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## Daniel 11 and the Islam Interpretation

Since the early years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the interpretation of Daniel 11:40–45 has been a subject of debate. The fact that the prophecy is about events that will transpire during the time of the end, some of which are still in the future, should make us cautious in our interpretation of the passage. What we offer here is a possible way of reading the text. In its interpretation it is important to read the passage on its own terms and examine the flow of ideas and the author's intention. It should also be read within the larger context of other biblical apocalyptic prophecies. Only after this is done will we be able to interpret its prophetic message.

From the methodological point of view, this is a linguistic, syntactical, and grammatical analysis of the text. We will spend some time examining the Hebrew text and discussing the meaning of the terms used as well as relevant syntactical constructions. I have also tried to determine whether there is an OT narrative that could provide a parallel or that could function as a conceptual background to the apocalyptic narrative found in our text. If such narrative is available it can be used to understand the activity and intentions of the king of the North. I believe that the story of the exodus from Egypt provides enough terminological connections, images, and conceptual parallels to assist us in the interpretation of this apocalyptic passage. I am also working under the assumption that there is a strong connection between the books of Daniel and Revelation and that this connection could be used to decode the passage under consideration.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The connection between Daniel and Revelation is a given among Adventist and non-Adventist scholars and is supported by White: "The books of Daniel and the Revelation are one. One is a prophecy, the other a revelation; one a book sealed, the other a book opened" (Ellen G. White, "Daniel and Revelation," *Manuscript Releases* [Washington, DC: E. G. White Estate, 1981], 1: 99). She adds: "A wonderful connection is seen between the universe of heaven and this world. The things revealed to Daniel were afterward complemented by the revelation made to John on the Isle of Patmos. These two books should be carefully studied" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1962], 114). According to her Revelation gives "fuller light on the subjects dealt with in Daniel" (Ibid., 117). For me the idea that Daniel and Revelation shed light on each other is a fundamental hermeneutical principle that should be used in the interpretation of Daniel 11:40–45.

What we are offering is a possible reading of the prophecy that is grounded in the Scripture, free from sensationalism, and compatible with the Adventist end-time scenario as found in Revelation. This is a case in which Scripture can and should be used to interpret Scripture.

### Translation of the Biblical Text<sup>2</sup>

**Daniel 11:40**—“At the time of the end<sup>3</sup> the king of the South will wage war<sup>4</sup> against him<sup>5</sup> and the king of the North will storm against<sup>6</sup> him with chariots, horsemen, and many ships, and he will

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<sup>2</sup> The translation provided is my own. In the footnotes I try to justify the translation.

<sup>3</sup> On the phrase “the time of the end” in Daniel, see Gerhard Pfandl, *The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), 230. His study led him to conclude that this phrase “is an apocalyptic *terminus technicus* of Danielic origin which always applies to the last period of *Heilsgeschichte* prior to the second advent of Christ when the everlasting kingdom will bring to an end and replace world history” (316). See also his article, “Daniel’s ‘Time of the End,’” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7.1 (1996): 148–149.

<sup>4</sup> The verb *nāgaḥ* means “to gore”; but in the *hitpael* formation it means “to join in combat with” or “to wage war.” Cf. Daniel 8:4 where the *piel* formation means “to charge against.” The image conveyed by the verb is that of “an attacking motion that will destroy another, as a figurative extension of the goring motion of a horned animal into a person” (James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew Old Testament* [Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997], # 5590).

<sup>5</sup> There is some disagreement concerning the antecedent of the pronoun “him” (“with him”; “against him”). Some dispensationalists believe that the pronoun refers to the antichrist as a third power. In that case Daniel 11:40 is describing an attack against the Antichrist by the kings of the North and of the South (e.g., Walvoord, *Daniel the Key to Prophetic Revelation: A Commentary* [Chicago, IL: Moody, 1971], 277–279; and J. Paul Tanner, “Daniel’s ‘King of the North’: Do We Owe Russia an Apology?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35.3 [Sept 1992]: 322). According to this view “the king” mentioned in 11:36–39 is not the king of the North but the antichrist. However, Daniel 11 describes the fights between the king of the North and the king of the South and there is no clear indication in Daniel 11:36 or 40 that a third party is introduced in the conflict. What we have in verse 40 is a military attack followed by a massive counter attack. The geographical directions are quite clear. The king of the South makes his move to the north and the king of the North moves immediately against him and travels to the south. The countries defeated are those located to the south. In the context, the enemy of the king of the North is the king of the South and not a third power unidentified in the passage. The most natural reading of the Hebrew text will be to take the pronoun “him” as referring to the king of the North. Among dispensationalists who find in the text only two kings and who identify the king of the North with the antichrist are Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holmes, 1994), 309–310; Edward J. Young, *The Prophecies of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), 251; and G. L. Archer, Jr., “Daniel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. F. E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 7: 147.

<sup>6</sup> The basic meaning of the verb *sā’ar* II is uncertain. In the *piel* formation it means “to

enter many lands and will overflow<sup>7</sup> and pass through<sup>8</sup> [or ‘and will be like an overflowing flood’].”

**Daniel 11:41**—“And he will enter the beautiful land and many<sup>9</sup> will fall;<sup>10</sup> but these will be saved/rescued from his hand,<sup>11</sup> Edom, Moab, and the foremost<sup>12</sup> of the sons of Ammon.”

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carry away in a storm.” Here we find the verb in the *hitpael* followed by the proposition ‘*al* in the sense of “to storm against.”

<sup>7</sup> *Šāṭap* means “to flood over someone or something,” “to gush,” “to overflow”; the image here is that “of an army cascading through the land like a flood” (L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. and ed. under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson [Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000], 4:1475; abbr. *HALOT*).

<sup>8</sup> ‘*ābar* means “to move through,” “to go/pass over.” The two verbs, *šāṭap* and ‘*ābar*, are also found in a military context in Daniel 11:10. Their combined usage could be interpreted as a hendiadys to refer to “an overwhelming flood” (Michael A. Grisanti and Elmer A. Martens, “שָׁטַף *šṭp*” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997], 4:97; abbr. *NIDOTTE*).

<sup>9</sup> *Rabbôt*, “many,” is a feminine plural and this has led some to suggest that it designates “many nations.” Some reprint it as *ribbôt*, “myriads” (e.g., John J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993], 368). Although the feminine plural used here appears strange, it is probably influenced by the feminine plural “lands,” in Daniel 11:40 (see André Lacocque, *Book of Daniel* [Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1974], 223). The absolute usage most probably refers to the “many” people that fall as the army of the king of the North passes through the “beautiful land.”

<sup>10</sup> The verb *kāšal*, in the niphal formation, in Daniel 11:14, 19, 33–35 means “collapse, fall; to stumble; fall of a dynasty.”

<sup>11</sup> Since the niphal form of the verb *mālaṭ* implies a flight that results in “deliverance,” “escape,” (cf. Gerhard Hasel, “פָּלַח *pālaṭ*” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974], 11:559; abbr. *TDOT*), the phrase “saved from his hand” means that those nations were able to flee away and escape from the power of the king of the North; they “fled to safety” (*HALOT*, 1:589). The usage of the verb does not allow for the interpretation that the nations escaped “by throwing their lot with the victorious leader, who takes possession of all the lands and their riches” (Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978], 23); or that they escaped by considering the king of the North as “their liberator from the Egyptian yoke” (Lacocque, *Daniel*, 233).

<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to determine the meaning of the phrase “the foremost of the sons of Ammon.” The noun *rēšit* usually designates “what comes first,” and could be used in the sense of beginning, the best, the first fruits. Here it could designate “the main part of the Ammonites,” (*HALOT*, 3:1170) or perhaps “the leaders of the Ammonites” (Hasel, 566). The main idea seems to be that not all of the Ammonites are able to escape from the hand of the king of the North. However, it has been suggested that the noun sometimes expresses the idea of totality and that “the meaning ‘sum’ seems to be present in Daniel 11:41: *rēšit b’nê ʿammôn* ‘all Ammonites’” (H.P. Müller, “רִשׁוֹן *rōš*

**Daniel 11:42**—“And he will stretch out his hand against [many] lands and the land of Egypt will not be able to escape.”<sup>13</sup>

**Daniel 11:43**—“And he will govern/gain control over<sup>14</sup> the treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt, and Libyans and Ethiopians [will follow] in his footsteps.”<sup>15</sup>

**Daniel 11:44**—“But<sup>16</sup> news from the east and the north will horrify<sup>17</sup> him, and he will go out with great anger to destroy<sup>18</sup> and exterminate<sup>19</sup> [to totally annihilate] many.”

**Daniel 11:45**—“And he will plant the tent of his palace [the royal tent]<sup>20</sup> between the sea and the splendid<sup>21</sup> holy mountain;<sup>22</sup> yet he

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head” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997], 3:1191; abbr. *TLOT*).

<sup>13</sup> The literal translation of the phrase *lō' tihyeh liplētāh* would be, “will not become a rescue,” meaning “will not be able to escape.” The verb *mālaṭ*, used in the previous verse is a variant of *pālaṭ*. In this verse we have the noun *p'lēṭāh*, “escape, deliverance.”

<sup>14</sup> The verb *māšal* plus the preposition *b'* means “to rule over.” It is primarily used in political contexts, as is the case here in Daniel. The king of the North rules over treasures, meaning that he controls them.

