

'EREB BŌQER OF DAN 8:14 RE-EXAMINED

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The expression 'ereb bōqer of Dan 8:14 is interpreted in the current literature as a reference to the morning and evening sacrifices offered daily in the Temple. The omission of 2300 such sacrifices would correspond to 1150 days, the interval of time during which the services in the Temple were suspended following the profanation of temple and altar by Antiochus Epiphanes. This interpretation has become practically normative, so that modern scholars seldom take time to examine it critically.

Thus, for instance, A. Bentzen states: "2300 'evenings-mornings,' namely 1150 days, this peculiar way of indicating the time being explained by the fact that the total number of tamîd-sacrifices omitted is given; since every morning and evening of every day a tamîd was offered, the omission of 2300 such sacrifices signifies 1150 days."¹ Bentzen adds the interesting observation that this interpretation dates back to Ephraem Syrus. The same explanation is repeated uncritically by most of the more recent commentators.²

Two observations should be made here. First, none of these modern commentators questions the correctness of the assumption that *tāmîd* means each of the daily sacrifices, the morning one and the evening one. Second, the reason proposed by some commentators for the strange fact that "evening" precedes "morning" in Dan 8:14 is not tenable in the light of biblical usage.

¹ A. Bentzen, *Daniel* (Tübingen, 1972), p. 71.

² J. Montgomery, *The Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh, 1927), p. 343; Jean Steinmann, *Daniel* (Paris, 1950), p. 124; N. W. Porteous, *Das Danielbuch* (Göttingen, 1962), p. 104; O. Plöger, *Das Buch Daniel* (Gütersloh, 1965), p. 127; M. Delcor, *Le livre de Daniel* (Paris, 1971), p. 177; André Lacocque, *Le livre de Daniel* (Paris, 1976), p. 49.

In an examination of the first assumption, namely that *tāmīd* may refer to each of the daily sacrifices taken separately, it deserves notice that the word *tāmīd* is not employed as a noun by itself except in the book of Daniel: 8:11, 12, 13; 11:31; 12:11. In the rest of the OT the word is often used as an adverb in the sense of “continually” or “daily,” or as an adjective meaning “continual,” “perpetual,” “regular,” etc. It is employed 26 times in a construct relation to qualify nouns such as “burnt offering,” “meal offering,” “fire,” “show-bread,” “feast,” “allowance,” and the like. Because *tāmīd* is used most often to qualify burnt offering or sacrifice, the word “sacrifice” has been supplied by different translators to complete the sense of the elliptical *tāmīd* in the five texts of Daniel. The LXX has simply translated *tāmīd* by *θυσία* in these passages. But since the word was used to qualify other aspects of the service of the Temple besides sacrifices, one might be entitled to supply the word “service” instead of “sacrifice” in the same texts. When the sanctuary was overthrown by the activity of the “little horn,” not only the sacrifices ceased to be offered, but the totality of the services of the Temple ceased as well.

But even if the word “sacrifice” be supplied in the different texts of Daniel where the word *tāmīd* occurs, it should be observed that *tāmīd* is a technical term in the language of the ritual to designate the double burnt offering of the morning and the evening which should be offered daily. The legislation of Exod 29:38-42 is very precise. After presenting the detailed prescription for the daily offering of two lambs a year old without blemish, vs. 42 sums up the whole instruction by saying: “It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations. . . .” The Hebrew text brings out the point even more clearly: עלה תמיד לזרחיכם. It is evident that the double offering of the morning and the evening formed one unit contained in the expression עלה תמיד.

The parallel text of Num 28:3-6 points to the same technical

use of the term: "two male lambs a year old without blemish, day by day, as a continual" offering (vs. 3), where the Hebrew text reads, עלה תמיד, probably to be corrected to עלה תמיד.³ The preceding instruction is summed up as follows (vs. 6): "It is a continual burnt offering . . .," repeating the technical term 'ōlat *tāmīd*. It is clear that in the language of the cult the morning and evening offerings constituted one "continual burnt offering."

In the remaining verses of Num 28 and in chap. 29 one may read a summary of all the sacrifices to be offered throughout the religious year: those of the Sabbath (28:9, 10); of the new moon (vss. 11-15); of the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread which followed the celebration of the passover on the 14th of Nisan (vss. 16-25); of the day of the first-fruits (vss. 26-31); of the first day of the seventh month (29:1-6); of the tenth day of the same month (vss. 7-11); and of the eight days of the feast of tabernacles (vss. 12-38). In all cases the special sacrifices were to be offered "besides the continual burnt offering" (28:9, 15, 23, 31; 29:6, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 38), altogether fourteen times. Regardless of the number of sacrifices to be offered on festal occasions the 'ōlat *tāmīd* could never be suspended. It is also clear from the context that by 'ōlat *tāmīd* the double burnt offering of the morning and evening is meant, the only exception being found in Num 28:23: "You shall offer these besides the burnt offering of the morning which is for a continual burnt offering." A careful study of this last passage indicates that the MT is probably disturbed, and that the copyist after writing 'ōlat *habbōqer*, tried to correct the mistake by adding 'āšer le'ōlat *hattāmīd* of the regular formula. This lone exception does not invalidate the rule that in this long text, 'ōlat *tāmīd* means technically the double burnt offering of the morning and evening.

