 10.

For these reasons, then, it is concluded here that the 3d year of Cyrus referred to in Dan 10:1 should be interpreted according to a fall calendar used by the author. This type of reckoning dates the events described in Dan 10 to the spring of 535 B.C.

Day of the Month and Day of the Week

The narrative of Dan 10 tells us that Daniel was mourning and fasting for three full weeks (vss. 2-3) and that these three weeks led up to the 24th day of the first month (vs. 4), when he received the prophetic revelation described in the rest of chaps. 10 through 12. It is a simple task to determine the Julian equivalent for the 24th of Nisan in 535 B.C. from the Neo-Babylonian chronology tables compiled by R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein.⁵ When these tables

³D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of the Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London, 1956), p. 67.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 63. Cf. 2 Kgs 23:31.

⁵R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 75* (Providence, R. I., 1956).

are consulted, an equation can be made between 24 Nisan and its Julian equivalent that year, namely, May 11.⁶

This process can be taken one step further. From a knowledge of this Julian date it is possible—through the use of another set of tables—to determine the day of the week upon which that date fell in ancient times. There is also a suggestion of this day in the narrative of Daniel itself, and to this we will turn first.

Dan 10:2-3 states twice that Daniel was mourning and fasting for “three full weeks.” While some commentators continue to take the occurrence of the word “days” in the literal phrase “three weeks, days” here to indicate a contrast with the days of the prophetic weeks that stand for years in the preceding chapter, more perceptive commentators have noted that this construction is simply a pleonastic idiom that refers to “full, whole, complete” weeks.⁷ The same idiom is also applied, on occasion, to months (Gen 29:14, 2 Kgs 15:13) and years (Gen 41:1, Lev 25:29, 2 Sam 13:23, 14:28, Jer 28:3).

Inclusive reckoning does not apply here, since these three weeks were each filled out with a full seven days. This adds up to a total of 21 days for those three full weeks, and that was the same period of time during which Gabriel and Michael were opposed by the prince of Persia (Dan 10:13). Since Daniel was concerned over a problem for the same period of time that Gabriel and Michael were wrestling with this problem, it is likely that the two periods mentioned were identical and that the problem of concern was one and the same.

But the question now arises: What is a “full” week? It surely consists of seven days, that much is clear. However, can those seven-day periods be identified more specifically? There are two possibilities here: (1) that they were non-sabbatical weeks that extended from any day in the week to the same time in the following week, or (2) that they were sabbatical weeks that extended from the first to the seventh days of those weeks (or, in our terms, from Sunday to Saturday).

⁶Ibid., p. 29.

⁷S. R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel*, The Cambridge Bible (Cambridge, 1922), p. 153.

Which of these two possibilities is more likely? I would suggest that sabbatical weeks are more likely here for two reasons.

In the first place, the historical fulfillment of the prophetic weeks of the preceding chapter can now be determined to have taken place during sabbatical years.⁸ Sabbatical years were modeled after sabbatical weeks,⁹ and thus one would expect a similar phenomenon to operate here between Dan 9 and 10. It would seem less likely for sabbatical weeks to occur in Dan 9 and non-sabbatical weeks in Dan 10.

In the second place, the idiom "full," when applied to years, generally seems to refer to one kind of calendar year or another,¹⁰ rather than to any period of 354 days within the lunar calendar. The two OT references to "full months" are too brief to determine whether they began with the new moon or not (Gen 29:14, 2 Kgs 15:13), but the references to "full years" provides some parallel support for the idea that these "full weeks" should have been regular sabbatical weeks, rather than a random sequence of any seven successive days. It is reasonable, therefore, to take the "full" weeks of Dan 10 as probably ending on a sabbath. Daniel's worshipping by a river on this proposed sabbath provides a nice parallel for such a practice that is also known from the NT (Acts 16:13).

A further line of evidence that can be utilized to test this proposition is to determine the day of the week for the Julian equivalent of the date in Dan 10—24 Nisan, 535 B.C. The procedure for use in

⁸I am working here with the dates of 457 B.C., 27 A.D., and 34 A.D. for the beginning and end of the 69 weeks, and the end of the 70th week. Space does not permit an extensive examination of the chronological factors involved. For these years as sabbatical years see now Ben Zion Wacholder, *Essays on Jewish Chronology and Chronography* (New York, 1976), pp. 33, 38.

⁹Notice in particular the relationship between Lev 23:15 and Lev 25:8, in which both the weekly and the yearly periods involved were modeled after the sabbath.

¹⁰The "full years" in Gen 41:1 appear to date from the king's birthday. Cf. Gen 40:20. The "full years" of Lev 25:29 relate to the sabbatical and jubilee years. The years in 2 Sam 13:23 date to the time of sheepshearing around the spring New Year. The years in 2 Sam 14:28 are connected with the end of the year by vs. 26. The one possible exception might be Jer 28:3, but these years—referred to in the 5th month of the year—might have begun with the next fall New Year in the 7th month. J. A. Montgomery has noted that "calendar" weeks are involved in Dan 10:2-3 (*The Book of Daniel*, ICC, vol. 17 [Edinburgh, 1927], p. 407).

this instance has been described in some detail by A. F. Johns, who calculated, in connection with his discussion of military attacks upon the Jews, that Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar on a sabbath.¹¹ With the Julian date of May 11, 535 B.C., established from the Parker-and-Dubberstein tables, the next step in the procedure is to determine the Julian day number for this date from the table available for that purpose (a table that appears in every annual edition of the *Nautical Almanac*).¹² This table gives the Julian day number for the beginning of January at four-year intervals from 1600 B.C. to the present. The nearest year in this case is 537 B.C., for which that day number is 152 5328. To this must be added 851 days to come to the beginning of May, 535 B.C., and then 11 more days to come to May 11 of that year.