<sup>15</sup> The Hebrew *b'miš'ādāyw* is difficult to interpret. The noun *mišād* means “step, footstep,” suggesting that the phrase means “in his footsteps” (*HALOT*, 2:624). The idea seems to be that, after gaining control over the Egyptian treasures, Libyans and Ethiopians will follow next or “in his train” (James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1927], 466; cf. Baldwin, *Daniel*, 203). Perhaps the idea is that Libyans and Ethiopians have become, through defeat, the king's entourage (see Collins, *Daniel*, 308).

<sup>16</sup> The conjunction *w'* in *ūš'mū'ōt* introduces a contrasting clause and can be rendered “but [news].”

<sup>17</sup> The niphal form of the verb *bāhal* means “to be horrified, to be out of one's senses” (*HALOT*, 1:111), usually in a situation of war (Benedikt Otzen, “*בָּהַל* *bhl*,” *TDOT* 2:4).

<sup>18</sup> In the interpretation of the verb *šāmad*, hiphil, “perhaps particular emphasis should be given to the deliberateness of the action of the internally causative *hiphil*, to feel oneself compelled (obliged) to destroy something: to exterminate” (*HALOT*, 4:1553).

<sup>19</sup> The verb *šāmad* is followed by the verb *hāram*, which means “to devote to destruction.” When the two verbs are so closely associated, the goal of the action expressed is that of “total annihilation” (N. Lohfink, “*הָרַם* *hāram*,” *TDOT* 5:183).

<sup>20</sup> The noun *'appeden* is of Persian origin (Montgomery, *Daniel*, 467) and designated “the royal palace of the Achaemenids to the N of Susa” (*HALOT*, 1:78). When used in conjunction with “tent,” as is the case here, it means “the royal tent” in which the king dwelt when traveling during military campaigns.

<sup>21</sup> The noun *š'bi* means “ornament,” “splendor” and refers to something that is beautiful. It is probably derived from the verb *šbh* II, which means “to want, wish.” The noun is used in Daniel to refer to the land (*b'ereš hašš'bi*; 11:16). This appears to be its meaning when used by itself in geographical contexts (8:9; 11:41). Although the general reference is to the land, its main focus appears to be Jerusalem and probably the temple (see H. Madl, “*שְׁבִי*,” *TDOT* 12:237).

<sup>22</sup> The phrase “between the . . . and the . . .” can be literally translated “between the seas

will come to his end and there will not be any help for him.”

### Context of the Passage

Before we start our analysis of Daniel 11:40–45, it would be good to place this passage within its immediate context. Daniel 11:40–45 is part of a long prophecy recorded in Daniel 10:1–12:13. Its introduction is found in 10:1–11:1 and its conclusion, and that of the book of Daniel as a whole, is recorded in 12:5–13. Although the prophecy deals with specific geographical locations, we will argue that its scope is of cosmic proportions. In fact, the cosmic dimension frames the prophecy. In the introduction, Daniel is informed that Gabriel and Michael are directly involved in the conflict against forces of evil that are trying to control the movements of history in an attempt to interfere with God’s plan for His people (Dan 10:12–14). The prophet is taken behind the scenes in order to show him that in this conflict God is personally involved; it is not something that is just happening in the countries of the Middle East. This same cosmic dimension is also found at the end of the prophecy with the second mention of Michael and His work on behalf of God’s people at the close of the cosmic conflict—at the end of the investigative judgment in heaven (Dan 12:1–3). The time of anguish and the resurrection transcend geographical limitations (see Appendix II).

The transition to our passage within the prophecy begins in Daniel 11:29. The king of the South had been engaged in a war against the king of the North but finally the king of the South defeated him. The king of the North returned home frustrated and enraged. The text suggests that he furiously went back to continue a previously unfin-

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to the mountain” (*bên yammîm ʔhar*). The combination *bên . . . ʔ* is used to distinguish different objects (see Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Nudé, and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 282). In such cases the preposition *ʔ* assumes the meaning of *bên* (“between”) and it means “between . . . and . . .” (see Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* [Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993], 2:487). This is overlooked by Stephen R. Miller who translates the preposition *ʔ* as “at,” meaning that the antichrist places his tent on the glorious mountain, between the Mediterranean and the Dead Seas (Miller, 312). The truth is that the combination of the two prepositions is a variant of the more common phrase *bên . . . ûbên* (“between X and between Y,” or in better English, “between X and Y;” cf. Gen 9:16; Exod 11:7; Zech 11:14). The plural “seas” is a plural of extension (Montgomery, 467), or “the poetic plural of fullness, as a sign of the great Mediterranean Sea” and does not refer to the Mediterranean and the Dead Seas (Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Daniel, Commentary on the Old Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002], 9:810; also Collins, *Daniel*, 389). In other words, although it is plural in form it is singular in meaning.

ished battle in which he had been involved: a war against the people of God (Dan 11:30–39). He oppresses and persecutes them, opposes the truth, and rejects the true God. Things are going well for the king of the North until the king of the South interferes with what he is doing by attacking him. The intention is to destroy him.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Plot of the Apocalyptic Narrative**

We will first explore the flow of the apocalyptic narrative and its intertextual connections with the exodus narrative. This will help us establish how the different elements of the narrative fit together and will hopefully facilitate the understanding of the apocalyptic text.

#### **Function of Daniel 11:40**

Daniel 11:40 fulfills three functions. First, it introduces the king of the South and his last conflict against the king of the North. Second, it dates the narrative—it will take place in the time of the end. Third, the reaction of the king of the North—his military response—is summarized in verse 40b: “And the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through.”<sup>24</sup> This summary statement is developed in more detail in the next few verses. In the process of defeating the king of the South, the king of the North is able to subjugate many other nations.

#### **The King of the North and God**

Keeping in mind that in Daniel 11 the king of the South is identified or directly associated with Egypt (see v. 8) we additionally find several elements in the text that support the impression that the biblical background of the passage is the Israelite exodus from Egypt.

First, Daniel refers to Egypt as the “land of Egypt.” This phrase is used very often in the book of Exodus to designate Egypt (6:13, 26, 28; 7:3–4, 19; 8:5; etc.). In fact, it is used in Exodus more often than in any other book of the Bible.

Second, while the hand of the Lord was against Egypt during the Exodus (Exod 3:20), now it is the hand of the king of the North that is against the land of Egypt (Dan 11:42). A fundamental difference is that the king of the North is not leading an exodus from Egypt but a

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<sup>23</sup> See footnote number 5. The text indicates that now it is “the king of the south who attacks, provoking a massive response by his opponent” (Carol A. Newsome, *Daniel: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014], 357).

<sup>24</sup> All biblical quotations are from the NAS unless otherwise indicated.



return to it. At another level one could postulate that the similarity is found in the fact that both the king of the North and God went down to Egypt for very specific reasons. Obviously their intentions were vastly different—God went to free His people; the king is interested in conquering Egypt.

Third, the language of water plays an important role in both narratives. In the case of the Exodus, one could say that the Red Sea became the army of the Lord fighting against the Egyptians (Exod 14:27–28; 15:5, 8–10). The army of the king of the North is described as a flood, or as a strong rushing storm, overflowing the lands and passing through them as the king went against his enemy (Dan 11:10, 40; cf. Isa 8:8).

Fourth, the reference to chariots and horsemen in this military battle echoes the armies of the enemies of God during the Exodus. The terms “chariots” (*rekeb*) and “horsemen” (*pārāšim*) are closely associated with the exodus from Egypt (Exod 14:9, 17–18, 23, 26, 28; 15:19; Josh 24:6).

Fifth, Edom, Moab, and Ammon are mentioned in the narrative of the wilderness travels of the Israelites (e.g., Exod 15:15). The Israelites did not conquer them and neither did the king of the North (e.g., Deut 2:19; Judg 11:15).

Sixth, the Israelites took silver (*keseph*) and gold (*zāhāb*) and precious things from the Egyptians (Exod 12:35–36), but this is now done by the king of the North.

Seventh, the Israelites left the land of Egypt and went to meet the Lord on the holy mountain, Sinai (Exod 3:12; 19:20–23). Now the king of the North is leaving Egypt and is heading to the “holy mountain,” probably referring to Mount Zion.

Eighth, the Israelites were commanded by the Lord to exterminate (*hāram*) the inhabitants of Canaan on account of their sins (Deut 7:2). The king of the North leaves Egypt heading to Israel to exterminate (*hāram*) God’s people (Dan 11:44). In both cases the reference is to the law of extermination (*hērem*).

By using the exodus from Egypt as a literary and conceptual background for the apocalyptic narrative, a particular understanding of the king of the North emerges from the text. The exodus from Egypt is the most important and majestic revelation of God in the Old Testament. It was a display of His redemptive power on behalf of His people and resulted in the defeat of Egypt and its gods. It revealed God’s sovereignty in a unique way. He took His people out of Egypt as a victorious king. Although the language used in Daniel is predominantly military, the descriptions of the actions of the king of the North use the images and terminology employed to describe

God's actions during the Israelite exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan. By doing this, the deepest intentions of the king of the North are manifested. He is pretending to act like God by defeating Egypt, by claiming to have control over history, and by determining who should live and who should die. He goes down to Egypt with his army, then leaves for Canaan, and finally places his tent in the center of his military camp in preparation for a war of extermination. The king also pretends to be like the people of God: he goes down to Egypt, possesses the wealth of Egypt, leaves Egypt, and is involved in a war of extermination. But he is in fact the enemy of God's people.