Our contention that the *tāmīd* stands for the daily double burnt offering of the morning and evening seems at first sight to be contradicted by Ezek 46:14, 15: "Thus the lamb and the

³ Cf. R. Kittel, *Biblia hebraica*, 3d ed.

meal offering and the oil shall be provided, morning by morning, for a continual burnt offering." This would be a major objection if it could be shown that Ezekiel's cultic ordinances found in chaps. 45 and 46 were meant to be detailed and exhaustive, rather than a simple outline of the essential features of the new order he envisaged.

John Skinner, G. A. Cooke and Georg Fohrer take the text to indicate that Ezekiel knew nothing of an evening burnt offering.⁴ The standard argument is that in the pre-exilic period there was only a morning *'ōlah* and an evening *minḥāh*. This is supposed to be supported by the fact that King Ahaz commanded Uriah the priest, saying: "Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening cereal offering . . ." (2 Kgs 16: 15).

On the other hand, there are scholars who have understood Ezekiel's cultic instructions as a mere outline of the temple service and not as a detailed prescription. Thus, Johannes Pedersen in commenting on Ezek 45:13-17 calls attention to the omission of two important items from the list of offerings to be made, and he offers the following explanation:

It is probably merely on account of the incompleteness of the plan that wine and cattle are not mentioned. This must also be the reason why no daily offering is referred to other than that of the prince: a lamb for a burnt-offering every morning with an offering of agricultural produce and oil. . . . We possess plenty of evidence that the daily afternoon sacrifice was, indeed, preserved in post-exilic times.⁵

Likewise, W. Zimmerli in his recent commentary expresses the opinion that the instruction of Ezek 46:13-15 is a summary rather than a complete blueprint for the sacrificial service:

In view of the fact that in the pre-exilic period the morning and evening offerings were already known, it is not probable that Ez. 46:15 means to reduce the full service. Probably its editor was obliged, by the revision of verses 13 and following and by

⁴ John Skinner, *The Book of Ezekiel* (New York, 1905), pp. 472, 473; G. A. Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel* (Edinburgh, 1936), p. 511; Georg Fohrer, *Ezechiel* (Tübingen, 1955), p. 256.

⁵ J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 3/4 (London, 1940): 352.

the combination of both offerings into one, to concentrate all in the morning *tāmid* and to describe only the morning *tāmid*.⁶

That Ezekiel's ritual prescriptions are no more than an outline is also evident from the reference to the celebration of the passover in 45:21. This statement cannot be taken as anything but the barest reference to a well-known ritual of long standing. Josiah is said to have celebrated the passover with all solemnity in the 18th year of his reign (2 Kgs 23:21-23).⁷ It should be borne in mind that in most cases Ezekiel was not innovating, but standardizing ancient practices according to an ideal plan.

Moreover, it should be observed that the text of 2 Kgs 16:15 does not rule out the possibility that an evening burnt offering was offered as well. The text makes reference to "the king's burnt offering, and his cereal offering," as well as to "the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their cereal offering, and their libation." From this it is evident that there was more to the daily service even in the days of Ahaz than "the morning burnt offering, and the evening cereal offering." The comments of the prophet Isaiah, a contemporary of Ahaz, on the ceremonialism of the day leave the distinct impression that the number of sacrifices offered in the temple in his time was enormous (Isa 1:11-13).⁸ There was no lack of ceremonial zeal, but a crying absence of morality and rationality in the religion as then practiced.

No final opinion can be expressed on the validity of the argument based on 2 Kgs 16:15 before the term *minḥāh* is clearly defined.

N. H. Snaith has expressed the opinion that in the course of time *minḥāh* acquired the narrow sense of "gift of grain (cereal)," but that it could also have retained the original meaning of "tribute, gift." He argues that "because of this, it could be used in a wider sense, namely, that of the whole ceremony."⁹ As an

⁶ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* (Neukirchen, 1969), p. 1175.

⁷ For the ancient origin of the passover, see R. de Vaux, *Les sacrifices de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris, 1964), p. 22.

⁸ Cf. the remarks of Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, in Mic 6:6-8.