The result of the above calculations is that the Julian day number of May 11, 535 B.C., is 152 6180. This can be compared with the day number which Johns worked out for the day when Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar on Sabbath, July 29, in 587 B.C. That number is 150 7231.¹³ Subtraction yields a difference of 1 8949—a number evenly divisible by 7 ($\times 2707$). Hence, this day of the week in 535 B.C. fell on the same day of the week as July 29, 587 B.C. Since that day was a sabbath, this day in 535 B.C. was also a sabbath.

These calculations can be double-checked by working back from the Dominical-Day tables that Jack Finegan has used to determine the days of the Passion Week during the first century A.D.¹⁴ The same result is reached as that which is indicated above.

¹¹A. F. Johns, "The Military Strategy of Sabbath Attacks on the Jews," *VT* 13 (1963): 482-486.

¹²*The American Ephemeris and Nautical Almanac*, published by the United States Government Printing Office, any edition.

¹³Johns, p. 485.

¹⁴The calculations in this case are as follows: According to Finegan's calculation of the possible times for the crucifixion using the Dominical Day tables, April 8 in A.D. 30 was a sabbath (Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* [Princeton, 1964], p. 295). In the Julian day tables, the number for the beginning of January in A.D. 28, the nearest year for which a starting number is given, is 173 1284. To this must be added 829 to come to April 8 in A.D. 30. This yields a Julian day number of 173 2113 for that date. From this the Julian day number of 150 7231 for July 29,

In summary, the 24th day of the first month (Nisan) in Cyrus' 3d year—the date mentioned in Dan 10:1-4—can be equated with May 11, 535 B.C., through the use of a fall-to-fall calendar and applying the dates in the tables of Parker and Dubberstein. Then the day of the week upon which this date fell can be calculated through the use of its Julian day number, and that day is discovered to be a sabbath day. Given the cross-checks available for these calculations, I consider this result to be a mathematical certainty.

Moreover, to correlate this result with the biblical record, one need only make two simple assumptions: (1) that these dates in Daniel were originally calculated according to a fall-to-fall calendar, and (2) that the "full weeks" referred to in Dan 10:2-3 were sabbatical weeks rather than non-sabbatical weeks. Both of these presuppositions appear to be reasonable on the basis of the evidence adduced for them above. The corollary to this conclusion is that there was available to the author of this passage a remarkably detailed knowledge of the sixth century B.C., and in particular the year 535 in that century.

2. *The Issue in Dan 10*

Since a great religious struggle was going on at the time delimited by these dates, it is natural to ask what the nature of this struggle was. What was at stake or involved here? This issue is best determined by noting what happened after the introduction given in Dan 10:1-4.

Immediately thereafter, Daniel received a vision of the glory of God, who was seen over the Tigris River (vss. 5-7). There is some difference of opinion among commentators as to the identity of the being described. He is not specifically named or otherwise identified. I take it to be God, on the basis of the parallels between his description in this chapter and those found in Ezek 1 and 10, and Isa 6 (compare also Rev 1).

587 B.C. can be subtracted. This day was a sabbath, according to Johns' calculations. The difference between these two Julian day numbers is 22 4882, which is evenly divisible by 7. This means that both of these days fell on the same day of the week, and since one of them was a sabbath, so was the other. This fact has thus been worked out by two different systems, which supply a cross-check for each other. (In 536 B.C., the 24th of Nisan was not a sabbath, but a Tuesday.)

Daniel's vision was given in terms very similar to what appears in Ezek 1 and 10, where the point is that God has abandoned his temple in Jerusalem to dwell no more among his sinful people (Ezek 8:6). Later, however, God and his glory were seen returning to the reconstructed temple (Ezek 43:2-5). Historically speaking, this vision in Daniel took place between those two poles of divine experience described in Ezekiel—between God's departure from the temple in Ezek 10 and his return to the temple envisioned in Ezek 43.

In Dan 10, God is seen in the east, not having returned to his temple yet. Why had he not returned? For the obvious reason that the temple had not yet been rebuilt. Its reconstruction in the west had only just begun; and shortly after the project commenced, it was stopped.

The first wave of exiles had already returned to Judah by this time (Ezra 1:1; 3:1-8), so the return of the exiles was not at stake here. The city of Jerusalem was not to be rebuilt until almost a century later, and hence the reconstruction of Jerusalem was not the main issue here either. By a process of elimination, we are left with the temple as the focus of concern. As indicated in Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra 5-6, it was not God's intention that the reconstruction of the temple should be delayed as long as it was. The delay was caused in particular by local opposition (Ezra 4:4).

One aspect of this local opposition was the hiring of "counselors against them [the returnees from the exile] to frustrate their purpose" (Ezra 4:5). Counselors were hired to serve at court, and the court of greatest importance at this time was the Persian court in the east. That would have been the most effective place for these hired counselors to lobby.