### Passing through the Glorious Land

Although the king of the North is going to war against the king of the South, on his way to Egypt he passes through the "glorious/beautiful land" (Dan 11:41). When the verb *bô'* is used with the preposition *b<sup>e</sup>* in the context of war it could mean "to invade," but here the idea seems to be "to come into" because the primary target of the king is the land of Egypt. The "glorious land" refers to the land of the people of God and it stands as a symbol for that people. The term *š<sup>e</sup>bî* designates something that is magnificent and therefore desirable. It is used to describe Babylon (Isa 13:19), but only the land of Israel is called "the most beautiful of all lands" (Ezek 20:6, 15; see also Jer 3:19). The result is that "many will fall." The Hebrew verb translated "fall" (*kāšal*) means "to stumble, stagger." It designates the stumbling that precedes the fall and expresses the idea that a disaster is about to take place.<sup>25</sup> The verb is used several times in Daniel to designate the stumbling and fall of an enemy (Dan 11:19), as well as the experience of the people of God as they pass through trials that refine them (11:14, 33–35). When applied to the people of God, the verb in Daniel designates "the purifying eschatological judgment" of God.<sup>26</sup> The "many" are the people of God, who dwell in the "glorious land." At this point in the narrative, as already indicated, the main interest of the king of the North is not the "glorious land," but defeating the king of the South. Yet, what he is doing causes many of God's people to "stumble."

### Escape of Edom, Moab, and Ammon

We have suggested that the reference to Edom, Moab, and Ammon recalls the exodus from Egypt and the travel of the Israelites to Canaan. The mention of these nations could be a literary device used to show that the language and images of the Exodus and conquest

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<sup>25</sup> C. Barth, "כָּשַׁל *kāšal*," *TDOT* 7:353, 358.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 357. Barth is specifically referring to Daniel 11:14, 19, 33–35, 41.

are being employed to describe the work of the king of the North. If that is the case, there is no need to identify them with any specific political power or group.<sup>27</sup> The other option would be to take them as designating people who, according to OT eschatology, will find refuge in the Lord (“flee to safety”; Heb. *mālaq*; we are dealing with remnant terminology).<sup>28</sup> This idea is explicitly found in Isaiah’s prophecy that Moab was going to find refuge on Mount Zion in its moment of crisis and under the leadership of a Messianic king (Isa 16:1–5). In this particular case, “Moab is representative of the nations which will come to the mountain of God to learn his ways, ways which are incarnated in a person who is the true ruler of Israel.”<sup>29</sup> In the case of Ammon, God announced judgments against it and also its future restoration (Jer 49:1–6). The Lord promised the Israelites that they would possess the remnant of Edom (Amos 9:12). According to Isaiah, Edom, Moab, and the sons of Ammon will be part of the messianic kingdom (Isa 11:14). Since Daniel also builds on the eschatological ideas of the Old Testament, we could suggest that the three nations, associated with the exodus of Israel from Egypt, appear to represent those from among the nations who would invoke the name of the Lord and find refuge and deliverance on Mount Zion (e.g., Joel 2:32; cf. Isa 2:2–4).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> By the time of the Roman Empire Moab had ceased to exist, and Edom and Ammon had lost their political influence and power (see Jean-Michel de Tarragon, “Ammon,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 1:195). This suggests that these nations are being used here as symbols and not as a geographical designation; see Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 2008), 544.

<sup>28</sup> See footnote number 11. Although it is logical to assume that Edom, Moab, and Ammon were part of the territories of the king of the South, this is not clearly stated in the text. In any case, this would not negatively impact our interpretation but would point to the fact that the king of the South designates much more than the land of Egypt opening up the possibility for a broader understanding of him.

<sup>29</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 343.

<sup>30</sup> According to Amos 9:12, the remnant of Edom, together with all the nations, will be part of the renewed kingdom of David. Edom stands here for more than a particular nation. “Probably Edom is here representative of all Gentile hostility to Israel” (Duane A. Garrett, *Amos: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008], 284). It has been also suggested that “here in 9:12 the LXX translates אֲדוֹמִים [Edom] with τῶν ἀνθρώπων ‘of men, humankind,’ reading אָדָם [ādām] instead of אֲדוֹמִים ‘Edom.’ This fact, together with God’s propensity to employ puns in Amos (e.g., 5:5; 7:7–8; 8:1–2), indicates that ‘Edom’ here is probably a cipher or symbol for אָדָם, or all humanity, including Gentiles. In this way, אֲדוֹמִים stands for all the Gentile nations judged in 1:3–2:3 and, by analogy, for all of humanity. אֲדוֹמִים [Edom] linguistically is therefore a synecdoche for the phrase ‘all the nations’ (כָּל הַגּוֹיִם)

## Complete Victory

During the Exodus the powers of the land of Egypt were defeated by the power of God, but in this case the king of the North is the one who defeats Egypt. He is acting the way God acted in the time of the Exodus. The fact that all the treasures of the Egyptians are now taken over by the victorious forces of the king of the North indicates that the victory is final and complete. Libya and Ethiopia were traditionally considered the geographical limits of the Egyptian Empire. The victory of the king of the North over them simply means that his triumph over the king of the South is complete.<sup>31</sup> The king of the North has unified his kingdom by finally conquering Egypt. Jeremiah announced that the king of the North was going to conquer Egypt (46:24).

## News from the North and the East

But the moment of victory leads to an unexpected situation. The king of the North receives news (*šēmūāh*) from the north and the east that horrifies him. The north is the direction from which the enemy comes bringing destruction (Isa 14:31; Jer 46:20, 24). But the true king of the North is the Lord (e.g., Ps 48:1–2; see Appendix II). The east is the place of exile but it is also the place of deliverance from which the Lord reveals His saving power on behalf of His people (e.g., Ezek 43:2–5). The north and east are explicitly associated with the work of Cyrus as the liberator of Israel from the exile (the new exodus in the Old Testament). We read in Isaiah, “I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes—one from the rising sun who calls on my name. He treads on rulers as if they were mortar, as if he were a potter treading the clay” (41:25; cf. 41:2, NIV). The liberator of God’s

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in the next clause, which is parallel to it” (R. Reed Lessing, *Amos*, Concordia Commentary [St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2009], 578). See also Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, 31 (Dallas, TX: Word, 2002), 398, who writes, “In the parallelism of v 12, however, ‘Edom’ is not used strictly for its own sake, but rather as a synecdoche for the phrase ‘all the nations’ (כל הַגּוֹיִם) which parallels it.” Acts 15:16–17 is a quote from Amos 9:11–12, it is used to argue for the inclusion of believing Gentiles in the church. The disciples recognized that Edom was standing in the text for all humanity in particular the Gentiles who would come to believe in Christ. James followed the Greek translation reading Adam (*ʿādām*) instead of Edom, reflecting the real intent of the text. “Broadly speaking, however, the result in both the Hebrew and the Greek texts is the same, namely, the inclusion of other peoples in the future kingdom of Israel” (David J. Williams, *Acts*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011], 265).

<sup>31</sup> See Arthur Jeffery, “The Book of Daniel: Introduction and Exegesis,” *The Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon, 1951–1957), 6: 539.

people is associated with the north and the east.<sup>32</sup> The implication of the text in Daniel seems to be that the true king of the North is going to confront the earthly king of the North, the usurper. Nothing is said about the nature of the news, but it is clear that they pose a threat to the unity of the kingdom of the king of the North. A similar usage of the term *šēmūāh* (“news, report, rumor”) in military contexts is found in Jeremiah 49:23 and Ezekiel 21:7.

The verb “to horrify” (*bāhal*) is used in the Old Testament to designate the fear experienced in a war situation (Exod 15:15; Judg 20:41; 2 Chron 32:18). It is the terror “connected with the unexpected or is brought about by an event that breaks into human reality in a threatening manner.”<sup>33</sup> The king of the North experiences this fear and decides to mobilize his army. His goal is no longer to subdue Egypt—this has already occurred—but to possess the Glorious Holy Mountain of God. The conflict is between the Lord and the king of the North. The fact that he leaves Egypt to exterminate God’s people suggests that they were unwilling to submit to him. For the king, the final solution is to attack God’s people in a war of extermination (the law of *hērem*). What the Lord asked the Israelites to do to the corrupt Canaanites the king of the North is now ready to do to them.

### Purpose of the Last Attack

In this attack the king of the North is doing what *hēlēl ben šāḥar* (lit., “shining one, son of the dawn,” or “Lucifer, son of the morning” [KJV; AV]) attempted to do, namely to take over the Mountain of the Lord (Isa 14:12–14). He plants his royal tent between the sea and the Holy Mountain, that is to say he encamps to get ready for the attack. The idea seems to be similar to the practice of the God of Israel during the wilderness period when He dwelt in His tent in the midst of His people as their king and military leader.<sup>34</sup> Another possible parallel is found in Jeremiah 1:15, where “the families of the kingdoms of the north . . . will come and they will set each one his throne at the entrance of the gate of Jerusalem.” This is a vivid description of a city

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<sup>32</sup> The combination of north and east is based on the geography of the ancient Near East. The arid region to the east of Israel made it practically impossible for armies from the east to attack Israel coming directly from the east. They went north, where they had access to water and food, and came down from the north to attack Jerusalem. That explains why, for instance, Jeremiah refers to Babylon as coming from the north or as the enemy from the north (4:6; 6:1; 10:22).

<sup>33</sup> See Jeffery, 539.