⁹ N. H. Snaith, "Sacrifices in the Old Testament," *VT* 7 (1957): 315.

example of this wider sense, Snaith refers to the *'ōlat hamminhāh* of 1 Kgs 18:29, 36, evidently offered in the evening, and to the *'ōlat hamminhāh* of 2 Kgs 3:20, obviously offered in the morning. He goes on to say that “the two ceremonies referred to are the Tamid, Ex. 29:38ff., Num. 28:3ff.”

It seems reasonable to suppose that the *minhāh* of 2 Kgs 3:20, offered in the morning, included the standard burnt offering. On the other hand, the *minhāh* alluded to in 2 Kgs 18:29, 36 certainly included, among other things, the burnt offering made that evening by Elijah himself on top of Mount Carmel. If this wider sense of *minhāh* is allowed in 2 Kgs 16:15, then there is no reason to rule out the possibility that an evening burnt offering might have been included in the total ceremony known as the *minhāh*.

We have assumed, and we believe correctly, that the term *tāmīd* of Dan 8 signifies the double sacrificial ceremony of the morning and the evening. The previous paragraphs have shown that this assumption is not invalidated by Ezek 46:15, nor by the often-quoted text of 2 Kgs 16:15.¹⁰

The evidence furnished by the texts of Exod 29 and Num 28 and 29, which are fundamental to any discussion of the meaning of *tāmīd*, should caution the impartial exegete from any hasty assumption that *hattāmīd* in Daniel did designate each sacrifice by itself, as if the sacrifices of the morning and evening were two independent units. The text of Ezra 3:3-5 is particularly significant in this discussion. After speaking of the restoration of the altar and the presentation of “burnt-offerings morning and evening,” vs. 5 sums up the daily burnt offering of the morning and the evening under the expression *'ōlat tāmīd*, evidently a singular.

Moreover, one should observe that the word *tāmīd* itself is not found in Dan 8:14. It is simply assumed on account of the

¹⁰ As for the mention of *tāmīd* in Ezek 46:14, Zimmerli, p. 1168, explains it as an intrusion from vs. 15.

references to it in vss. 11-13. But the assumption that the formula ‘*ereh bōqer*’ is the equivalent to *hattāmīd* of the preceding verses ignores another fundamental fact of the language of the cult, namely that in the description of the daily sacrifices “morning” always precedes “evening.”

O. Plöger, for example, commenting on Dan 8:14, follows countless predecessors when he writes: “Since the sacrifice was offered in the evening and in the morning, this would signify an interval of 1150 days.”¹¹ But it should be observed that the language of the ritual always designates the morning sacrifice before the one of the evening, without exception. A survey of the OT produces the following illustrations: Exod 29:39; Lev 6:13; Num 28:4; 2 Kgs 16:15; 1 Chr 16:40; 23:30; 2 Chr 2:4; 13:11; 31:3; Ezra 3:3. “Burnt offerings morning and evening” becomes a stereotyped phrase which finds no exception in the biblical literature. It is also perpetuated in the post-biblical period, as e.g. in 1 Esdr 5:50: “. . . and they offered sacrifices according to the time, and burnt-offerings to the Lord both morning and evening.”¹²

The expression *mē‘ereh ‘ad-bōqer* is used in Lev 24:3, but this is in reference to the time when the lamps should burn in the sanctuary. The reason for the sequence evening-morning in this particular instance is obvious. The lights should burn during the night and not during the day. Commenting on the daily ceremonies of the temple, J. B. Segal remarks that “the daily ritual of the temple followed the routine of every-day life, beginning in the morning and finishing in the evening.”¹³

¹¹ Plöger, p. 127. However, Porteous, p. 104, is careful to observe the order morning-evening: “während dieses Zeitabschnittes wäre das *tamid*-Opfer 2300mal am Morgen oder Abend dargebracht worden.”

¹² *APOT*, 1: 39. According to R. H. Charles, the date of Esdras would be “the late Greek age.” The expression *δλοκαυτώματα τῷ κυρίῳ τὸ πρῶϊνὸν καὶ τὸ δευτέρον* of 1 Esdr 5:49 in LXX contains no new technical terms, as Montgomery, p. 343, suggests, but simply repeats the terms already employed in Exod 29:39 LXX.

¹³ J. B. Segal, “Intercalation and the Hebrew Calendar,” *VT* 7 (1957): 254.