The convergence of such factors suggests that Cyrus, directly or through his representatives, acceded to the pressure applied by the counselors of the opponents of the Jews; he agreed to the suspension of the reconstruction of the temple. This, then, is the issue most likely at stake in Dan 10; namely, the development of resistance on the part of Persian authority to the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The glory of God was still seen in the east, according to this vision of Daniel, because God was still waiting to return to his temple, the construction of which had been delayed by the aforementioned obstacles. Historically, these obstacles were not overcome for another decade and a half.

3. *The Political Situation: Identification of the Opposition*

A useful place at which to begin our evaluation of the political situation described in Dan 10 is with the identification of the opposition that is mentioned. The narrative identifies this opposition with which the angels had wrestled, were wrestling, and were going to continue to wrestle as “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” (vs. 13a), “the kings of Persia” (vs. 13b), and “the prince of Persia” (vs. 20).

Standard Interpretation of “Prince” as Guardian Angel of Persia

The standard interpretation of the “prince” referred to here, as found in most commentaries, is that he represents the guardian angel of Persia. One of the grounds for this interpretation is that the word “prince” used in this instance is also used of the angelic figure Michael (vss. 13 and 21; and 12:1) and of the heavenly prince in Dan 8:11, 25. There are, however, several reasons why this interpretation is less than satisfactory:

First, one should take into account *all* of the uses of this word in the Hebrew of Daniel. It is used six times in chap. 1 to refer to a Babylonian official; it occurs twice in Daniel’s prayer of chap. 9 to refer to princes of Judah (vss. 6 and 8); and it is also used in Dan 11:5 to refer to Seleucus Nicator. Thus, this word could be used for human beings as well as for angelic figures. As a matter of fact, it is more commonly used that way.

Second, even when “prince” is used of an angelic figure, elsewhere in Daniel, it is consistently used only of such angelic beings on God’s side, never for fallen angels, demons, or Satan. The powers opposing God are identified in other ways in Daniel, not by this term.

Third, the term “kings” occurs in connection with “prince” in vs. 13, and commentators do not view that former term as a reference to tutelary deities of Persia. Rather, the term “kings of Persia” in this verse must include reference to Cyrus, as it explicitly does in vs. 1.

Thus, more favorable consideration should be given to the interpretation that this “prince of Persia” in Dan 10 is a human prince, not an angel. Although this possibility is rarely entertained in the commentaries, there have been a few exceptions.

Cyrus as “Prince of Persia”

Adam Clarke has observed that “Cyrus alone was the prince of Persia, and God had destined him to be the deliverer of his people; but there were some matters, of which we are not informed, that caused him to hesitate for some time.”¹⁵ While Clarke did take the human interpretation of this prince seriously, which is commendable, the problem which his approach raises is that Cyrus was also identified as “king” in the same chapter, and it would seem strange to identify him as both “prince” and “king” at the same time.

Cambyses as “Prince of Persia”

A more perceptive identification—of Cambyses as “*Prince of Persia*”—was given by John Calvin, who considered seriously the implications of the title “prince” in the 3d year of Cyrus. Commenting on Dan 10:13, he wrote: “But I think the angel stood in direct opposition against Cambyses, to prevent him from raging more fiercely against God’s people. He had promulgated a cruel edict, preventing the Jews from building their temple, and manifesting complete hostility to its restoration.”¹⁶

Calvin returned to this point in his commentary on Dan 10:20:

In reality, I [the angel talking to Daniel] am the defender of thy safety, since I have constantly to fight for thee with the Prince of the Persians. He means Cambyses. I follow my former interpretation of an engagement between the angel and the king of Persia, whom wicked men had stimulated to cruelty; for he had revoked the edict of his father.¹⁷

This is the one interpretation which takes cognizance of both (a) the potentiality for interpreting the word “prince” as a human being, and (b) the actual political situation that obtained in the 3d year of Cyrus. In my opinion, therefore, Calvin was correct in this identification. He was not able to go beyond that point, however,

¹⁵Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible: The Old Testament*, Abingdon reprint ed. (n.d.), 4:606.

¹⁶John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, Eerdmans reprint ed. (1948), 2:252.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 264.

because the detailed knowledge of the ancient Near East which is now open to us had not yet been opened in his time. With the additional information available to us, we can explore the political ramifications of this identification in relationship to the situation in Dan 10.

4. *The Political Situation: Cambyses' Obstructionist Stance*

If Cambyses, the son of Cyrus and crown prince of Persia, was the particular obstructionist in view in this biblical narrative, the question arises: What caused him to act in such a way? Two aspects of this matter need consideration: first, his own personal attitude toward foreign cults; and second, the position of political power he held in Babylon at this time.

Cambyses and Foreign Cults

Since most of our information about Cambyses comes from sources that deal with his conquest and occupation of Egypt, it is to such sources that we must turn for evidence of his animosity toward foreign cults. Herodotus is our principal source, supplemented on occasion by Egyptian texts and by the statements of later classical historians.

First of all, Herodotus tells how Cambyses desecrated the body of his enemy Amasis, the pharaoh who died before Cambyses' arrival in Egypt. Since Amasis' body had already been embalmed, it did not suffer sufficient damage from direct physical attack to satisfy Cambyses, and consequently Cambyses ordered that it should be burned. Herodotus notes that this was "counter to the religious beliefs of both nations" (*Hist.* 3.16).