<sup>34</sup> See Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, Jewish Publication Society (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 340–341; and Baruch A. Levine, *Number 1–20*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 142–144.

under siege.<sup>35</sup>

According to verse 16 the Lord will then come to judge the kings. The reference to the “sea” in Daniel 11:45 may point to Daniel 7:1 where the sea is associated with evil powers. The phrase *har šēbî qōdeš*, “the glorious/beautiful holy mountain,” is only found here in the Old Testament. In this case *šēbî* is associated with *har qōdeš* (“holy mountain”), thus clarifying what it specifically designates. The shortened form, “holy mountain,” is employed in Daniel 9:16, 20 to designate the temple in Jerusalem or Mount Zion. The phrase “holy mountain” is common in the Psalms as a reference to Zion, the dwelling place of the Lord (3:4; 15:1; 43:3; 48:1; 87:1; 99:9).<sup>36</sup> The same usage is found in Isaiah (11:9; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20), Jeremiah (31:23), and in some of the Minor Prophets (Joel 2:1; 3:17; Zech 8:3). The king of the North is fighting the Lord Himself. The final attack of Israel’s enemies against the city of God and His temple, as well as their subsequent defeat by the Lord, are an intrinsic part of the eschatological hope of the Old Testament (e.g., Ps 2:1–4; Isa 17:12–14; Zech 12:1–9).<sup>37</sup> This is the same message Daniel proclaims.

### **King of the North is Defeated**

The text gives the strong impression that the king of the North is defeated before he launches his full attack, perhaps while still camping. The phrase “to come to his end” establishes the temporal limitations of this power—his defeat. This is also indicated by the statement that no one came to help him. The fact that no one came to help him suggests that his kingdom was pulled apart—that he was unable to hold it together. In Daniel, God is the one who provides help (*‘ôzēr*) in moments of critical importance and danger (Dan 10:13; 11:34), but in the case of the king of the North there is no help (*‘ôzēr*) available for him from his allies or from the Lord. This clearly indicates that he is the enemy of the Lord.

### **Actions of the King of the North**

The activities of the king of the North take him through the land of Israel, down to Egypt, and finally back to Israel. They parallel the actions of God’s people who went from Canaan to Egypt and then

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<sup>35</sup> See William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 1:18.

<sup>36</sup> See Helmer Ringgren, “שָׁבִי *qdš*,” *TDOT* 12:541.

<sup>37</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 389 comments, “The passage [12:40] does, however, recall other eschatological oracles that speak of a final invasion of Israel, where the aggressor is indefinite.”

left Egypt and went back to the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. God also came down to Sinai, then went to Egypt with Moses and left Egypt during the Exodus taking His people to the Promised Land. This general background is filled out using images from OT prophecies describing the eschatological attempt of the nations to exterminate Israel and their ultimate failure. This mosaic provided hope and encouragement to those experiencing the oppression of God's enemies (see chart on page 29).

### **Attempting to Decode the Prophecy**

In this interpretation of Daniel 11:40–45, I am assuming, as I already indicated, that the books of Daniel and Revelation are closely related to each other, not only in terms of their literary type (biblical apocalyptic literature), but also in terms of their message and theology. I will suggest that Daniel 11:40–45 contains in embryonic form an apocalyptic narrative that is fleshed out in detail in the book of Revelation.<sup>38</sup> This is supported by an intertextual study that will show the presence of linguistic and thematic connections between the passage in Daniel and Revelation. I will specifically suggest that the activities of the king of the North and some of the images used in Daniel are further developed in Revelation in the context of end-time Babylon. But before exploring that idea, let me say something about the king of the South.

### **Egypt as a Symbol**

Daniel 11 identifies or associates the king of the South with Egypt (v. 8). In the Bible the symbolism of Egypt is ambivalent, but predominantly negative. On the positive side we find that it is a wealthy land with plenty of food. Abraham and Jacob went there to escape famine (Gen 12:10–20; 42–47); it was a land of refuge. But it was also a place of temptation, as the story of Joseph illustrates (Gen 39–41). During and after the Exodus it is described as a land of slavery and hard work (Exod 13:3; Deut 5:6; Jer 34:13). It is a land whose king has no respect for Yahweh, does not know anything about Him, and openly challenges and opposes Him (Exod 5:2). He has his own gods and does not care about Yahweh and His will for him or for his people. During the monarchy, Egypt was a constant temptation for Israel.<sup>39</sup> Many Israelite kings concluded that Egypt's power was more efficient

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<sup>38</sup> Steinmann, *Daniel*, 544, suggests that Daniel 11:40–45 parallels Revelation 20:7–10, but this, as we will demonstrate, is too restrictive and does not take into consideration the apocalyptic narrative that runs throughout the book of Revelation.

<sup>39</sup> See Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 229.

in defeating and delivering them from their enemies than the Lord (Isa 30:1–5; Ezek 23). They formed political alliances with it. In the Old Testament “Egypt served as a model of idolatry and arrogant power.”<sup>40</sup> Egypt was basically a land of bondage and oppression (Exod 23:9; Deut 5:15) from which God delivered His people. In that respect Babylon assimilates elements of the character of Egypt, making it necessary for God to intervene and deliver His people again through a new exodus. This aspect of the significance of Egypt plays an important role in the book of Revelation. In fact, “John’s Apocalypse, though without formal citations of biblical tradition, is replete with literary allusions to the book of Exodus.”<sup>41</sup> This is particularly the case in Revelation 5–16.<sup>42</sup> Babylon experiences God’s judgments through plagues, and the deliverance of God’s people occurs through a new exodus. The language of the seven trumpets and seven plagues echoes the language of the plagues of Egypt.<sup>43</sup> We also find parallels like “the emergence of the Pharaoh-like dragon, its pursuit of the woman into the wilderness, and the safe passage of the Lamb’s followers through the sea.”<sup>44</sup> Perhaps what is surprising is that, in Revelation, Egypt, and Babylon seem to merge into each other in the sense that Babylon is an enslaving power opposed to God’s plan for His people.

As we have seen, Egypt stands in the Bible for human hubris and independence. It is a land uninterested in Yahweh or taking His place in human history. Its kings have their own gods and the military power they need to protect themselves. While the king of the North is interested in Yahweh and in occupying His place, usurping

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<sup>40</sup> Herbert B. Huffmon, “Egypt,” *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 251.

<sup>41</sup> Benjamin G. Wold, “Revelation 16 and the Eschatological Use of Exodus Plagues,” *Eschatologie—Eschatology: The Sixth Durham–Tübingen Research Symposium: Eschatology in Old Testament, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, eds. Hans-Joachim Eckstein, Christof Landmesser and Hermann Lichtenberger, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 272 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 249.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 250. Wold mentions, among other allusions, the image of Jesus as the paschal lamb who delivers from Egypt/Babylon, the new song, the new kingdom of priests, some of the trumpets’ allusions to the plagues of Egypt, etc.

<sup>43</sup> See David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 52B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997), 865; J. Roloff, *The Revelation of John*, *Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 183; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 383; and Wold, 252.

<sup>44</sup> Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of John*, *Black’s New Testament Commentaries* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 224. See Laslo Gallus, “The Exodus Motif in Revelation 15–16: Its Background and Nature,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 46.1 (2008): 21–43.



His role, the king of the South simply does not care. Egypt represents the nations of the earth that do not take the Lord into consideration. Today we would probably refer to them as non-Christian societies and nations where secularism or atheism prevails. In the final conflict these nations will join the king of the North in his opposition against the Lord. This understanding of Egypt fits well with Daniel 11, where the main interest of the chapter is the cosmic conflict and the forces involved in it. Behind military and political powers are operating specific ideologies.

### **The Use of Revelation in Decoding the Prophecy**

I will begin with what appear to be clear connections between Daniel and Revelation, move to those that are less clear, and finally summarize the narrative in order to demonstrate that what is briefly depicted in Daniel is much fuller developed in Revelation.

#### ***1. Mimicking God***

In Revelation the archenemy of God is described as assuming the role and even the characteristics of God Himself, but not His holiness. Three evil powers are united, standing for what is usually called the unholy trinity—the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth (Rev 12–13).<sup>45</sup> They attempt to usurp the role of God on earth. This is developed in different ways in the book. The beast from the sea is to a large extent mimicking the role of Jesus, the beast from the earth in general stands for the role of the Spirit, and the dragon for the Father.<sup>46</sup> The unity of these three powers is identified in Revelation as the mystical Babylon opposed to God and His people. The nature of the king of the North in Daniel—a power mimicking God—is now ascribed to the three powers that constitute the end-time Babylon.

#### ***2. Extermination***

The unholy trinity goes to the kings of the earth to unify them—to “conquer” them in the sense of persuading them to join the coali-

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<sup>45</sup> This is a common view among commentators; see for instance, David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, Word Biblical Commentary, 52A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997), lxxvii; and Beale, 729, where he writes, “As past commentators have observed, the dragon, the sea beast, and the land beast form a competing trinity with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” See also, Jon Paulien, *Armageddon at the Door* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008), 64–69.

<sup>46</sup> See Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *Future Glory: The 8 Greatest End-Time Prophecies in the Bible* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 105–106. See also Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, rev. ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 376–379.

tion—in order to use them as instruments of extermination:

Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty (Rev 16:13–14, NIV).

