

Daniel's 70 Shemitahs Part 1

Daniel 9:24-27

Clarification: 69 Shemitahs Not Weeks

Whilst the Hebrew 'Shâbûa' can correctly be translated week(s) it also has the meaning seven(s) and for this prophecy it should have been translated sevens not weeks. The crux of Daniel's prophesy reiterates Yahweh's sevenfold program for the salvation of humanity: a seventh day Shabbat, a Shemitah period of seven years, a Yovel (Jubilee)¹ of seven times seven years and seven thousand years for the age of man. Daniel's prophecy is measured in 'Shemitah' periods not weeks. There is no relationship between 'Shemitah' and 'week'. This realisation is essential for a correct understanding of this prophecy. It is the translation 'weeks' that has created confusion concerning the truth of Daniel's seventieth Shemitah.

Introduction

In answer to Daniel's prayer for the restoration of the people and the temple he is given a prophecy of seventy Shemitahs. Unfortunately, because of the poor translation of the Hebrew 'Shâbûa' the prophecy has been misconceived and the truth lost, particularly with respect to the Daniel's final Shemitah period. This prophecy spans the period between the first and second coming of Mashiach and supports a new, not renewed, covenant. In essence the prophecy was given to assure Daniel that his prayer would be answered at once, commencing with the return of the exiles from Babylon. The prophecy went on to disclose the prospects that lay in store for the temple which, after being restored, would again become a den of abomination, evoking Yahweh to once again pour out His full vengeance. But it's not all doom and gloom, the prophecy secures a blessing for those who were to become the elect of the true Israel. Before the termination of the 'Mosaic order' Mashiach would institute the new covenant order, in which the old system would find consummation. But before the restored temple is levelled the foundations of the 'new' everlasting temple of the Spirit would be laid. We will see that this new, anti-typical restoration of Yahweh's temple would be achieved in what is portrayed as ten jubilee periods.

The prophecy can be understood in two separate periods; one of 69 Shemitahs and a final 70th Shemitah. In verse 24 Daniel splits the initial 69 Shemitahs into separate periods of 7 and 62 and there is a reason for this as explained below.

Daniel's 69 Shemitahs

Seventy (Shâbûa) Shemitahs are decreed for your people and for your holy city, to put an end to the transgression, and to seal up sins, and to cover crookedness, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know, then, and understand: from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Mashiach the Prince, is seven Shemitahs and sixty-two Shemitahs. It shall be built again, with streets and*

¹ The Hebrew 'Yovel' is translated Jubilee, but it is not the best translation. The salient characteristic of the 'Yovel' is that of release or freedom not joy.

a trench, but in times of affliction. And after the sixty-two weeks Mashiach shall be cut off and have naught. And the people of a coming prince shall destroy the city and the set-apart place. And the end of it is with a flood. And wastes are decreed and fighting until the end. And he shall confirm a covenant with many for one Shemitah. And in the middle of the Shemitah he shall put an end to slaughtering and meal offering. And on the wing of abominations he shall lay waste, even until the complete end and that which is decreed is poured out on the one who lays waste. (Dan.9:24-27).

We are told that the Mashiach would come after 69 *Shemitahs* (7+62) from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. The return of the exiles to Judah, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem was accomplished in three main stages.

- The first and main party returns with Zerubbabel in 538 BC. They rebuild the temple
- A second party returns with Ezra about 80 years later in 457 BC. They make spiritual and religious restoration and reform.
- A third wave returns with Nehemiah in 445 BC. They rebuild the city walls and gates but not many houses.

457 BC recorded in Ezra 7:8, is the correct starting point for the prophecy given to Daniel. Ezra 7:7-13 states that the decree was given in the seventh year of the king and we know that Artaxerxes I reigned from 465–424 BC, thus making the year of the decree 458/457 BC, Hopefully there is no need to waste time on the Scriptural philosophy for a day equalling a year (Ezek.4:6), this being the case, sixty-nine *Shemitahs* equals 483 days equals 483 years. 483 Years from 457 BC bring us to 27AD (there is no year zero).

Mashiach was anointed with His immersion (Acts 10:38) and Scripture asserts that 27 AD was the year of Yeshua's immersion,

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar...Now when all the people were immersed it came to pass, that Yeshua also being immersed, and praying, the heaven was opened and the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven saying, "You are My Son, the Beloved, in You I am well pleased. (Luke 3:1, 3:21-22)

Here we have the Biblical account of the immersion of Yeshua. He was immersed in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. From historical records we know that Tiberius Caesar ruled from the year AD12,

Tiberius Caesar was granted supreme power from Augustus Caesar in AD.12 (www.roman-britain.org).