Continuing on to Upper Egypt, Cambyses sent an expedition from Thebes to burn the Oracle of Zeus at Siwa—probably the El-Khargeh oasis 400 miles west of the Nile. Although the expedition met with disaster and did not accomplish its mission (3.17, 25-26), the mere fact that it was sent gives evidence that Cambyses appears to have had more than the usual amount of antipathy for foreign cults.

Cambyses next returned to Memphis, where, according to Herodotus (3.27-29), he inflicted a mortal wound upon the recently selected Apis Bull on the occasion of its installment as god. The

historicity of this episode has been questioned,¹⁸ partly because there is a fairly extensive overlap between the burial and birth dates on the sarcophagi of two bulls known from the Serapeum to have served as god during this interval.¹⁹ I am inclined to accept Herodotus' testimony on this point, and it may be that the problem in the chronology of these bulls is related to the unusual circumstances of this time. A later native Egyptian piece, written in Coptic, still remembered Cambyses' connection with the Apis Bull, albeit in garbled form.²⁰

Beyond these directly religious offences in Egypt, Herodotus notes that Cambyses "entered the temple of Hephaestus and jeered at the god's statue" (3.37). Cambyses also "entered the temple of the Cabiri, which no one but the priest is allowed to do, made fun of the images there, . . . and actually burnt them" (ibid.).

Other ancient historians, too, have referred to the looting of, and damage to, Egyptian temples caused by Cambyses' troops. Diodorus Siculus, who visited Egypt ca. 60 B.C., spoke of their looting of silver, gold, and costly stones from the temples (1.46.4). He wrote, as well, of the destruction of the mortuary temple of "Ozymandias" (that is, Ramesses II) (1.49.5). Strabo, who visited Egypt in 24 B.C., states, "The city [Heliopolis] is now entirely deserted; it contains the ancient temple constructed in the Aegyptian manner, which affords many evidences of the madness and sacrilege of Cambyses, who partly by fire and partly by iron sought to outrage the temples, mutilating them and burning them on every side, just as he did with the obelisks" (17.1.27, LCL).

¹⁸R. N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (New York, 1963), p. 112.

¹⁹According to the information available from the inscriptions, Apis Bull A was born in the 27th year of Amasis and buried on the equivalent of Nov. 6, 524 B.C., in the 6th year of Cambyses. The death date of this bull is not given. Apis Bull B was born on the equivalent of May 29, 525 B.C., in the 5th year of Cambyses, died on the equivalent of Aug. 31, 518 B.C., and was buried seventy days later. Why Bull A was not buried until a year and a half after Bull B was born has been a subject of considerable discussion. See B. Porter and R. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, III: Memphis* (Oxford, 1931), p. 213; and É. Drioton and J. Vandier, *L'Égypte* (Paris, 1952), p. 624.

²⁰This text is the so-called Cambyses Legend. H. L. Jansen, *The Coptic Story of Cambyses' Invasion of Egypt* (Oslo, 1950).

While some exaggeration may have crept into the foregoing traditions in the course of time, they probably contain more than a kernel of truth. Particularly with regard to Cambyses' damaging of Egyptian temples, there is also the more direct testimony of a letter to this effect from the Jewish military colony at Elephantine in southern Egypt. It dates to the year 407 B.C. and was written to Bagohi, the Persian governor of Judah. This letter refers to the fate of the temple of Yahweh which was already in existence at Elephantine before Cambyses came to Egypt, and indicates that contrary to the fate suffered by the Egyptian temples at his hands, this temple to Yahweh was spared: "And during the days of the king(s) of Egypt our fathers had built that temple in Elephantine the fortress and when Cambyses entered Egypt he found that temple built. And they overthrew the temples of the gods of Egypt, all (of them), but no one damaged anything in that temple."²¹

There is one Egyptian source which on the surface might be taken to point in the other direction; namely, to show that Cambyses actually did favor some Egyptian cults on occasion. In this case, a priest in the temple of Neith at Sais complained to Cambyses, according to the inscription on his statue,²² about the foreigners who had settled as squatters in the ruins of the temple. He appealed that they should be expelled and that the temple should be restored to its former glory. Cambyses acceded to his request, and these corrections were carried out. The king then visited the temple and performed due homage to the goddess. While it is true that Cambyses did order what the priest requested in this case, it must also be noted that Cambyses either brought about, or at least allowed, the state of ruin in the first place. Thus, this particular case is not a clearcut exception to Cambyses' negative policy toward Egyptian cults.

As evidence for some strictures directed by Cambyses more directly against the Egyptian priesthood than against Egypt's temples and gods, there is his order which decreed the curtailment of temple donations. Only three especially favored temples were exempted

²¹B. Porten and J. C. Greenfield, comps., *Jews of Elephantine and Arameans of Syene* (Jerusalem, 1976), p. 90; B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine* (Berkeley, 1968), pp. 19-20.

²²G. Posener, *La première domination perse en Égypte* (Cairo, 1936), pp. 7-17.

from the stipulations of this decree, which affected the rest of the temples more adversely: "The cattle, which were given to the temples of the gods previously at the time of Pharaoh Amasis . . . with respect to them Cambyses commands, 'Its half shall be given to them.' As to the fowls, give them not to them. The priests themselves shall raise geese, and give (them) to their gods."²³

As potential evidence for an unfavorable attitude towards Cambyses on the part of some priests in Egypt in return, it may be noted that the prediction given to him by the oracle of Buto was one of his death. He does not appear to have believed this until the circumstances described by it overtook him in a way which he did not expect, according to Herodotus (*Hist.* 3.64).