These powers are successful in bringing about the intended world coalition: “They [the kings] have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb” (17:13–14, NIV). This suggests that the king of the North at least represents what in Revelation is called Babylon—the apocalyptic coalition formed by the unholy trinity. After gaining their support, the three powers “gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty” (Rev 16:14). This war against the remnant is specifically introduced in Revelation 12:17 and its goal is to exterminate those who do not worship the image of the beast (Rev 13:15).<sup>47</sup> Only those who identify themselves with the forces of evil by bearing the mark, name, or number of the beast will survive. In the Septuagint, in Daniel 11:44, the Hebrew verb *hāram* (“to exterminate”) is translated using the Greek *apokteinō* (“to kill”), the same verb used in Revelation 13:15 to refer to the attempt to kill God’s people. Besides Daniel, this is the only other biblical apocalyptic passage that anticipated an attempt to eradicate God’s people shortly before God’s final intervention in human history.

### 3. Mount Zion

As the attempt to exterminate the remnant—represented by the apocalyptic symbol of 144,000—approaches, they find refuge on Mount Zion (*oros Siōn*, Rev 14:1).<sup>48</sup> John says, “I looked, and behold,

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<sup>47</sup> See Paulien, 175–176.

<sup>48</sup> It has been correctly stated that “according to Rev 14:1 the seer sees the ‘lamb’ and with it the 144,000 (God’s eschatological people) on ὄρος Σιών, where they are protected from persecution and suffering (cf. ch. 13) and can at the same time hear and learn the ‘new song’ sung in heaven (14:3). Zion is thus where the pious are delivered in time of persecution (cf. 7:1–4; also Joel 2:32; Ps 125:1)” (Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds., “Σιών *Siōn*,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993], 3:247). Revelation 14:1–5 is not primarily describing the experience of the people of God in heaven but is the counterpart of Revelation 13:15–17. The forces of evil are ready to exterminate the people of God but they will not be able accomplish this because the people of God have found refuge on Mount

the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads” (14:1). They have chosen to remain loyal to the Lamb and this is not acceptable to the unholy trinity. The forces of evil gather at a specific place called Armageddon (*harmagedōn*) where they will fight against God and His people (16:16).<sup>49</sup> Although the meaning of this term is debatable, it seems to be contrasted<sup>50</sup> and conceptually related to Mount Zion—the place where God’s people find refuge, where they are gathered through the proclamation of the messages of the three angels (14:6–12), and where the forces of evil will go to attack them. Interestingly, after the millennium the evil forces also attempt to attack the people of God who are now dwelling within the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem that descended from heaven (Rev 20:7–9; 21:2). According to the Old Greek version, the king of the North “will place” (*histēmi*) his tent (*skēnē*) between the sea and the holy “mountain” (*oros*)<sup>51</sup> in preparation for the attack (Dan 11:45), but in Revelation the Lamb is “the one standing” (*histēmi*) on Mount (*oros*) Zion protecting His people (14:1). At the end of the conflict John hears a loud voice saying, “Now the dwelling [*skēnē*] of God is with men, and he will live with them” (Rev 21:3, NIV). The contrasts are significant.

#### 4. Result of the attack

In Revelation the attempted extermination fails because God delivers His people. He delivered them from Egypt and now He delivers them from the threatening power of the king of the North. It is as if the king of the North has suddenly appropriated elements of the character of the king of the South. A theophany takes place<sup>52</sup> and Babylon is divided into three parts; the coalition against God’s people collapses (16:18–21). The coalition failed because it was fighting against the

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Zion. We will suggest that Revelation 14:6–12 describes how they were gathered there for the final conflict (the messages of the three angels), and that 14:14–20 describes their final deliverance at the coming of Christ.

<sup>49</sup> Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 176–177, has also seen the connection between the attempt of the king of the North to exterminate God’s people and Armageddon in Revelation 16.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> The Greek reads, τοῦ ὄρους τῆς θελήσεως τοῦ ἁγίου “of the mountain of the desire of the holy.” “Desire” is probably used because what is beautiful is usually desirable.

<sup>52</sup> The language used in Revelation 16:18–20 echoes the theophany at Sinai; see Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 293–295; and Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 842.

Lamb of God (17:14). Like the king of the North, there was no one to support the evil intentions of Babylon. According to Daniel, at the close of the conflict none of the kings of the earth will help the king of the North (Dan 11:45) and Michael will deliver His people (12:1–3); in the case of Babylon, the nations will withdraw their support (Rev 17:16). The poetic language used is interesting: “The merchants who . . . gained their wealth from her [Babylon] will stand far off [*histēmi*], terrified at her torment” (Rev 18:15, NIV).

### *5. Escaping from the enemy*

In Daniel a group of nations are able to escape from the hand of the king of the North. In Revelation, many of God’s people are still in Babylon and are being invited by God’s remnant people to come out of it: “I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people’” (18:4). The reference in Daniel to Edom, Moab, and Ammon could be equated with those who, according to Revelation, will hear the call to come out of Babylon. According to Daniel these nations escaped from the attack of Babylon finding refuge in the Lord. These are sincere persons who are not yet part of the eschatological remnant mentioned in Revelation (12:17). These people are found in all Christian communities and among world religions. As we approach the end, the Lord is going to do a special work among those religions and many of their adherents will join God’s people. Escape from Babylon is the same as finding refuge on Mount Zion (18:1–4).

### *6. Initial attack against the king of the North*

The initial attack of the king of the South against the North is not explicitly mentioned in Revelation but we do find an attack against the beast from the sea.<sup>53</sup> A mortal wound is inflicted on one of its heads but it is finally healed (13:3). The text does not explicitly state who inflicted the wound but one can assume that an enemy did it. The passive voice may point to God<sup>54</sup> but He could have used human instrumentalities that, while accomplishing their own evil purposes,

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<sup>53</sup> It could be argued that Daniel 11:40 does not describe an initial defeat of the king of the North by the king of the South. In principle this is true; the defeat is not explicitly stated. But as we already indicated the king of the South takes the initiative and launches an attack against the king of the North to which the king of the North reacts and in the end defeats the South. Daniel is not interested in telling us what happened at the moment when the king of the South attacks the North or how long it takes for the North to react to the South. What we have is a brief description telescoping prophetic events that are further developed in Revelation in terms of the mortal wound and its healing which leads to the final conflict.

<sup>54</sup> Beale, 687.

also actualized God's purpose. The beast from the sea exercises its hegemony for 1,260 days and then is wounded (Rev 13:5). At the end of this same period a unique beast comes from the abyss and makes war against the two witnesses of God (Rev 11:7). This beast is associated with Egypt and Sodom (Rev 11:8), and could very well represent powers that, like Egypt, have no respect for the true God and oppose Him<sup>55</sup> and those who are illegally trying to take His place on earth (the beast from the sea). Historicist interpreters have found the historical fulfillment of this prophecy in the rise of France as a rationalistic and atheistic power.<sup>56</sup> The principles on which the French Revolution was established have spread throughout the world. Ellen G. White states:

Anarchy is seeking to sweep away all law, not only divine, but human. The centralizing of wealth and power; the vast combinations for the enriching of the few at the expense of the many; the combinations of the poorer classes for the defense of their interests and claims; the spirit of unrest, of riot and bloodshed; the world-wide dissemination of the same teachings that led to the French Revolution—all are tending to involve the whole world in a struggle similar to that which convulsed France.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> One could then suggest that “the beast from the abyss seems to be Satan working through a secular power” (Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11,” *JATS* 13.2 [2002]: 38). “Here in 11:7 ‘the beast,’ identified by the definite article (τό), is clearly the angel of the abyss (9:11) and the dragon and Satan (12:9). In particular, because the devil is called ‘the beast’ here in 11:7, this designation refers to the dragon . . .” (L. A. Brighton, *Revelation*, Concordia Commentary [St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1999], 297).

<sup>56</sup> “The ‘great city’ in whose streets the witnesses are slain, and where their dead bodies lie, ‘is spiritually Egypt.’ Of all nations presented in Bible history, Egypt most boldly denied the existence of the living God, and resisted his commands. No monarch ever ventured upon more open and high handed rebellion against the authority of Heaven than did the king of Egypt. When the message was brought him by Moses, in the name of the Lord, Pharaoh proudly answered, ‘Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go.’ [Exod 5:2; A.R.V.] This is atheism; and the nation represented by Egypt would give voice to a similar denial of the claims of the living God, and would manifest a like spirit of unbelief and defiance. The ‘great city’ is also compared, ‘spiritually,’ to Sodom. The corruption of Sodom in breaking the law of God was especially manifested in licentiousness. And this sin was also to be a pre-eminent characteristic of the nation that should fulfill the specifications of this scripture” (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950], 269).

<sup>57</sup> *Idem*, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 228. In context, White is writing against an approach to the study of science based on natural evolution, against

According to Revelation 13, the secular and atheistic powers of the world will finally be defeated. The beast will be healed—will recover from the initial attack—once it has the full support of the kings of the earth (Rev 16:14) and through the power of spiritualism will defeat once and for all the king of the South (see point 8).<sup>58</sup> In other words, the return of the beast from the sea takes place through the assistance of the false prophet and the dragon and the three together will constitute the mystical Babylon that will unify the dwellers of the earth against God's people. This is the unholy trinity of Revelation that mimics the divine and pretends to occupy the place of God in human history. This narrative parallels quite well the experience of the king of the North who, after being attacked by the king of the South, recovers and goes with power against him and overcomes him.

### 7. *News from the east*

In Revelation, the east is associated with Jesus and His liberating armies; these kings are mentioned in the sixth plague as coming from the east (*anatolē*) (16:12).

