A Note on the Syntax of Dan 12:7
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And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. (Dan 12:7, ESV)[1]

Introduction

In an earlier paper I isolated seven clauses of approximately equal length within Dan 12:7. These are listed below in English and Hebrew.[2] See table 1.

Table 1
Clauses in Dan 12:7

Clause	English (ESV)	Hebrew	Syllables
a	And I heard the man clothed in linen,	wāʾešmaʿ ʾet-hāʾîš lᵉbûš habbaddîm	11
b	who was above the waters of the stream;	ʾᵃšer mimmáʿal lᵉmêmê hayʾōr	10
c	he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven	wayyārem yᵉmînô ûśmôʾlô ʾel-haššāmáyim	14
d	and swore by him who lives forever	wayyiššābaʿ bᵉḥê hāʿôlâm	9
e	that it would be for a time, times, and half a time,	kî lᵉmôʿēd môʿᵃdîm wāḥēṣî	10
f	and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end	ûkᵉkallôt nappēṣ yad-ʿam-qṓdeš	10
g	all these things would be finished.	tikléynâ kol-ʾḗlleh	6

Syntax of the Last Two Clauses

Verb model for *nappēṣ*

There is a question how to understand the syntax of the last two clauses (f, g) and their relationship to the time period (e). If clause f has the structure shown in fig. 1 (below), then one would expect something like *ûkᵉkallôt* [*X lᵉ*]*nappēṣ yad-ʿam-qṓdeš* for the Hebrew. The English

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corresponding to this would be, "and when X finishes shattering the power of the holy people." Here X is a subject supplied from context. This is not what the text says, but in fig. 1 we include the supplied subject for the sake of discussion.
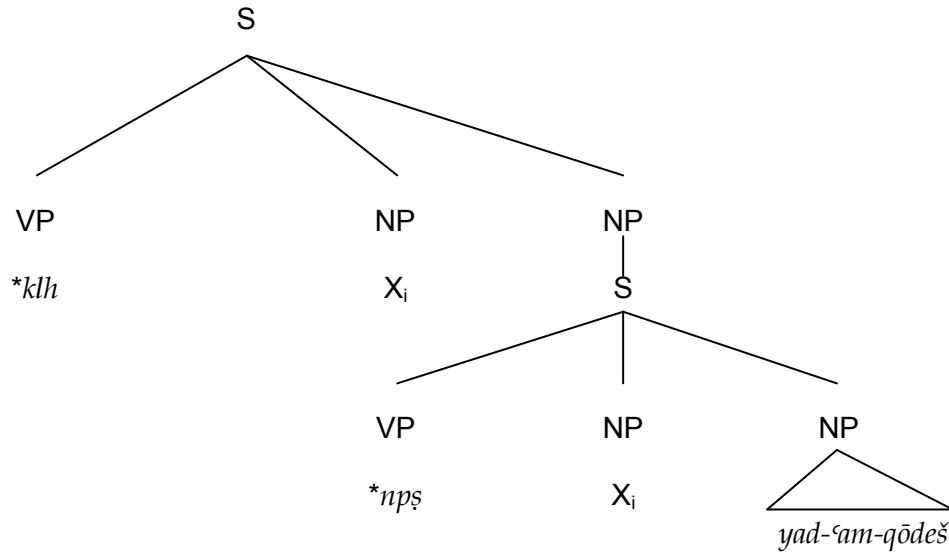

Fig. 1. Structure of textual reconstruction: *ûkᵉkallôt* [*X lᵉ*]*nappēṣ yad-ᶜam-qṓdeš*.[3]

We are not here concerned with the morphology of the two verbs *klh* (*kallôt*, "finish") and *nps* (*nappēṣ*, "shatter") and how they achieve their surface forms, but only with the relationships of major constituents. In fig. 1 notice that the supplied subject X occurs in both a main and a subordinate underlying sentence. This is one point. Another more important one is that including a supplied subject transforms *klh* and *nps* into finite verbs, as against the text itself in which they are both infinitives.

Noun model for *nappēṣ*

Without the supplied subject, which must be accommodated by a subordinating structure of the form

    (1) [X_i finishes [X_i shatters] [the power of the holy people]]
        → "when X finishes shattering the power of the holy people"

what we have is simply

    (2) [finish [shatter(ing) the power of the holy people]]
        → "when the shattering of the holy people ends"

(my gloss both times).