While an attempt has been made in recent times by some historians to rehabilitate Cambyses from the charge that he expressed a particular hostility towards foreign cults,²⁴ it seems to me that the cumulative impact of the various foregoing statements is such as to suggest that some sort of antagonism is indeed in evidence. More than just the random pillage of wartime conditions seems to be involved. Indeed, a certain selectivity of antipathy towards gods, temples, and priests runs through the accounts like an echoing refrain.

In this connection, it is of more than passing interest to note that during Cambyses' eight-year reign as king of Persia (530-522 B.C.), no attempt whatever was made at any time to take up the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Just as some of these temples in Egypt lay in unreconstructed ruins during that period, so did the temple in Jerusalem. The resumption of the building project in Jerusalem had to wait until Darius came to the throne of Persia.

Cambyses' Position in the Persian Empire

The second main point necessary about Cambyses in order to connect him with the obstinate "prince of Persia" in Dan 10 is that by the time indicated there, he must have come to a position of sufficient power and influence to have had the importance and

²³W. Spiegelberg, *Die sog. demotische Chronik des Pap. 215 der Bibliothèque Nationale zu Paris* (Leipzig, 1914), pp. 32-33.

²⁴Frye, p. 112.

impact attributed to that obstructionist prince. If he remained only an unimpowered prince in the palace at Pasargade in Persia, then he would not have been able to influence to any significant degree the course of events pertaining to the Hebrew exiles in Babylon, their return to Palestine, and the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem. He does not appear to have been governor of Babylon, since Daniel himself probably occupied that office for a time, and was followed by Gubaru, as I have indicated in a previous study.²⁵ Cambyses was not king of Persia, since Cyrus still occupied that office at this time. This leaves open to Cambyses but one main post through which he could have exercised the power attributed to the "prince of Persia" in Dan 10; namely, the position of King of Babylon.

If Cambyses was king of Babylon at this time, he would have been superior in power to the governor of Babylon; but he still would have been vassal to his father. As king of Babylon, Cambyses would also have been able to exercise authority over all of Syria and Palestine—including Judah—because those territories still belonged to the Persian satrapy of "Babylon and Beyond the River." It was not until the time of Darius I that they were separated, through his governmental reorganization.

The power available to Cambyses as king of Babylon would fit the position of power necessary for the influence exercised by the "prince of Persia" in Dan 10. Is there any evidence that Cambyses did indeed occupy such a position at that time?

5. *The Political Situation: Cambyses as "Coregent"*

Biblical Evidence for the Coregency

There is some evidence from Dan 10 itself for a coregency of the kind described above. This evidence comes from the unusual statement of the angel interpreter in vs. 13, "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." The direct sense of this statement appears

²⁵W. H. Shea, "A Further Note on Daniel 6: Daniel as 'Governor'," *AUSS* 21 (1983): 169-171.

to be that the “kings” (plural) were located in the same place where the angel had been opposed by the “prince” (singular).

If we are dealing with a human prince here, as has been argued above, then that human prince should have been located in the same place as those kings. That opens up the possibility that this prince was also one of those kings.

But how could a prince be both a prince and a king at the same time? He could be, if he was prince of Persia and king of Babylon. By occupying both of those positions, Cambyses could have fulfilled the requirements of this statement.

The occurrence of the plural form of the word “kings” in Dan 10:13 has posed a problem for many commentators. Since they have not understood any sense in which there could have been two contemporary kings involved, several different solutions to this problem have been proposed.

One approach has been to emend the word “prince” and to change the word “king” to “kingdom.” This results in a second reference to the “prince of the kingdom of Persia.”²⁶ This procedure rests upon altering the original form of the Hebrew text to make it more understandable to the interpreter. But if it is understandable as it stands, it does not need to be emended.

Another approach to this passage has been to apply its reference to the “kings of Persia” to the *successive* kings of that dynasty collectively.²⁷ The passage itself, however, appears to refer to action that involved *contemporaneous* kings.

A third main approach has been to suggest that the writer was simply free and inaccurate with the singular and plural forms.²⁸ But cases of free and inaccurate use of the plural for the singular

²⁶L. F. Hartman and A. A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, AB 23 (Garden City, N. Y., 1978): 256.

²⁷A. Jeffery, “Daniel,” *IB* 6:507.

²⁸Montgomery, p. 412. This school of thought argues that since there is an interchange between the meanings of king and kingdom in Daniel, there should also be an interchange of ideas between king and kings. In those other instances, however, both words occur in parallel passages, while only one word occurs here. Equating a king with the kingdom over which he rules is understandable politically, while equating a king with kings would represent a confusion in number over how many rulers ruled. The two cases are not equivalent.

have not been identified elsewhere in Daniel, and hence this appears to be a case of special pleading.