In Revelation 19:11–16, Jesus is described as riding a white horse accompanied by His heavenly army. He is coming as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Shortly before the final conflict John saw an angel from the east proclaiming the coming defeat of the wicked armies and inviting the birds to come and eat from the corpses of the wicked (Rev 19:17–18). Finally, the prophet sees “the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army” (19:19). This seems to be the same scene we found in Daniel 11:43–44. The “news” from the “east” (LXX, *anatolē*) could be related to the events described in Revelation 18:1. The passage introduces a heavenly being that descends with a powerful message against Babylon. The glory of the messenger and therefore the message itself fills the earth. The messenger proclaims

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the use of the higher criticism and against a life of licentiousness that totally disregards the law of God. For her these are the results of the teachings of the French Revolution that have now captivated the world and that will play a significant role in the final conflict.

<sup>58</sup> It would be good to remember that atheism is not interested in taking the place of the biblical God on the planet but, as I suggested previously, in denying His very existence. Atheism does not care about this God and considers Him irrelevant. This is a threat to the papacy that wants to take the place of God on earth (the representative of Christ on earth). This is a challenge that the papacy has to overcome and this would be done through what makes atheism extremely vulnerable, namely the supernatural (miracles). This would be a real battle, but a battle for the hearts and minds of human beings.

like never before what was announced in Revelation 14:6–12, namely the fall of Babylon, the enemy of God. This messenger is unmasking Babylon at the moment when Babylon seems to be all-powerful, having the support of the kings of the earth (Rev 17:11–13), and having, like the king of the North, much *gold* (Gk., *chrysos*) and *silver* (Gk., *argyros*) (Rev 18:12, 16; cf. LXX Dan 11:43). This could be the way Revelation interprets the bad news that will horrify and enrage the king of the north in Daniel.<sup>59</sup>

### 8. *First attack and the cleansing of God's people*

The eschatological drama depicted in Revelation includes as part of the healing of the beast an attack launched by the forces of evil against the people of God using a series of miracles with the intention of deceiving the dwellers of the earth (13:13–14).<sup>60</sup> This could also be a time during which the people of God go through a process of refinement before the final crisis (cf. Rev 3:14–22). This idea is developed by White:

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<sup>59</sup> White describes the moment when that message is proclaimed and its impact on the forces of evil as follows: “Thus *the message of the third angel* will be proclaimed. As the time comes for it *to be given with greatest power*, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power—all will be unmasked. By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred. *Thousands upon thousands will listen* who have never heard words like these. *In amazement they hear* the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven. As the people go to their former teachers with the eager inquiry, Are these things so? the ministers present fables, prophesy smooth things, to soothe their fears and quiet the awakened conscience. But since many refuse to be satisfied with the mere authority of men and demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ *the popular ministry*, like the Pharisees of old, filled with anger as their authority is questioned, *will denounce the message* as of Satan and stir up the sin-loving multitudes to revile and persecute those who proclaim it” (White, *Great Controversy*, 606–607). She adds, “*Servants of God*, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, *will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given.* Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand” (Ibid., 612; italics are mine).

<sup>60</sup> For the nature and purpose of deception in the book of Revelation, see Paulien, 69–81.

We need not be deceived. Wonderful scenes, with which Satan will be closely connected, will soon take place. God's Word declares that Satan will work miracles. He will make people sick, and then will suddenly remove from them his satanic power. They will then be regarded as healed. *These works of apparent healing will bring Seventh-day Adventists to the test. Many who have had great light will fail to walk in the light, because they have not become one with Christ.*<sup>61</sup>

We are to be ready and waiting for the orders of God. Nations will be stirred to their very center. *Support will be withdrawn* from those who proclaim God's only standard of righteousness, the only sure test of character. And all who will not bow to the decree of the national councils and obey the national laws to exalt the sabbath instituted by the man of sin, to the disregard of God's holy day, will feel, not the oppressive power of popery alone, but of the Protestant world, the image of the beast.

Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. *The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall.* It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. *This is a terrible ordeal*, but nevertheless it must take place. None but those who have been overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony will be found with the loyal and true, without spot or stain of sin, without guile in their mouths. We must be divested of our self-righteousness and arrayed in the righteousness of Christ.<sup>62</sup>

Also at that time, according to Satan's plan, "we [the satanic powers] will enlist great men and worldly-wise men upon our side, and induce those in authority to carry out our purposes. Then the sabbath which I have set up shall be enforced by laws the most severe and exacting. Those who disregard them shall be driven out from the cities and villages, and made to suffer hunger and privation."<sup>63</sup>

Spiritualism will defeat secularism, atheism, and the opposition of world religions to Christianity by providing evidence of a super-

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<sup>61</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 2:53 (emphasis added).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 380 (italics mine).

<sup>63</sup> *Idem*, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 473.



natural nature that will validate the claims of apostate Christianity. There is not much in the apocalyptic prophecies of the Bible about how world religions will fit into the end-time events. White has only one statement that may be helpful: “As we near the close of time, there will be greater and still greater external parade of heathen power; heathen deities will manifest their signal power, and will exhibit themselves before the cities of the world; and this delineation has already begun to be fulfilled.”<sup>64</sup> According to Adventist eschatology, Satan will impersonate Christ in his last masterful deception. White seems to suggest that there will also be personifications of leaders and deities from non-Christian religions. This implies that there will be radical changes in the religious map of the world, as we know it today.

### 9. *Second attack: the law of extermination*

As indicated, in Revelation the forces of evil will form a coalition that will unite all the kings of the earth against the people of God (16:13–14; 17:12–14). This coalition will prepare a second attack against God’s remnant. Evil powers will require submission from all the dwellers of the earth; those who not submit will be killed.<sup>65</sup> A death decree is enacted against the end-time remnant with the intention of exterminating them (13:15–17). The two stages in the end-time attack against the people of God are clearly described by White. In the second attack the goal of the enemy, according to her, is to exterminate God’s people.

When once we [the satanic powers] have the power, we will show what we can do with those who will not swerve from their allegiance to God. We led the Romish church to inflict imprisonment, torture, and death upon those who refused to yield to her decrees; and now that we are bringing the Protestant churches and the world into harmony with this right arm of our strength, we will *finally have a law to exterminate all who will not submit to our authority*. When death shall be made the penalty of violating our sabbath, then many who are now ranked with commandment keepers will come over to our side.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Idem, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970), 705.

<sup>65</sup> In Revelation, Satan “has two primary methods of dealing with human beings. 1. On the one hand, he counterfeits the work of God in order to deceive people and persuade them to give allegiance willingly to him rather than to God. 2. On the other hand, he uses force, persuading people by intimidation to do what they otherwise would not do” (Paulien, 68).

<sup>66</sup> White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 473, also mentions a spiritual attack that will

The enemy encamps in Armageddon (cf. Isa 14:13; *har mō'ēd*, “mountain of the congregation/assembly”) to prepare for the final battle against the people of God (Rev 16:16), who have been gathered together on Mount Zion through the messages of the three angels (14:1–12). But the Lord personally intervenes, delivers His people, and defeats the evil forces (17:14). In the end, none of the kings of the earth will help the king of the North (Dan 12:45). As far as Babylon is concerned, the nations will withdraw their support (Rev 17:16) and the Babylonian coalition will collapse.

Our reading of Daniel 11:40–45 places it within the cosmic conflict and incorporates it within the end-time events depicted in Revelation. The structure of the passage clearly supports this specific approach:

- Papacy oppresses the people of God, vs. 30b–39  
(Middle Ages)
- King of the South stops the oppression, v. 40  
(End of the 1,260 years in 1798)
- King of the South defeated by papacy, vs. 40–43  
(The healing of the Beast from the Sea)
- Papacy attacks the people of God, v. 44  
(Close of the cosmic conflict)

This is a perfect prophetic match! It clearly integrates Daniel and Revelation on the topic of last-days apocalyptic prophecies. Nevertheless, I merely offer this reading of Daniel 11:40–45 as a possibility—an alternative to those being offered to the church today.

### **Key Theological Themes in Daniel 11**

Let us go back to Daniel 11 to pull together some of its basic theological emphases. If we look at the theology behind the conflicts between the North and the South, several theological themes converge and are central in the book of Revelation.

First, as in Revelation, the struggle is fundamentally about supremacy and dominion, or the exercise of total sovereignty by one of the kings. Since the two kings are powerful, no one is able to per-

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precede those two. She quotes Satan as saying, “But before proceeding to these extreme measures, we must exert all our wisdom and subtlety to deceive and ensnare those who honor the true Sabbath. We can separate many from Christ by worldliness, lust, and pride. They may think themselves safe because they believe the truth, but indulgence of appetite or the lower passions, which will confuse judgment and destroy discrimination, will cause their fall” (Ibid.).

manently have the upper hand. They defeat each other but neither is capable of gaining a final victory over the other and consequently the conflict sooner or later rises again. In some cases there is a long truce, but then there is war again (Dan 11:13).

Second, the struggle for dominion aims at establishing permanent peace, but this is never achieved (Dan 11:6, 17). There are brief periods of tranquility, but they are fragile and sooner or later war returns (v. 21). The arena of human history is, as in Revelation, a place where human powers battle and oppose God's people.

Third, the king of the North seems to be the final human winner. At the time of the end the king of the South initiates an attack against the king of the North aiming at destroying him (v. 40a). This infuriates the king of the North and he decides to prepare himself for a final attack against the king of the South (v. 40b). This time the North is able to permanently defeat the South (vs. 41–43). The mortal wound is healed (Rev 13:3). He achieves what no other kings have been able to accomplish, namely freedom from war and permanent peace (see 1 Thess 5:3).