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[3] VP would not be required here with a verb-first language such as Hebrew. I use it primarily to maintain the parallel with English, i.e., for ease of exposition.

In the second case (2 above) we have the familiar phrase structure rules S → NP VP and NP → S, which have been with us at least since 1957 and 1968 respectively.[4] An attentive reader will have noticed that the above rules represent English rather than Hebrew usage and that what I actually wrote in fig. 2 was S → VP NP, since Classical Hebrew, by contrast with English (SVO), lends inself to a verb first analysis (VSO).

When we strip away the supplied subject (X), that removes any need there might have for a subordinating structure, such as that of fig. 1. We now restate fig. 1 as fig. 2, without the supplied subject. And this in turn can be restated even more simply as fig. 3.
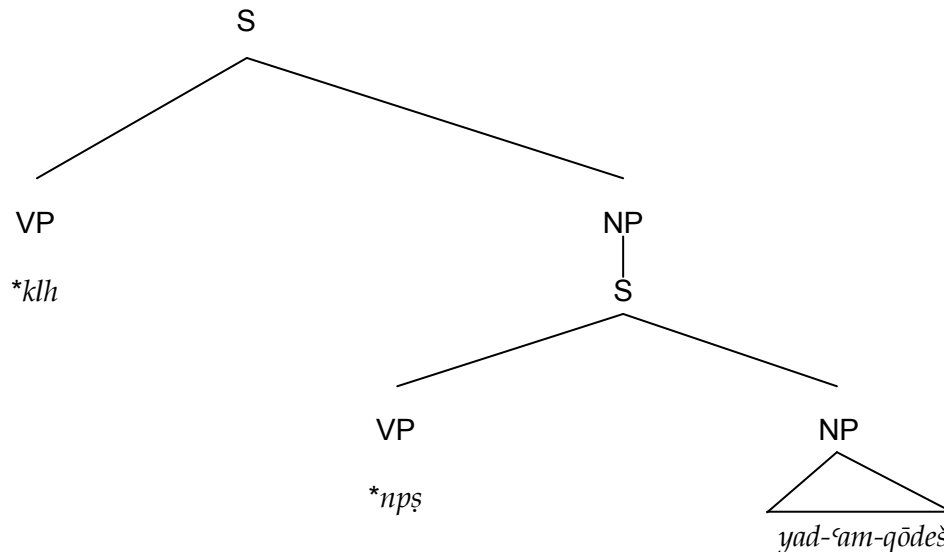
Fig. 2. Subordinating structure of clause f, but without the supplied subject marker X.
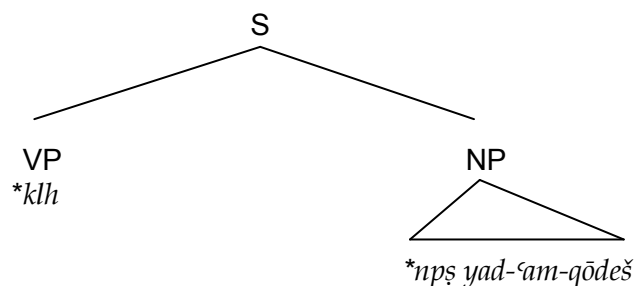
Fig. 3. Simplified analysis of clause f.

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[4] See Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), p. 29 for S → NP VP. Chomsky added S as one component of NP (thus, NP → [Det] N [S']) in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* [Cambridge: MIT, 1965], see p. 100. These formalisms become more fully developed in Roderick Jacobs and Peter Rosenbaum, *English Transformational Grammar* (Waltham, MS: Blaisdell, 1968), where NP → S occurs on p. 164. The field has changed dramatically since the 1970s when I learned these things, but such early phrase structure rules have stood the test of time – to the extent that phrase structures themselves have stood the test of time. Not every theory of grammar requires them.

Notice that what I have shown in fig. 3 is substantially similar to the structure found in clause g. See fig. 4 (below).
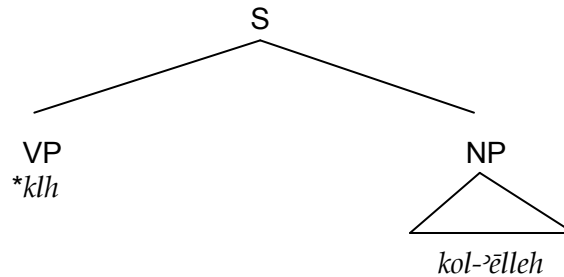

Fig. 4. Structure of clause g.