None of the three main solutions that have been proposed for this problem appears to be satisfactory. On the other hand, if there really were two Persian kings envisaged in Dan 10—Cyrus and Cambyses—, then this difficult passage can be understood just as it stands. Technically speaking, of course, Cyrus and Cambyses were not fully equal co-kings of the Persian Empire. They were both Persian kings in the generic sense, but they were not both kings of Persia. Cambyses was a Persian king over Babylon, which was a part of the Persian Empire. The approximation seems sufficiently close to satisfy the requirements of this biblical statement. At least, it offers a better explanation for the statement than does the suggestions offered by previous commentators.

Cuneiform Evidence of the Coregency

Another line of evidence which bears upon the position of Cambyses at this time comes from twenty-nine cuneiform tablets which indicate that Cyrus made Cambyses king of Babylon on a certain occasion, while he retained for himself the title and authority of the king of Persia. Twenty of these tablets are dated simply "Cambyses King of Babylon, Year 1," without the additional title of "King of Lands" that Cambyses carried during his own full and sole reign as king of the whole Persian Empire. The other nine tablets are more specific. They date to "Year 1, Cyrus King of Lands, Cambyses King of Babylon."

The fact that none of these coregency tablets date to any year higher than Year 1 indicates that this arrangement lasted only through one regnal year of Cyrus. In my previous discussions of these tablets,²⁹ it has been noted that the regnal year of Cyrus to which they belong has not yet been localized with precision. The 1st, 8th, and 9th years of Cyrus appear to have been ruled out, but that still leaves the possibility of any year between his 2d and 7th years.

²⁹W. H. Shea, "Darius the Mede: An Update," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 237-240; idem, "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period, II," *AUSS* 9 (1971): 99-128.

In the chronological discussions above, it was noted that Cyrus' 3d year, according to Daniel's Jewish fall-to-fall reckoning would have run from the fall of 536 to the fall of 535 B.C. However, the first month, Nisan, that occurred within that fall-to-fall year would have begun the 4th year of Cyrus' reign in the spring of 535, according to Babylonian reckoning. I would currently suggest that as a working hypothesis these coregency tablets may be dated to that Babylonian 4th year of Cyrus, fitting well there with the time frame of the reference to the "kings of Persia" in Dan 10:13.

Cambyses' Installment at New Year's Festival

One final point of interest about Cambyses' kingship is the time of year that it began. Since documents from this year that are dated in terms of Cambyses' kingship begin with the third day of Nisan and continue all the way through the year, it is evident that Cambyses must have been installed as coregent at the time of the spring New Year's festival, regardless of the year of Cyrus in which this took place. As Dubberstein has noted for his reconstruction of these events, which he places at the end of Cyrus' reign, "At the New Year's festival, the official beginning of the year, in March-April 530 B.C., Cambyses became the official king of Babylon while Cyrus retained the broader title of king of Lands."³⁰ While Dubberstein does not appear to have been correct in dating the inception of this coregency in the last year of Cyrus, he was correct in dating its commencement at the time of the New Year's festival in the spring.

The Nabonidus Chronicle provides several points of information about the New Year's festival that illustrate the vital importance of the relationship of the king to it throughout this period. During the ten years that Nabonidus was away in Tema in Arabia, the New Year's festival was not held, because the king was not present to participate in it. Successive entries in the Chronicle for his regnal years repeat as a refrain the fact that "the king did not come to Babylon for the (ceremony of the) month of Nisanu; the god Nebo did not come to Babylon, the god Bel did not go out (of Esagila in procession), the festival of the New year was omitted."³¹ Then,

³⁰W. H. Dubberstein, "The Chronology of Cyrus and Cambyses," *AJSL* 55 (1938): 418.

³¹A. L. Oppenheim, "Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts," in *ANET*, p. 306.

when Nabonidus finally did arrive in time to celebrate that festival at the beginning of his 17th and last year, the same text reads, "[Seventeenth year:] . . . Nebo [went] from Borsippa for the procession of [Bel . . .] [the king] entered the temple É.TÛR.KALAM.MA, in the t[emple] . . . (partly unintelligible). [Be] went out (in procession), they performed the festival of the New Year according to the complete (ritual)." ³²

These alternating fates of the New Year's festival provide an interesting parallel to what Cambyses—not Cyrus—did after the Persians had taken over Babylon. The successive events narrated by the Chronicle refer to the death of Gubaru, then the death of his wife, and then the mourning performed for her. That period of mourning was completed on Nisan 3. Cambyses then entered the temple the next day to perform the rites of the New Year's festival, as the king ordinarily would:

From the 27th day of Arahshamnu till the 3rd day of Nisanu a(n official) "weeping" was performed in Akkad, all the people (went around) with their hair disheveled. When, the 4th day, Cambyses, son of Cyrus, went to the temple É.NÍG.PA.KALAM.MA.SUM.MA, the É.PA priest of Nebo who . . . the bull . . . they came (and) made the "weaving" by means of the *handles* and when [he le]d the image of Ne[bo . . . sp]ears and leather quivers, from. . . Nebo returned to Esagila, sheep-offerings in front of Bel and the god *Má[ṛ]-b[îti]*.³³

This passage of this text is, unfortunately, badly broken, but what survives of it evidently refers to ceremonies connected with the New Year's festival, as can be seen from a comparison of this passage with the two quoted above that describe similar events from the same text.