Fourth, the prophecy establishes that it is not in the hands of the king of the North to achieve permanent, universal peace. While he thinks that there is finally peace on earth, news come from the north and the east that disturbs and terrorizes him. His kingdom is being threatened. He immediately gathers his army and heads toward Israel to destroy the people of God (Dan 11:44–45). But this time he is permanently defeated by the Lord (v. 45). Only the Lord can establish a kingdom free from war where His people can dwell in safety and peace (12:1–3). The prophecy, like the prophecies in Revelation, is indeed about God's concern for His people. He is the Sovereign Lord of cosmic history.

Fifth, based in the previous comments we conclude that the conflicts between the king of the North and the king of the South are used to illustrate the real universal nature of the conflict between God, the true King of the North, and Satan, the false, self-proclaimed king of the North (see Appendix II). All earthly kingdoms seek to impose through force their will and ideology upon all and particularly upon God's people, but they will fail. We find here a summary of the message of Daniel 2 and 7 with their emphasis on the universal kingdom of God that will overcome and bring to an end all the earthly kingdoms. This perspective is found at the beginning of the prophecy but reaches its full expression in 11:40–12:3. The chapter slowly moves from the clearly literal and geographical (Medo-Persia and Greece) to the universal (pagan and papal Rome and the Kingdom of God)—from a particular emphasis on the political to an explicit religious

concern, without totally leaving behind the political elements (see Appendix II).

### Conclusion

Daniel 11:11–45 does not contain esoteric information not found in any other place in the Bible. A study of its biblical background, language, and imagery greatly assist in its interpretation. We find in it a collage of biblical images, terminology, and theology taken mainly from the narrative of the exodus from Egypt and from OT prophetic eschatology to formulate an apocalyptic prophecy that aims at instilling hope in the heart of the faithful ones. The ideas present in an almost embryonic state in Daniel 11:40–45 are further developed or fleshed out in the apocalyptic prophecies found in the book of Revelation related to the mystical Babylon. As in Daniel, in Revelation the main purpose of the author is to provide hope for God's people as they face invincible enemies that will nevertheless be defeated by the Lord.

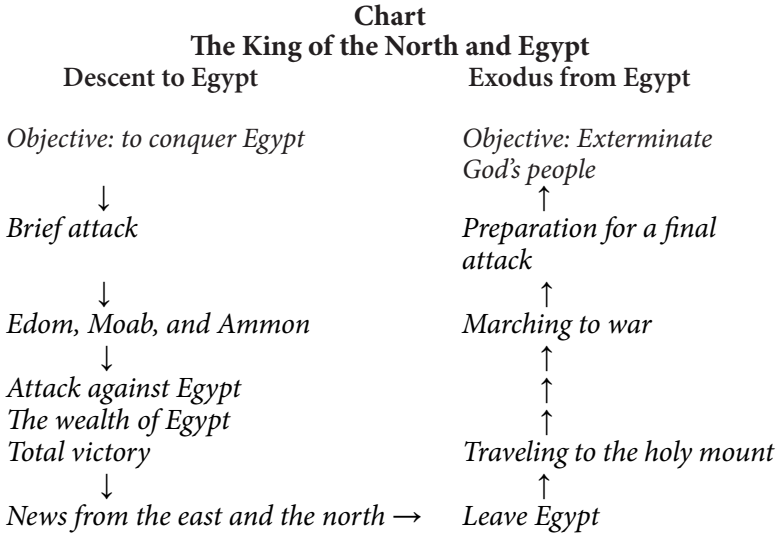
Before we close, I will suggest that the interpretation offered here has several advantages over other suggested interpretations. First, it significantly reduces the need to speculate about the historical fulfillment of this prophecy. We have reduced this risk by grounding the interpretation on other biblical passages that provide the background for the prophecy or that develop its content. In other words, it provides a stronger biblical support for its interpretation.

Second, the intertextual study places this prophecy of Daniel within the apocalyptic outline of last-day events, as we understand them based on Daniel and Revelation. It does not introduce a new prophetic event that is not mentioned anywhere else in biblical apocalyptic prophecy. Important apocalyptic events are mentioned in different ways in the apocalyptic prophetic cycles in the form of recapitulation. What we found in Daniel is also found and developed in Revelation.

Third, our interpretation connects the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation in a more direct way, providing a clearer continuity of message.

Fourth, our suggested interpretation is particularly loyal to the primary purpose of the prophecy of Daniel 11: "I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet *future*" (10:14). The people of God mentioned here are not to be exclusively identified along ethnic lines (see Appendix I). The vision is not about what will happen to the people of God in the land of Israel. The end-time people of God are not to be exclusively identified on the basis of specific geographi-

cal locations. They are the Israel of faith in their diaspora—the exile. This affirms the cosmic nature of the conflict narrated in Daniel 11 (see Dan 10:12–14; 20–12:1) and God’s final victory.



## Appendix I

### King of the South and Islam in Daniel 11:41

The view that Islam is the king of the South in Daniel 11:40 is supported by a number of Adventist interpreters. According to them the passage predicts a war against Islam under the leadership of the Pope. This view is relatively new among Adventists and fortunately it is not widely supported. There are several elements in the text of Daniel 11:30–40 that make it practically impossible to find Islam in verse 40. These are all based on contextual analysis:

First, the identification of the king of the South in verse 40 as Islam is dependent on a previous interpretation of the king of the South as Islam in Daniel 11:25–30 (the Crusades). Let it be clear that finding the Crusades in Daniel 11 is far from certain and Adventist interpreters of Daniel 11 are still debating the matter. Therefore determining the identity of the king of the South in verse 40 on the basis of this particular interpretation of 11:25–30 should be, to say the least, an extremely tentative suggestion. Apart from finding the Crusades in Daniel 11 there is not a linguistic or syntactical argument that could reveal the presence of Islam in Daniel 11:40. Of course the same could be said about the king of the South being atheism. But in this case there is a significant difference: the book of Revelation provides some assistance in clarifying the issue. One could also argue that since the first time the king of the South was mentioned in Daniel 11 where it referred to a subdivision of the Greek Empire, this should, for consistency's sake, be its meaning throughout Daniel 11. But that could not be because Daniel 11 provides an overview of history from the time of Daniel to the end. As history progresses, the identity of the king of the South will be modified or changed.

Second, assuming that the Crusades are predicted in Daniel 11, it does not follow that the king of the South in verse 40 has to be Islam. Notice that the discussion about the Crusades ended in verse 30 and that the winner was the king of the South (Islam). No mention is made of a counter attack from the king of the North; that war was finished. The text indicates that there is a shift to a new type of war—a war against the people of God: “He [the king of the North] will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant” (11:30). Hence it would be logical to suggest that the identity of the king of the South in Daniel 11:40 also changes. Why? Because the time period has changed, it is no longer the Middle Ages. History has made clear that in 1798 the enemy of the papacy, which intended to exterminate the papacy, was not Islam

but a different power. By the way, it was a literal power, with literal soldiers involved in a literal war against the papacy.

This important shift in the conflict against the papacy is documented in Revelation and in the writings of Ellen G. White. These two sources are enough to argue against a reading of Daniel 11 along the lines of Islam and the last Crusade. The king of the North is no longer interested in fighting against the king of the South. He is aiming at the people of God, ready to make war against God and His people.

Third, Daniel 11:40 begins with a brief description of an attack of the king of the South against the king of the North. The only thing he could do was to regroup and get ready for another, final attack against the king of the South. If we were to argue that the king of the South is in this case Islam, we would not be able to find a contextual reason for the attack. Bear in mind that according to verse 30, the Crusades ended with the defeat of the king of the North. The king of the North was now interested in opposing God's people. The new attack of the king of the South is somewhat addressing this type of persecution, because as a result of the attack of the king of the South against the North God's people experienced some relief from the oppression of the king of the North.

Fourth, notice that after defeating the king of the South and conquering the nations, the king of the North returns to what he was doing before the time of the end: He renews his attack against God's people. They pose a threat to his kingdom and must be exterminated. We can outline Daniel 11:30b-45 as follows:

Religious warfare of the king of the North	11:30b-39
Interruption by the king of the South	11:40-43
Religious warfare renewed by the king of the North	11:44-45

If we look for the historical fulfillment of this prophecy, the only option is to look for a political power that at the beginning of the time of the end launched a powerful attack against the king of the North aiming at killing him. Historically speaking there is only one: the experience of the church during the French Revolution that, at the very beginning of the time of the end (1798), inflicted a mortal wound to the papacy. We have already demonstrated that the mortal wound as well as its healing is further developed in the book of Revelation (Rev 13). Daniel paves the way for a more detailed revelation in the New Testament.

## Appendix II

### Geographical and Literal versus Symbolic

The question of hermeneutics is important in the interpretation of Daniel 11 and needs some attention. A common argument is that in this chapter we find a prophecy using literal language in the context of a literal geography. We will argue that this radical literalism is absent in biblical apocalyptic prophecies and that it is difficult to harmonize with the prophecy of Daniel 11 for several reasons.

First, there are in the book of Revelation many texts in which the literal and the symbolic appear together. We can only provide a few examples here. The messages to the seven churches are given in literal terms but we often find in their introduction symbolic language: “The One who holds the seven stars . . . , who walks among the seven golden lampstands” (Rev 2:1); “the One who has the sharp two-edged sword” (Rev 2:12); “the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire” (v. 18); etc. We also find literal and symbolic language within the messages themselves (e.g., teaching of Balaam [Rev 2:14], hidden manna [v. 17], Jezebel [v. 20], synagogue of Satan [3:9]). See also the messages of the three angels (14:6–12) in which we find the literal and the symbolic used side by side.