The dual nature of infinitives

An infinitive, such as either *klh* or *npṣ* in fig. 3 (by contrast with *klh* in fig. 4), is a verbal noun.[5] As such it has two potential behaviors – one verb-like and one noun-like. If I could say it this way, an infinitive is able to function as a *verbal* noun or a verbal *noun*. The emphasis might swing either way, depending on context.

If either emphasis is grammatically possible, then on what basis can we choose between them in the present case? Other examples might prove more challenging, but in the present case the answer is that in clause f (fig. 3) the text makes the distinction clear by omitting any surface subject. There *npṣ* clearly functions as a noun (i.e., a verbal *noun*).

The two examples of *klh* – one in clause f (*ûkᵉkallôt*, fig. 3), the other in clause g (*tiklêynâ*, fig. 4) – serve functions that are similar to each other within their respective clauses, by contrast with *npṣ*. The first example of *klh* (fig. 3) is an infinitive like the two already mentioned, but functions verbally (i.e., as a *verbal* noun), and as such it stands in parallel to the second example of *klh* (fig. 4), which is a finite verb.

The structure proposed for clause f in fig. 3 shows how close the syntactic relationship is between the two clauses (f and g), and demonstrates one of the ways in which they are similar. This first form of similarity between them is syntactic. The second form of similarity is lexical. The VP nodes of both clauses are represented by forms built on the same root (*klh* "finish, end"). See fig. 5 (below).

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[5] "Infinitives are hybrids, verbal nouns, and as such are bracketed with the other words in settings where we would expect either a verb or a noun" (Bruce Waltke and M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], p. 582). "The infinitive construct is a true infinitive, a verb and a noun, and thus a form without necessary restriction as to agency. As a verbal noun the infinitive may function where a nominal constituent might be expected or as a verbal predicator; . . ." (idem, p. 600).
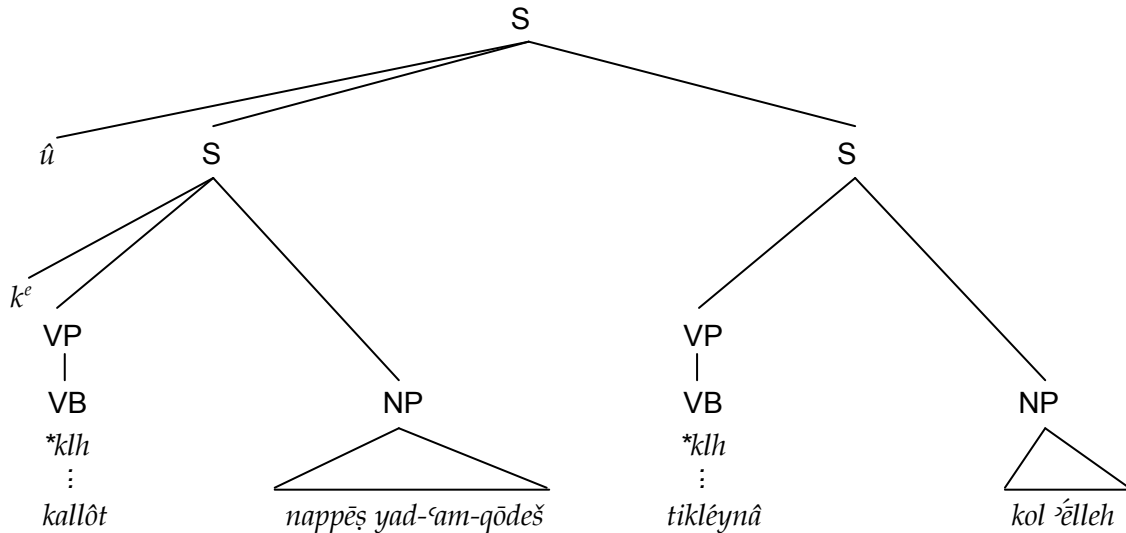
Fig. 5. The relationship between clauses f and g as proposed in the current analysis.