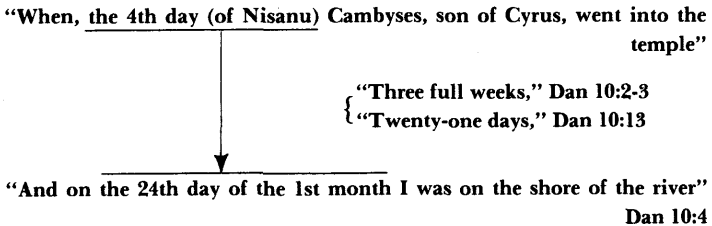
From these parallels, it is evident that Cambyses was functioning as a kingly type of figure in this case. If more of the text had survived in a legible condition, it might have told us whether or not this was the occasion on which Cambyses was installed as king and coregent with his father Cyrus. Nor is the chronology of this text clear, a point with which I have already dealt in an earlier

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid, pp. 306-307.

study.³⁴ This entrance of Cambyses into the temple took place at least one year later than is generally held by scholars who have discussed this text. This New Year’s festival is usually dated in the spring of 538 B.C., when it actually took place in the spring of 537 B.C. or possibly in even a later year.³⁵

While the specific year in which Cambyses entered the temple at the New Year’s festival cannot be determined with precision at the present time, the description of these events still provides an interesting parallel for consideration in connection with Daniel’s description of the events in which he participated in the 3d year of Cyrus. This New Year’s temple entry by Cambyses may well have occurred in a year earlier than Daniel’s mourning and fasting, but it might have occurred the very same year. It is very unlikely, on the other hand, that it could have occurred later. The potential relationship present here is derived especially from a comparison of the dates within the month of Nisan upon which these events took place:



What we find when these dates are compared is that the period of Daniel’s mourning (during which also the angels wrestled with the prince of Persia)—twenty-one days—is the exact equivalent of the length of time between the date in Nisan on which Cambyses entered the temple during the New Year’s festival, the 4th, and the date in Nisan on which the events of Dan 10 are described as occurring, the 24th. If the 24th of Nisan was the twenty-first day of Daniel’s mourning, then by working backwards we find that the first day of Daniel’s mourning was the 4th of Nisan, the same day

³⁴Shea, “Darius the Mede,” p. 240.

³⁵Shea, “An Unrecognized Vassal King, IV,” *AUSS* 10 (1972): 159.

on which Cambyses entered the temple during the New Year's festival.

Because of the broken state of the Chronicle, we cannot definitely say that these events both occurred in the same year; nevertheless, this is a distinct possibility. However, even if they did not, Cambyses' participation in the New Year's festival provides a good model for analogy with the year in which he was installed as coregent, for his coregency should also have started with the New Year's festival.

We have tentatively located this coregency in the 4th Babylonian regnal year of Cyrus, his 3d year according to Daniel's fall-to-fall reckoning. With Cambyses installed as the official king of Babylon, Daniel would have had good reason for mourning, in view of Cambyses' attitude toward foreign cults and their activities, such as the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem that was under political attack at the time.

6. *Daniel as Governor*

A final point should be made about Daniel's position as governor during this period. It was proposed in a previous article that there is room in history for Daniel to have been governor of Babylon for a time, because the name of the Babylonian governor is not attested until Gubaru appears in the 4th year of Cyrus.³⁶ Some two dozen Babylonian texts written over the next decade indicate, cumulatively, that Gubaru held that office until the 5th year of Cambyses. Daniel was by then already an old man, and may be expected to have passed off the scene of action soon after we last hear of him early in the 3d year of Cyrus in Dan 10.

From a consideration of the chronological factors involved, the interval between Daniel and Gubaru can be narrowed somewhat more than the general statement above, relating to Cyrus' 3d and 4th years. In earlier discussion in this article, I have proposed that the first month of Cyrus' 3d regnal year mentioned in Dan 10 should be calculated according to a fall-to-fall calendar. This dates those events in Nisan in the spring of 535 B.C., for according to the Babylonian calendar, that was the time when Cyrus' 4th regnal year began.

³⁶Shea, "Note on Daniel 6," pp. 170-171.

It is of interest to note, therefore, that the first dated reference to Gubaru appears in a text that is dated to the 8th month of Cyrus' 4th year. Since Daniel was last heard from towards the end of the first month of that same year, the interval between the last reference to Daniel as a possible governor of Babylon and the first definite reference to Gubaru in that office is narrowed to approximately seven months, from the spring to the fall of 535 B.C.

7. *The Unity and Date of Dan 10-11*

It is the considered opinion of virtually all commentators on Daniel that chaps. 10 and 11 belong together as a part of the final prophecy of the book that also includes chap. 12. A few quotations will suffice to illustrate the general trend:

J. A. Montgomery: “These chapters (10-12) constitute one ‘Vision,’ the breaks introduced by our chapter divisions being fairly modern.”³⁷

A. Jeffery: “Chs. 10-12 are really only one vision . . . the division is artificial, for there is no real break in the sense after either 10:21 or 11:45.”³⁸

N. W. Porteous: “It is generally agreed that these chapters belong together as a single whole and tell a single revelation.”³⁹

André Lacocque: “Chapters 10-12 constitute a literary unit.”⁴⁰

R. H. Charles: “These three chapters are to be taken closely together as forming the whole.”⁴¹

A. Di Lella: Chaps. 10-12 “form a single and final prophecy.”⁴²

Citations of similar sort could be multiplied many times over.

³⁷Montgomery, p. 404.

³⁸Jeffery, p. 499.