Although Tiberius officially became emperor shortly after the death of Augustus in September AD14, the ancient historian, Suetonius recorded the following,

After two years he (Tiberius) returned to the city from Germany and celebrated the triumph (for his military victories in Germany and Pannonia)...Since the consuls caused a law to be passed soon after this that he (Tiberius) should govern the provinces jointly with Augustus....(Augustus 97:21; Tiberius 20-21). (<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/ancient/suet-tiberius-rolfe.asp>)

Furthermore Velleius Paterculus, a soldier who served under Tiberius recorded the following,

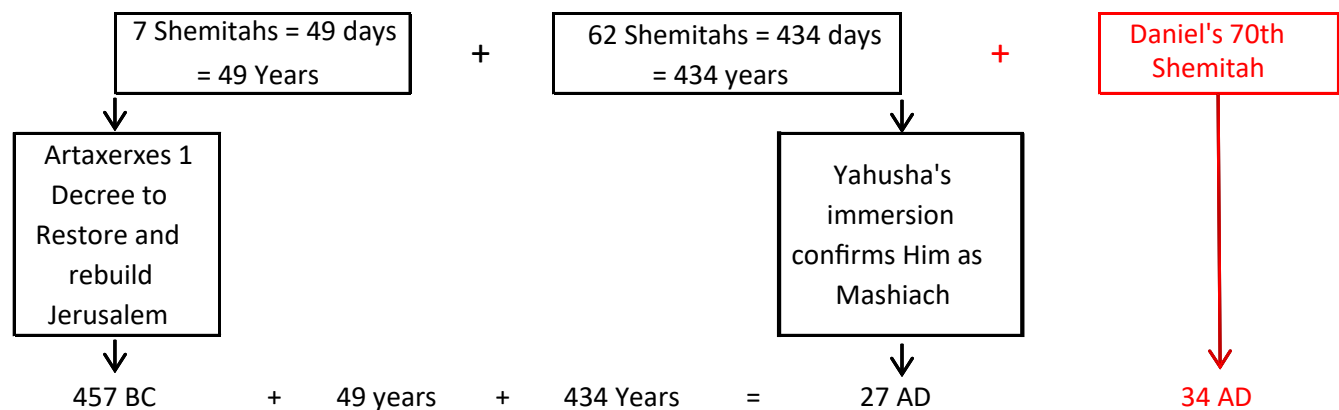
After he had broken the force of the enemy by his expeditions on sea and land, had completed his difficult task in Gaul, and had settled by restraint rather than by punishment the dissensions that had broken out among the Viennenses, at the request of his father (Augustus) that he should have in all the provinces and armies a power equal to his (Augustus')own, the senate and Roman people so decreed. For indeed it was incongruous that the provinces which were being defeated by him should not be under his jurisdiction.

(http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/VelleiusPaterculus/2D*.html)

Finally, there is another record: the Fasti Praenestini inscription states'

On October 23, AD12 'Tiberius rode a chariot in triumph from Illyricum' implying he received co-authority in AD12.

So, Tiberius Caesar was granted the position of co-ruler in 12 AD, hence the fifteenth year of his reign would bring us to 27 AD which, according to Luke, was the year of Yeshua's immersion and as shown in the time line below exactly as predicted in Daniel



*Daniel's prophecy referred to the anointment of Mashiach which occurred during His immersion when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove.

** In the prophecy the 69 *Shemitahs* expressed in terms of 7 and 62? Seven *Shemitahs* equals 49 years which if we count from 458/7 BC takes us to 409/8 BC and the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The rebuilding of the city is a milestone in this prophecy.

Although the 70th *Shemitah* would terminate Daniel's prophecy at AD 34 there is nothing appertaining to this prophecy that can be affixed to this date. Whilst some affix the stoning of the apostle Stephen to this date, this is pure conjecture, furthermore Stephen's death is completely immaterial to this prophesy. Even the year AD 34 has no significance whatsoever, because Mashiach's death 3½ years earlier in AD31 brought Daniel's timeline to a premature end. However, it is only the timeline that is ended with Mashiach's death and not the prophecy itself. Daniel's comment "*And on the wing of abominations he shall lay waste, even until the complete end and that which is decreed is poured out on the one who lays waste*" in verse 27 has the effect of extending this prophecy the time of Mashiach's return. This is discussed later.