Parallels Between Clauses

Instead of clause f creating a need for a verbally oriented *nappeṣ* to serve as the subject of *ûkᵉkallôt*, with *yad-ᶜam-qṓdeš* as a separate complement – a configuration for which there is no precedent in Biblical Hebrew[6] – the subject of *ûkᵉkallôt* is a nominally oriented *nappēṣ* together with *yad-ᶜam-qṓdeš*, forming a noun phrase that includes both. This analysis of clause f closely parallels the structure of clause g, where *kol-ʾḗlleh* is the subject of the finite verb *tikléynâ*. In terms of the types of phrase structure rules it uses, the linguistic analysis proposed here is entirely straightforward.[7]

There is one other point that the present analysis clarifies, or lays under emphasis, and that is the close relationship between *ûkᵉkallôt* (the predicate of clause f) and *tikléynâ* (the predicate of clause g). It's not just that the same root is used in both cases. It's the fact that, in the context set forth here, the same idea is conveyed in both clauses. The idea in both cases is one of finishing something, or bringing something to an end. In saying this, please bear in mind that ending is not the same as beginning. This fact seems too obvious to mention, but there is a reason for mentioning it.

In some English versions one comes away with the idea that when the shattering ends, the work of fulfilling can begin.[8] In such a model, when the one stops the other starts. One might say that at that point it starts stopping, or coming to an end, i.e., being "fulfilled" (TNK). But such an understanding sounds forced once we notice, and insist on confining ourselves to, what the text actually says – with reference to both syntax and vocabulary. With the parallels between

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[6] See Hardy, "Thoughts on Dan 12:6-7" (http://www.historicism.org/Documents/Dan1206-07.pdf), p. 26 (tables 21 and 22).

[7] Not every linguistic system posits the existence of phrase structure rules, but this is not a debate over different theories of grammar. It's a discussion of two clauses in the Hebrew text of Dan 12:7.

[8] "[A]nd all these things will come true, once the crushing of the holy people's power is over" (NJB = *New Jerusalem Bible*).

clauses in view, the idea is not that when the one stops the other starts, but rather that when the one stops, so does the other. Some translations lean strongly in this direction without making the thought absolutely unequivocal, but others leave no possibility for misunderstanding.[9]

Uses and Misuses of Context

The analysis put forward here does not ignore context, but reveals a context that would otherwise be easy to miss or ignore. If the time period, the process of shattering, and "all these things" end together – because they all have the same things in view – each clause draws upon the others. Some might disagree with the implications of the present model, but no one can claim that it lacks internal cohesion. In my view this is one mark identifying a correct use of context. It is a validation of the method.

When the Man dressed in linen says, "all these things" (*kol-ʾēlleh*) at the end of vs. 7, what specific things does He have in mind? He has just told us. It is "the shattering of the power of God's people" (*nappēṣ yad-ʿam-qṓdeš*, clause f). How long a time does this process of shattering take? He has just told us that too. It takes "a time, times and half a time" (*lᵉmôʿēd môʿᵃdîm waḥḥēṣî*, clause e). Thus, the context for the answer in 12:7 is not 12:3, or 12:2-3, or 12:1-3, or 11:40-12:3, or 11:40-45. It is 12:6. The answer has to do with the question.

Similarly, if there is only one question, our starting assumption would be that there is only one answer. The answer in this case has more than one part, but it is one answer nonetheless. First there is the time period (clause e). Then there is the process of shattering (clause f). Then there is a statement that shows the relationship of the two earlier clauses to each other (clause g). This third statement (clause g) makes clear that the shattering stops because the time period stops, or alternatively we could say that the time period stops because the shattering stops. Either way the effect is the same.

History is often messy. In regard to the time period we are discussing, although not with specific reference to Dan 12,[10] Jesus says the time would be "shortened" (Matt 24:22, KJV), or "cut short" (NIV). This does not mean the number of days changes, but rather that the severity of opposition would be moderated toward the end of the period, and we know from history that this is what happened. This, however, is not evidence that the various parts of the answer no longer correspond. They do. The time period was a time of opposition for God's people. This is the characteristic that sets it apart from other periods in church history. So the "fulfillment" (or "end," *tikléynâ*) of "all these things" (*kol-ʾēlleh*, vs. 7g) is associated with the end of the shattering, i.e., with the end of the time period during which the shattering would occur.