³⁹N. W. Porteous, *Daniel*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, 1965), p. 149.

⁴⁰André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, trans. D. Pellauer (Atlanta, 1979), p. 200.

⁴¹R. H. Charles, *The Book of Daniel*, The Century Bible (Edinburgh, 1904-1912), p. 110.

⁴²Hartman and Di Lella, p. 275.

Since Dan 10 and 11 are essentially inseparable in this final complex of prophecy in the book, the historical content of Dan 10 takes on considerable significance in dating this final prophecy. If Dan 10 does indeed convey a very specific historical knowledge of events in the sixth century B.C., and if Dan 11 is intimately bound up with Dan 10 in the final literary complex of the book, then the historical date supplied by the contents of Dan 10 should also be applied to the date when the prophecy of Dan 11 was written down.

It is commonly held that Dan 11 was composed in the second century B.C. It seems unlikely in the extreme, however, that someone writing in the second century B.C. would have known that the 24th of Nisan in the 3rd year of Cyrus, figured according to the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar, was a sabbath. This kind of information is so specific that it is hard to imagine how someone in the second century B.C. would have been able to determine such a minor and remote chronological datum with such accuracy.

The alternative is that this date was conveyed so accurately because it was written down by someone who lived through those events in the sixth century B.C. The unity of the prophecy of Dan 11 with the narrative of Dan 10 that is so specifically connected with the sixth century B.C. suggests that same date for the composition of the prophecy of Dan 11 as well.

8. *Summary*

The narrative of Dan 10 conveys some rather specific chronological information connected with the prophetic experience described in that narrative. That episode in the prophet's experience is dated on the 24th day of the first month of Cyrus' 3d year. The lines of evidence for interpreting Cyrus' 3d year according to a fall calendar have been presented above, and the acceptance of these lines of evidence dates the events of Dan 10 to the spring of 535 B.C., rather than to the spring of 536 B.C. Moreover, by consulting the appropriate tables available, we can determine that Nisan 24 may be equated with the Julian equivalent of May 11 in 535 B.C. The prophet was in mourning and fasted for a period of three full weeks that led up to and concluded with that 24th day of Nisan. The use of the phraseology "full weeks" implies that those weeks should be taken as ending on the sabbath, the last day of a "full

week." The prophet thus received this vision on a sabbath. Through a second set of tables available for the purpose, it can be determined that in 535 B.C., May 11 did indeed fall on a sabbath. This correlation illustrates the detailed accuracy of the knowledge of the sixth century B.C. conveyed by the narrative in Dan 10.

Larger issues were at stake in Dan 10 than mere chronological factors, however, as a struggle between heavenly powers and earthly potentates was then underway, according to the narrative. This struggle involved some aspect of God's plan for his people, and by a process of elimination that particular aspect can be narrowed down to the reconstruction of the temple. One of the key figures in this struggle was the "prince of Persia." The use of this word "prince" elsewhere in Daniel indicates that it can refer to either a supernatural prince or a natural human prince. The context of its use in Dan 10 favors the latter usage. If one looks for an earthly human prince of Persia in the 3d year of Cyrus, there is one specific candidate for that historical position: Cambyses, the son and crown prince of Cyrus.

Characterwise, Cambyses fits well the kind of problem that his angelic antagonists encountered with him, since his opposition to foreign cults is well documented from ancient records, especially those which deal with his conduct in Egypt. Judging on the basis of his performance elsewhere, we would readily conclude that it would only have been natural for him to oppose the temple building project in Jerusalem. It is interesting to note in this connection that no further attempts at rebuilding the temple were undertaken through the last half of Cyrus' reign, when Cambyses exercised a significant degree of influence over the affairs of the province of Babylon and Beyond the River (which included Judah). The same was true during Cambyses' sole reign thereafter. It was only with the accession of Darius I to the throne of Persia that the Jews were able to resume the temple building project.

In order to have exercised a determining influence in the affairs of the Jews and other peoples of the Persian Empire, Cambyses probably would have had to rise to a position of importance beyond that of mere heir-designate to the throne. The position of authority proposed for him here is that of king of Babylon, a sort of coregent with his father Cyrus, who was still the king of the Persian Empire. Due to a lack of direct information in the cuneiform tablets which

testify to this coregency, it has not been possible as yet to date with precision the year of its occurrence. It is proposed here that this coregency took place during Cyrus' 4th Babylonian regnal year, his 3d year according to the Jewish reckoning employed in Dan 10. The reference in Dan 10:13 to the "kings" of Persia at this time would fit well with such a circumstance.

This, then, was the time when Cambyses succeeded to a position of sufficient power with which to have interfered directly in the affairs of Judah. Thus, on the basis of this reconstruction we ascertain the person and the issue with which the angels were struggling while Daniel was mourning and fasting about those very same circumstances. In the normal course of events, Cambyses would have taken up his Babylonian kingship during the New Year's festival in Babylon, at the beginning of the first month of the year, Nisan. The Nabonidus Chronicle provides an interesting parallel, for it was on the 4th day of Nisan that Cambyses entered the temple of Babylon during the New Year's festival of whatever year that passage refers to. Three weeks after Nisan 4 would take us to the 24th of Nisan, the very date on which the "three full weeks" of Daniel's mourning and fasting were brought to a conclusion by the prophetic experience that came to him.