Daniel's 70th Shemitah (Mashiach's Last Shemitah)

It is verses:26 and 27 that tend to cause confusion. Considering verse 26,

And after the sixty-two Shemitahs, Mashiach shall be cut off and have naught. And the people of a coming prince shall destroy the city and the set-apart place. And the end of it is with a flood. And wastes are decreed and fighting until the end. (Dan.9:26).

Although the verse says 62 *Shemitahs* we must not forget the earlier 7 *Shemitahs* thus the total is 69. The above chart shows that the 69 *Shemitahs* ended with Mashiach's immersion and the commencement of His ministry. Whilst this verse does not tell us how long after the 69th *Shemitah* Mashiach is cut off, we know He was executed 3½ years after commencing His ministry. The people of a coming prince who is to destroy (lay waste) to the city is a reference to the Roman army who destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. 'Prince' in this verse is, I believe, a euphemism for leader and is referring to the Roman general Titus who later succeeded his father Vespasian as emperor. The term flood is a euphemism for warfare and conquest (refer Isa.8:7-8, Dan.11:10, 40, Nah.1:8), so we could rephrase verse 26 to read,

Three and a half years after the sixty-nine Shemitahs Mashiach shall be killed. And the army of Rome +++shall make war on the people and lay waste to the city and the temple.

Now let us now consider verse 27, which requires a lot of unpacking and for analysis this verse is divided into parts A and B as follows,

^{27A} And he shall confirm a covenant with many for one Shemitah (Shâbûa). And in the middle of the Shemitah he shall put an end to slaughtering and meal offering.

^{27B} And on the wing of abominations he shall lay waste, even until the complete end and that which is decreed is poured out on the one who lays waste.

Furthermore, 27A has within it two separate components,

- 1. And he shall confirm, (Not make) a covenant with many for one Shemitah*
- 2. And in the middle of the Shemitah he shall put an end to slaughtering and meal offering.*

1. And He Shall Confirm a Covenant With Many For One Shemitah

Most attribute Dan.9:27 to the false messiah and catapult this verse to the end times. It is alleged that the false messiah will make a covenant of some sort for a seven-year period and after three and a half years will renege on the agreement. But this is pure conjecture and frankly it is misconceived. Why would the false messiah be interested in making a covenant for a seven-year period and with whom will he make this covenant? Truthfully the concept of a seven-year covenant is a nonsense and another misconception of Daniel. Seven is Yahweh's number, not Satan's number and as mentioned above, Daniel's prophecy acknowledges Yahweh's sevenfold calendar. Furthermore, Daniel's prophesy is wholly about Mashiach and the 70th Shemitah flows immediately after the 69th Shemitah, hence it is Mashiach who is the person confirming the new covenant. Note it says He shall confirm a covenant, not make a

covenant, and you can only confirm that which already exists or is promised. This issue is discussed later. So, which covenant is Mashiach confirming? It is the new covenant Yahweh promised in Jeremiah,

“See, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day when I strengthened their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them,” declares Yahweh. “For this is the covenant I shall make with the house of Israel after those days”, declares Yahweh: “I shall put My Torah/Law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts. And I shall be their Elohim, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know Yahweh’: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says Yahweh: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer.31:31-34).

It says sins will be remembered no more and the apostle states that this requires a greater sacrifice (Heb. 10:4), hence Mashiach must be ratifying the same covenant via His blood at His Passover,

For this is My blood, that of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matt.26:28).

We know Daniel is referring to the same covenant as Jeremiah because he (Daniel) says so,

Seventy Shemitahs are decreed for your people and for your holy city, to put an end to the transgression, and to seal up sins, and to cover crookedness, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy. (Dan.9:24).

Elohim tells Jeremiah under this new covenant sins will not be remembered, this correlates with Daniel’s prophesy for sins to be sealed up: Rev.10:4 explains that to seal up is the opposite of record. Hence, Jeremiah, Daniel and Mashiach must all be referring to the same covenant.