Another clarification is that the "time, times and half a time" does not bring history to a close. Other things happen after the time period is over, and some of these will be marvelous to see. I don't deny this. But I do deny that the question of vs. 6 asks about them. There are many marvelous events still future that stand outside the scope of this particular question (see 1 Cor 2:9). So the issue is not whether a given event is wonderful. The issue is whether the question includes it exegetically. Framing the matter in these two different ways has the potential of

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[9] "When the shattering of the holy people has finally come to an end, all these things will have happened" (NLT = *New Living Translation*).

[10] There doesn't need to be specific reference to Dan 12. The same time period is mentioned seven times in Scripture (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14;13:5).

leading us to two different interpretations. If this is the case, I submit that, from a methodological point of view, the interpretation based on the content of the question will be the more reliable of the two – not the interpretation based on what we think is wonderful.

Notice that in vs. 6 the text does not say $p^el\bar{a}\hat{}\hat{o}t$. It says $happ^el\bar{a}\hat{}\hat{o}t$. The question does not have to do with all wonders in general, but with "these wonders" (lit. "the wonders"). In the same way, the answer does not say $hakkol$ ("the all" = "everything"), or some such. It says $kol\text{-}\hat{}ell eh$ ("all these things"). The answer does not have all things in view – not even all wonderful things – but merely all *these* things, i.e., the things included within the scope of the question.

Going beyond these constraints could lead to a misuse of context. There are not two ending points in vs. 7 (clause e and clauses f-g), nor are there three (clauses e, f, and g). There is one ending point and it occurs at the end of the 1260 days, or "time, times and half a time," in 1798.

Conclusion

In Dan 12:7, the context for clause g is clause f. The context for clause f is clause e. And the context for the answer as a whole, comprising all three clauses (in vs. 7), is the question which immediately precedes it (in vs. 6). The answer relates to the question, and the parts of the answer relate to each other.

Ignoring these constraints could have the effect of reversing the answer – of turning it inside out. Let me explain what I mean. If we see the (English) word "wonders" (vs. 6), then read other passages and say to ourselves, Surely these events are wonderful, so they must be what the word "wonders" refers to in 12:6, we end by including within the answer all the events after the time period and excluding all the events during it. This is the opposite of the passage's intent. The question has to do with the time period – at least the answer would imply that it does. So if we exclude everything that happens within the time period, and focus on everything after it, that is a reversal. The inside is left out and the outside is brought in. If we can read a passage and draw from it the opposite of what it properly means, we're missing something.

One point that we really must not miss is that the truth is always humbling, and it is not always what we want to hear. Events a thousand years old and more might seem stale – those in the future, fresh and exciting. Relevant. Timely. We like them. But Jesus does not call Himself Relevant or Timely. Instead He calls Himself "the truth" (John 14:6). So let the truth be what it is. Jesus never promises that the truth will excite us, but He does say in one passage that it will set us free (see John 8:23).

We do not need something new to set the church free from its lethargy. We need the truth – the truth that has always been the truth and always will be. We need Christ. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

Appendix
Some English Versions of Dan 12:7

In this paper I use ESV (*English Standard Version*) as a base text because the first three translations I pulled down when beginning this paper all had some novelty that I wanted to avoid. This does not make them bad translations, but they couldn't be used effectively to illustrate the clause structure of our verse. ESV, incidentally, is very good. It follows in the same tradition as RSV, from which NRSV split off.

Part of clause a included in clause d

NAB **Daniel 12:7** [1] The man clothed in linen, who was upstream, lifted his right and left hands to heaven; and I heard him swear by him who lives forever that it should be for a year, two years, a half-year; and that, when the power of the destroyer of the holy people was brought to an end, all these things should end.

NIV **Daniel 12:7** The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. {7 Or a year, two years and half a year} When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

NRS **Daniel 12:7** The man clothed in linen, who was upstream, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven. And I heard him swear by the one who lives forever that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time,[1] and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be accomplished.

RSV **Daniel 12:7** The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven; and I heard him swear by him who lives for ever that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time; and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished.

Part of clause a omitted

NLT **Daniel 12:7** The man dressed in linen, who was standing above the river, raised both his hands toward heaven and took a solemn oath by the One who lives forever, saying, "It will go on for a time, times, and half a time. When the shattering of the holy people has finally come to an end, all these things will have happened."