Second, in Daniel, outside of chapter 11, we find literal and symbolic language together. Probably one of the best examples is found in the prophetic times mentioned in Daniel 7 and 8. The angel is interpreting the prophecy of the four beasts to Daniel, but when dealing with the horn that would oppose God and His people he explains that this will happen “for a time, times, and half a time” (Dan 7:25). Although the explanation given to Daniel is literal, the time element is given in symbolic language. In Daniel 8 we find a similar situation. A heavenly being mentions a prophetic period—2,300 evenings and mornings (8:14). Another example is found in the dialogue between Daniel and an angel in Daniel 10. The angel tells Daniel that he was unable to answer him sooner because he had been engaged in a battle with the prince of the kingdom of Persia and Michael had to come to his assistance. Who is this prince of Persia? Many believe that the reference is to spiritual powers that are active in human history behind the scenes. Ellen G. White supports this reading of the passage.<sup>67</sup> This

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<sup>67</sup> “While Satan was striving to influence the highest powers in the kingdom of Medo-Persia to show disfavor to God’s people, angels worked in behalf of the exiles. The controversy was one in which all heaven was interested. Through the prophet Daniel we are given a glimpse of this mighty struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. For three weeks Gabriel wrestled with the powers of darkness, seeking to



means that the phrase “prince of the kingdom of Persia” is not to be interpreted as a reference to the literal or earthly prince of Persia. Although the dialogue uses literal language there are elements in it that are not to be taken literally.

Third, we find the same phenomenon in Daniel 11. Describing the work of papal Rome the angel interpreter tells Daniel that “forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice [the *tamid*]” (v. 31). The passage is not referring to the literal temple in Jerusalem but to what it represents: the heavenly temple. The language and services of the earthly sanctuary are used to refer to the heavenly realities. Other symbolic language is found, for instance, in phrases like “no regard for the desire of women” (v. 37), “he will honor a god of fortress” (v. 38), “Beautiful Land” (v. 41), “Edom, Moab . . . and Ammon” (v. 41), and “holy Mountain” (v. 45).

Fourth, the dichotomy between literal and symbolic overlooks the fact that, as we have already argued, the conflict is of cosmic dimensions. The introduction to the prophecy indicates that the conflict is not just about the lands in the Middle East. As we saw, the conflict takes place from the time of Daniel to the very end when the cosmic conflict comes to an end. In this cosmic conflict every individual and every nation is involved. This is what we find in Daniel 7 and 8, and Daniel 11 is no exception. We should keep in mind that in the Old Testament the combination north-south designates a totality<sup>68</sup> or what is universal (e.g., Ps 89:11–12; Ezek 21:4; Zech 6:6). When Psalm 89:12 states that God created the north and the south it does not mean that He created two literal cardinal points. What it really means is “that Yahweh has created even the most distant, ominous places and, therefore, no place lies beyond His rule.”<sup>69</sup> This same global idea is intensified when the four cardinal points

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counteract the influences at work on the mind of Cyrus; and before the contest closed, Christ Himself came to Gabriel’s aid. ‘The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days,’ Gabriel declares; ‘but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.’ Daniel 10:13. All that heaven could do in behalf of the people of God was done. The victory was finally gained; the forces of the enemy were held in check all the days of Cyrus, and all the days of his son Cambyses, who reigned about seven and a half years” (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1943], 571–572).

<sup>68</sup> W. H. Schmidt, “זָפוֹן *šāpôn* north,” *TLOT* 3: 1096. זָפוֹן

<sup>69</sup> J. E. Hartley, “Zaphon,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 4:1173. See also Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary, 20 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1998), 421, who speaking about the phrase “north south” comments that “the reference is to the worldwide dimensions of Yahweh’s creative work.”

are mentioned (e.g., Zech 14:4). This would suggest that the constant reference to the North and the South in Daniel 11 is pointing to a conflict that goes beyond local geographical limitations to a universal dimension (see ninth point).

Fifth, we have suggested that the conflict is not simply about wars among ancient kingdoms. As a matter of fact, the purpose of the prophecy recorded in Daniel 10–12 is to let Daniel know about the experience of the people of God particularly during the latter days (10:14; see above on the theology of the vision). This is about eschatology and the natural question is, who are the people of God in Daniel 11? The literal geographical approach to this vision will have to answer that it is the Jews in the land of Israel. But this would go against other apocalyptic prophecies and against much of what we find in the New Testament. The end-time people of God in Daniel should be identified with the Israel of faith dispersed throughout the world.

Sixth, closely related to the previous point, the geographical and literal reading of Daniel 11 reveals inconsistency in the interpretation of the attack of the king of the North against God and His people (11:30–39). According to this view, and in this we agree with them, these verses refer to what the papacy did during the Middle Ages to the true servants of God throughout the world—not only to those residing in the Middle East. In order to be consistent in the use of their own hermeneutics they would have to say that this specific conflict was literal and took place in the Middle East.

Seventh, the geographical and literal reading of Daniel 11 reduces the conflict described in that chapter to a Middle East conflict running from the time of Daniel to the second coming of Christ. It is a literal conflict that takes place throughout history in the literal nations of the Middle East. The universal perspective of the biblical message of salvation that is grounded in the sovereignty of God and His grace manifested to us through His Son is overlooked through the use of such hermeneutics. All of this could imply that Daniel 11 has little to say about God's final resolution to the cosmic conflict because the chapter is about what would happen in the Middle East. Such reading of the chapter seems to be quite different from what we find in Daniel 7 and 8 and in biblical and Adventist eschatology in general. It also overlooks the fact that although the conflict begins in a specific geographical area of the world (the land of the Greek Empire and its division), it spans out reaching universal dimensions with the coming of the Roman Empire. Daniel refers to Rome as the king of the north but he also clarifies that Rome comes from the west (8:9), not from the north. It is at this point that the literal and geographical interpretation begins to give way to the universal one

in which the king of the North stands for the enemy of God's people as a universal power.

Eight, the geographical and literal interpretation of Daniel 11 faces its greatest challenge in a literal and exclusively geographical reading of 11:44–45. According to these verses, the king of the North was located in Egypt after defeating the king of the South, fully enjoying his victory. But news from the north and the east disturbed him, and filled with anger he leaves Egypt to travel to Israel. His plan was to enforce the law of extermination. A literal reading of the text would mean that he was going to the literal land of Israel to attack the Holy Mount and to exterminate the people of God—that is, the Jews. According to this interpretation the king of the North would not only destroy Islam but would also destroy Israel! Obviously no one is reading the prophecy along these lines, but my point is that in order to be consistent in the use of a hermeneutics based on a geographical and literal reading of Daniel 11, the prophecy would have to be read this way. Otherwise this whole interpretation is seriously weakened.

Ninth, in the Old Testament the “north” is the place from where God rules as King of the cosmos. It was the place to which Lucifer wanted to ascend to make himself “like the Most High” (Isa 14:14). The passage is important in that it implies that the real King of the North is the Lord. This same idea is also associated with God's earthly residence. He dwells in “His holy mountain” or “Mount Zion in the far north, the city of the great King” (Ps 48:1–2). Isaiah indicates that there was a cherub who wanted to be the king of the North—the usurper, the false king of the North, called Lucifer. It is in this primeval conflict that we find the theological significance of the conflict with the king of the North. There is a self-proclaimed king of the North who wants to take the place of God and even rule over God's people. He is indeed the enemy from the North. This provides a theological perspective to the phrase “the enemy from the north” used several times in Jeremiah (e.g., 1:13–15).

The prophet Jeremiah indicates that this enemy comes from the north in the literal sense because kings reaching the land of Israel from the north attacked Israel. They appeared to be kings of the North but they were not. They reached Israel from the north. In Jeremiah this enemy is, in a number of cases, Babylon (cf. 4:6). Yet Babylon was geographically located in the east. Jeremiah says that “a people is coming from the north land” and then adds, to explain what he means, “and a great nation from the remote parts of the earth” (6:22). The north is the place from which evil (1:14; 6:1) and disaster (4:6) come over the land. When the time to punish Babylon arrives, the Lord will send against it an enemy from the north: Persia (50:3, 9, 41, 43). Persia was located in the east and southeast of Babylon but in terms of access and function

it comes from the north. It has taken the role of the enemy from the north against Babylon. What Babylon did to Israel (cf. 6:22–24) will be done to her. The concern is not about correct geography but about the function of this power. It is correct to conclude that “for Jeremiah, ‘the north’ symbolizes an evil, hostile force far more than a specific geographical location.”<sup>70</sup>

If we go back to Daniel 11, we find a similar situation. The Medo-Persians came from the east (8:4) and Greece from the west (8:5). Any possible reference to them as kings from the North implies more than geography. As we indicated, the symbolic reading of the “north” is more specifically introduced with the Roman Empire coming from the west of Israel (8:9). It was not a literal king of the North. It simply assumed the role or functions of kings who arrived at Israel as spiritual and military enemies of the people of God. In this prophecy Daniel points to Rome as the king of the North because it will become the spiritual enemy of God’s people and embodies the goals of the original usurper of the throne of the true King of the North.

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<sup>70</sup> J. E. Hartley, “North,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev., 3:551.



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