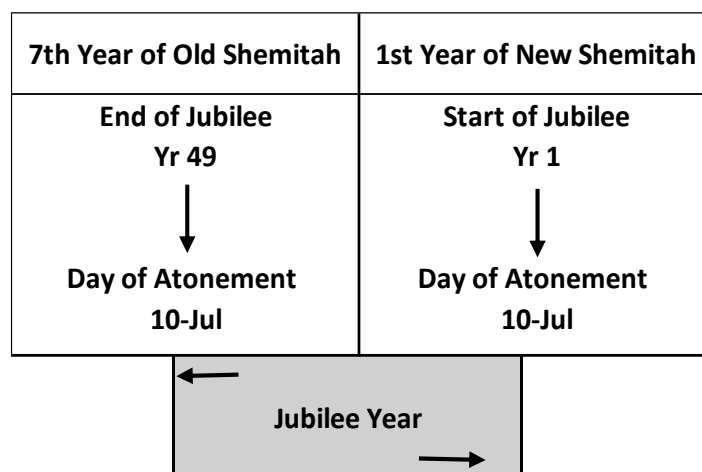
But verse 27 says ‘he will confirm a covenant with many for one Shemitah, that is, seven years’, yet the covenant of Jeremiah, Daniel and Mashiach is alive and real today. So, how are we to understand Daniel’s comment? To answer this question, we must go back to Yahweh’s sevenfold cycle for Shabbats particularly the relationship between Shemitah years and the Jubilee year.

A Jubilee comprises seven Shemitahs of seven years equaling forty-nine years. The Jubilee year is superimposed over the forty-ninth year of the outgoing Jubilee and the first year of the following Jubilee (illustrated below). Whilst it is termed a fiftieth year and has its own identity, **it is not consecutive**. The Jubilee year spans from The Day of Atonement to Day of Atonement as confirmed in the following passage,

Then shall you cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall you make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all

the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee to you; and you shall return every man unto his possession, and you shall return every man unto his family. (Lev.25:9-10)

The highlights clearly define the 'Day of Atonement to be the start of the 50th year which is not the start of the calendar year. Rashi would appear to support this understanding, commenting that at Lev. 25:9 there is a statement that the shofar is blown to proclaim the 'yovel' year. He concludes that the year is called 'yovel' based on this shofar blowing.



As the above illustrates, a Jubilee year is superimposed over the 49th year of the outgoing Jubilee period and the 1st year of the incoming Jubilee period. In effect linking the two Jubilees and the Shemitah periods. According to Geza Vermes² the Qumran community also applied this understanding: scroll 4Q319 states six consecutive jubilees gave 294 years i.e. 6 x 49. If the Jubilee year was a separate consecutive year to the 49th year, the jubilee cycles would be a deviation from Yahweh's inherent cycles of sevens.

Now let us consider Mashiach's opening sermon in the synagogue at the start of His ministry as recorded in Luke,

*And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And having unrolled the scroll, He found the place where it was written: **"The Spirit of Yahweh is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to bring the Good News to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away crushed ones with a release, to proclaim the acceptable year of Yahweh.** (Luke.4:17-19).*

Mashiach is quoting from Isa.61:1-3, (highlighted), and scholars agree that the comment '***to proclaim the acceptable year of Yahweh***' is a reference to the year of Jubilee. Then in verse 21 of Luke, Mashiach tells the synagogue audience that these words from Isaiah were fulfilled that very day, thereby confirming He commenced His ministry in a Jubilee year, that is, **at the start of a new Shemitah period**: year one of seven years. Daniel's terminology now becomes clearer. Daniel was measuring Mashiach's ministerial days in terms of a Shemitah. Thus, the covenant itself was not for a period of seven years (the covenant

² The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English

is alive today) but would be confirmed **within** Mashiach's ministerial Shemitah – the last seven-year period of His life. A more accurate presentation of Daniel 27a would be,

And he shall confirm a covenant with many during His last Shemitah: the last seven years of His life.

2. And in the middle of the Shemitah He shall put an end to the slaughtering and meal offering

This statement is given a negative connotation, consequently it is associated with the false messiah. But it is a positive comment and the subject is Mashiach not the false messiah. As said earlier this whole prophesy is concerning Mashiach and no one else. As demonstrated above Mashiach commenced His ministry at the start of a new Shemitah period of seven years. He died three and a half years into His ministry which is the middle of His last Shemitah. Furthermore, it was by His death that Mashiach brought an end to sin offerings and sacrifices,

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. (Heb.9:12).