Clauses c and d reversed

TNK **Daniel 12:7** Then I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the water of the river, swear by the Ever-Living One as he lifted his right hand and his left hand to heaven: "For a time, times, and half a time; and when the breaking of the power of the holy people comes to an end, then shall all these things be fulfilled." (dc)

Other

ASV **Daniel 12:7** And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for

ever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

CSB **Daniel 12:7** Then I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river. He raised both his hands¹ toward heaven and swore by Him who lives eternally that it would be for a time, times, and half *a time*.ᵃ When the power of the holy people is shattered, all these things will be completed.

ESV **Daniel 12:7** And I heard ᵃthe man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; ᶜhe raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and ᵇswore by him who lives forever that it would be for a ᶜtime, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of ᵈthe power of ᵈthe holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.

GNV **Daniel 12:7** And I heard ye man clothed in line which was vpon the waters of the riuer, when he helde vp his right hand, and his left hand vnto heauen, and sware by him that liueth for euer, that it shall tarie for a time, two times and an halfe: and when he shall haue accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

GWN **Daniel 12:7** I heard the man dressed in linen clothes who was above the river. He raised his right hand and left hand to heaven and swore an oath by the one who lives forever. He said, "It will be for a time, times, and half of a time. When the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, then all these things will be finished."

KJV **Daniel 12:7** And I heard the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that *it shall be* for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these *things* shall be finished. {a time...: or, part}

NAS **Daniel 12:7** And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, ¹as he ᵃraised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by ᵇHim who lives forever that it would be for a ²ᶜtime, ²times, and half *a* ²*time*; and as soon as ³they finish ᵈshattering the ⁴power of the holy people, all these *events* will be completed.

NET **Daniel 12:7** Then I heard the man clothed in linen who was over the waters of the river as he raised both his right and left hands to the sky⁸ and made an oath by the one who lives forever: "It is for a time, times, and half a time. Then, when the power of the one who shatters⁹ the holy people has been exhausted, all these things will be finished."

NJB **Daniel 12:7** I heard the man speak who was dressed in linen, standing further up the stream: he raised his right hand and his left to heaven and swore by him who lives for ever, 'A time and two times, and half a time; and all these things will come true, once the crushing of the holy people's power is over.' (gf)

NKJ **Daniel 12:7** Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and half *a time;* and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished.

Versions Cited

ASV   The Holy Bible, American Standard Version 1901 (ASV), similar to the English Revised Version of 1881-1885, both being based upon the Hebrew Masoretic text for the OT and upon the Westcott-Hort Greek text for the NT.

CSB   Holman Christian Standard Bible. Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers.

ESV   ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV). Copyright © July 2001 by Crossway Books/Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL, tel: 630/682-4300,

GNV   Geneva Bible 1599. Text edited and provided by Mark Langley (mlangley1@cox.net).

GWN   GOD'S WORD® translation. Copyrighted © 1995 by God's Word to the Nations.

KJV   King James Version. Public Domain.

NAB   "New American Bible. Copyright © 1991,1986,1970 by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 3211 Fourth Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1194, USA, is used by license of copyright owner.

NAS   The New American Standard Bible (NASB) (NAS [1977] and NAU [1995]). Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, 1995, and La Biblia de Las Americas. Copyright © 1986, both by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

NET   The NET Bible, Version 1.0 - Copyright © 2004,2005 Biblical Studies Foundation.

NIV   The New International Version. Scripture quoted by permission. "Quotations designated (NIV) are from THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved." (American Edition Copyright.)

NJB   New Jerusalem Bible. Edited by Henry Wansbrough. Copyright © 1985, by Darton, Longman & Todd Limited and Doubleday

NKJ   The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved.

NLT   Holy Bible, New Living Translation, second edition. Copyright © 2004 by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

NRS   NRS - New Revised Standard Version Bible. Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

RSV   Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Copyright © 1952 [2nd edition, 1971] by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

TNK   JPS TANAKH 1985 (English). The TANAKH, a new translation (into contemporary English) of The Holy Scriptures according to the traditional Hebrew text (Masoretic). The Jewish Bible: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim. Copyright © 1985 by The Jewish Publication Society. All rights reserved. This fresh translation began work in 1955.