

9 he said, 'Daniel, I have just gone to make you skillful
23-24 in understanding. ²³ At the beginning of your sup-
plications a word went forth, and I have come to
relate it, for beloved are you. Contemplate the matter
and gain understanding in the vision. ²⁴ Seventy
weeks have been decreed upon your people and your

24. שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים – Seventy weeks.

Seder Olam (ch. 28) and all the commentators, especially *Ibn Ezra*, interpret the expression to mean 490 years: *seventy weeks of years*.

[Similarly, we find (*Lev. 25:8*), *And you will count seven weeks of years* (שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים) should be translated *weeks* just as שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים in *Lev. 23:15* referring to the seven-year sabbatical cycles, is translated *weeks*; see *Onkelos* and *Yonasan* there). Also מְלֵא שָׁבֹעַ זֹאת, *fulfill the week of this one*, (*Genesis 30:27*), is understood by *Ramban* to mean seven years, a week of years.]

The Sages (*Seder Olam Rabbah* ch. 28) hold that these 490 years commenced with the destruction of the First Temple in the year 3338 from Creation (the word שְׁלֹשׁ, [= 338] is used as a mnemonic device). The beginning of the restoration of the Temple in the second year of Darius the Persian (*Haggai 1:1-8*) took place seventy years later in the year 3408. The Second Temple stood 420 years (see *Yoma 9a*, *Avodah Zarah 9a*, *Arachin 12b*). This adds up to a total of 490 years, with the destruction of the Second Temple taking place in the year 3828 (see *Avoda Zara 9b*; *Tosafos* s.v. *הוא*).

It follows that his decree had been promulgated not later than the date of the First Temple's destruction and that it preceded Daniel's vision by 51 years (see *comm. to v. 2*; *Seder Olam, ibid.*).

This interpretation is followed by the consensus of commentators (*R' Saadiah Gaon* in *Emunos VeDeos*, 8; *Rashi*; *Abarbanel*).

Abarbanel and *Malbim* understand the angel's reference to seventy weeks as an additional interpretation of the seventy years of Jeremiah. These seventy years were meant as seventy weeks of years. *Malbim* adds to this that Jeremiah's prophecy had a dual meaning. The seventy years of exile had been in punishment for the desecration of seventy שְׁמִיטוֹת, *sabbatical years*. In *Leviticus (26:34)* God warned Israel that if they would sin, desolation would be visited upon their land and, *then the land will rest and it will atone for its sabbaths*. Thus the sin of desecrating the sabbatical years had been atoned for by the seventy-year exile in Babylon. This is seen clearly in *II Chronicles (36:21)*: *to fulfill the word of HASHEM by the month of Jeremiah ... all the years of its desolation it kept the sabbath to complete seventy years*.

But in addition to the sin of desecrating sabbatical years, the Jews had committed other sins (*Yoma 96* specifies idolatry, licentiousness, and bloodshed), throughout the period occupied by these sabbatical periods (490 years). For this, seventy years of exile would not suffice, and the full

דְּנִיאל עָתָה יִצְאָתִי לְהַשְׁפִּילָךְ בִּינָה:
בְּתַחֲלַת תְּחִנוּנֶיךָ יִצְאָ דְבָר וְאֲנִי בָאתִי
לְהַגִּיד כִּי חֲמוּדוֹת אֶתָּה וּבֵין בְּדָבָר וְהִבֵּן
בְּמִרְאָה: שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים נְחָתָךְ עַל-עַמְּךָ | כג כד

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כג-כד

God. Daniel said, [God] understood, therefore He has now sent His angel to speak to me.

לְהַשְׁפִּילָךְ בִּינָה – To make you skillful in understanding.

The angel corrected the false understanding Daniel had of Jeremiah's prophesied seventy years (*Malbim*).

23. בְּתַחֲלַת תְּחִנוּנֶיךָ – At the beginning of your supplications.

As it is written (*Isaiah 65:24*), *Before they call I will answer* (*R' Saadiah*).

But the vision was not revealed to you then, for you are greatly beloved. He [God] desired to hear your prayer (*Koheles Rabbah 9:7* according to *Radal's* emendation). [God left questions in Daniel's mind so that he would pray for their resolution. God treasures the sincere prayers of righteous people.]

יִצְאָ דְבָר – A word went forth.

The word – i.e., the following vision (*Ibn Ezra*; *Metzudos*).

The angel told Daniel that a decree had been promulgated that the Holy Temple be rebuilt (*Koheles Rabbah 9:7*).

[It seems from this *Midrash* that if not for Daniel's prayer there was a possibility that the return prophesied by Jeremiah could have been delayed and the prophecy interpreted in some other way. Only through Daniel's prayer was this in-

terpretation adopted (see *comm. to 5:26*).]

– For beloved are you.

Three times it is written [that Daniel was] *beloved* (*Daniel 10:11-19*). He (the angel) said: 'Your Creator loves you, the heavenly host loves you, and [the people of] your generation love you' (*Koheles Rabbah 9:7*; see *Radal*).

– Contemplate the matter.

Abarbanel (*Mayenei HaYeshuah 10:6*), adhering to his theory about Daniel's worry (see *comm. to v. 2*), has this phrase refer to the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the seventy years. This prophecy is called *statement* or *word*, in allusion to *אֲשֶׁר הָיָה דְבָר אֶל יְרֵמְיָהוּ: 2. ו*, *אשר היה דבר אל ירמיהו*, *about which the word of HASHEM had come to Jeremiah*. It also alludes to *Jeremiah 25:3*, *הַדְּבָר, אשר היה על ירמיהו*, *the word which was upon Jeremiah*, which is clarified by this prophecy.

– And gain understanding in the vision.

This refers to Daniel's vision in chapter 8 in which the part which disturbed him so (*v. 14*) is characterized in *vs. 16-26* as a *מִרְאָה*.

The other commentators (*Rashi*; *Ibn Ezra*) understand *דְּבָר* and *מִרְאָה* to be synonymous expressions referring to the following vision.