*But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of Elohim. From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by a single offering he has perfected **for all time** those who are being sanctified. (Heb.10:12-14).*

Now where there is forgiveness of these sins, (eternal redemption) there is no longer any offering for sin. (Heb.10:18).

Not only did Mashiach, by His sacrifice, end the sacrificial system of slaughtering and meal offerings, He brought an end to the temple system and its rituals. The new covenant is the Torah/Law on our hearts: we are a spiritual temple (1 Cor.6:19) under a Malkizedek (not Aharonic) priesthood. This is the change that the apostle was referring to when he spoke of a change in the law,

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. (Heb.7:12).

It is not a change to any of the precepts in the law but in the mode of administration, as confirmed by the apostle when he says our prayers are our sacrifice (Heb.13:15) thus the principle of sacrifice remains as commanded, but the style is changed.

Mashiach Never Made the New Covenant

There is a misconception that Mashiach introduced the new covenant when, eating the Passover with His disciples, and said,

For this is My blood, that of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matt.26:28)

But Mashiach talks of **the** new covenant not **a** new covenant, evidencing an earlier origination of this new covenant. This correlates with Daniel describing the confirmation of a covenant in verse 27. As said earlier

you can only confirm that which exists or has been promised. Moreover, a close examination of Matt.26 shows the subject is His blood not the covenant.

Returning to Daniel 27B

And on the wing of abominations he shall lay waste, even until the complete end and that which is decreed is poured out on the one who lays waste

There is a misconception that this comment refers to the false messiah but as said earlier this prophecy is wholly about Mashiach. This sentence refers to Mashiach's return and His confrontation with the false prophet (the second beast of Revelation 13) but the presentation is confusing. If we insert a couple of highlights the verse becomes a little clearer,

And on the wing of abominations (an unrighteous world) He (Mashiach) shall lay waste (bring to an end), even until the complete end and that which is decreed is poured out on the one who lays waste (the binding of the false prophet).

But we can further simplify the verse,

And returning to an unrighteous world, Mashiach shall bring end to all unrighteousness, even an end to him who causes the unrighteousness, as is decreed.

This comment takes this prophecy to the time of Mashiach's return consequently, the 70th Shemitah must be considered in terms of pre Mashiach's death and post Mashiach's death. In other words, we have two equal periods each of three and a half years and this sentence refers to the period after Mashiach's death. In a sense the final three and a half years spans the period between Mashiach's first and second coming. Further support for this understanding is provided in the following section.

The Seventy Shemitahs Equals Ten Jubilees/Yovels

Some point to a connection between Daniel's seventy Shemitahs and Yahweh's jubilee years and there may be some credence to this. Scroll 4Q13 from the Qumran community, aligning with Daniel's prophesy, talks in terms of Malkizedek completing atonement (achieved on His return) in the tenth jubilee thereby correlating with Daniel's seventy Shemitahs: $10 \times 49 = 70 \times 7$.

Interestingly another of the Dead Sea Scrolls: scroll 11Q13, (the Malkizedek scroll), identifies a tenth jubilee as the last jubilee. Moreover, the apocalyptic pattern of ten can be found in 'The Apocalypse of Weeks' in the book of Enoch, where the tenth 'week' is the last week of this age. So, the apocrypha and the Dead Sea Scrolls provide another level to Daniel's prophecy, predicting the end of this age will be within a tenth jubilee.

The jubilee connection may raise addition questions, but it provides credibility for the contention that the last three and a half years of Daniels 70th Shemitah stretches all the way to Mashiach's return. To put it another way, the latter half of the 70th Shemitah represents the Messianic age, the age of the new covenant people and the disengagement from the old covenant and its ritual system.

Conclusion

Consequential to all the above a clearer presentation for Daniel 9:24-27 would be the following,

Seventy Shemitahs are decreed for your people Israel and for your holy city Jerusalem, to put an end to the transgression, and to seal up sins, and to cover crookedness, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know, then, and understand: from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Mashiach the Prince, is seven Shemitahs and sixty-two Shemitahs, that is, sixty nine Shemitahs. It shall be built again, with streets and a trench, but in times of affliction.

And in the seventieth Shemitah halfway through this Shemitah, Mashiach shall be sacrificed and through His blood He will enact a new covenant for all, bringing an end to sin sacrifices and meal offerings. After which the army of Rome shall war against Jerusalem and lay waste to the city and the set-apart place. And at the end of this age Mashiach shall destroy all abomination together with the beast and the false prophet, as is decreed.

-End-