It is alleged by some scholars that the inverted order of the expression *'ereḫ bōqer* of Dan 8:14 reflects the use of a new calendar adopted by the Israelites in their first contact with Babylonian civilization. According to R. de Vaux, e.g., the introduction of the Babylonian lunar calendar provoked a change in the old Israelite way of reckoning the day.¹⁴ Whereas before the exile the usual order had been morning-evening, in the postexilic period the order evening-morning became the normal one. The present writer has shown in another study that de Vaux's argument based on the use of the formula "day and night" is untenable in the light of the evidence offered by the Babylonian literature.¹⁵ It is generally recognized that in Mesopotamia the day was reckoned from evening to evening, which is usually the case where a lunar calendar is observed.¹⁶ Consequently one would expect, if de Vaux were right, that in the Babylonian literature the expression "night and day" would be much more common than its inverse "day and night." But a methodical count in the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Sumerian prototype of the Deluge, Inana's Descent to the Nether World, and the Epic of Creation showed a preponderance of the formula "day and night" over "night and day" in the ratio of 4:1.¹⁷

¹⁴ R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York, 1961), p. 181.

¹⁵ S. J. Schwantes, "Did the Israelites Ever Reckon the Day from Morning to Morning?," *The Ministry*, July, 1977, pp. 36-39.

¹⁶ See O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (Harper Torchbook ed.; New York, 1962), p. 106; A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology, 626 B.C. - A.D. 45* (Providence, R.I., 1956), p. 26; Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Bible Chronology* (Princeton, N.J., 1964), p. 8; E. J. Bickermann, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (London, 1968), pp. 13-14.

¹⁷ For the formula "day and night," see Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet I, 2.24, 4.21, 5.19 (*ANET*, pp. 74-75); the Old Babylonian Version of Tablets II, 2.6 (*ANET*, p. 77) and X, 2.5, 8 (*ANET*, pp. 89-90); the Assyrian Version of Tablet XI, lines 126 and 199 (*ANET*, pp. 94-95); the Sumerian prototype of the Deluge, line 203 (*ANET*, p. 44); the Sumerian myth of Inana's descent to the Nether World, line 169 (*ANET*, p. 55); the Creation Epic, Tablet I, line 50 (*ANET*, p. 61). For the formula "night and day," see the Creation Epic, Tablet I, line 129, and Tablet III, lines 19 and 78 (*ANET*, pp. 62, 64-65).

It is obvious from this cursory survey of Babylonian literature that there is no correlation between the type of calendar used and the use of the formula “day and night” or its inverse. The universal preference for the formula “day and night” reflects, as Segal remarks, “the ordinary course of human behaviour. It is at dawn that man begins the active work of the day, and, for that reason, a phrase current in man’s mouth is ‘day and night.’”¹⁸

It is not surprising, then, that the formula “day and night” is much more commonly attested than “night and day” in the pre-exilic biblical literature, regardless of the type of calendar used. And for the same reason it continues to be more common in the post-exilic books as well. Thus Nehemiah continues to pray “day and night” (Neh 1:6). In his time a guard is set as protection against the enemy “day and night” (Neh 4:9). The Siracide, writing early in the 2d century B.C., still says from “morning to evening” (Sir 18:26). Judas Maccabaeus ordered the people to call upon the Lord “day and night” (2 Macc 13:10). Judith is reported as serving the God of heaven “day and night” (Jdt 11:17). The stereotyped formula continues to be used right down to the beginning of the Christian era, as shown by the literature of Qumran.¹⁹

The language of the NT points in the same direction, namely that the use of the stereotyped expression “day and night,” or its inverse, bears no relation to the way of reckoning the day. Thus in the NT the formula *nuktos kai hēmeras* is used eight times (Acts 20:31; Rom 13:12; 2 Cor 11:25; 1 Thess 2:9; 3:10; 2 Thess 3:8; 1 Tim 5:5; 2 Tim 1:3), whereas the inverse *hēmeras kai nuktos* is used ten times (Matt 4:2; 12:40; Luke 18:7; Acts 9:24; 26:7; Rev 5:8; 7:15; 12:10; 14:11; 20:10). Also, in many passages of the Talmud the expression “day and night” is employed, as pointed out by C. H. Borenstein.²⁰ And

¹⁸ Segal, p. 254.

¹⁹ 1 QM 14:13; see J. van der Ploeg, “La règle de la guerre: Traduction et notes,” *VT* 5 (1955): 389, 415.

²⁰ Quoted by S. Zeitlin, “The Beginning of the Jewish Day,” *JQR* 36 (1945-

there seems to be little correlation between language and calendrical or astronomical sophistication even in our times.

The evidence pointed out above shows that the expression *'ereḥ bōqer* of Dan 8:14 could not be derived from the language of the cult, where the order morning-evening is the standard one at all times. There is no evidence whatsoever that the cultic formula for the "morning and evening" sacrifices was changed during the captivity or in the subsequent period. This being the case, the provenance of the expression *'ereḥ bōqer* must be sought elsewhere than in the language of the cult. It is inadmissible that a writer as familiar with the cultic jargon as the author of the book of Daniel would commit so gross an error.

It is the contention of the present writer that the unusual expression *ereḥ bōqer* must be sought in the lapidary language of Gen 1. There the standard expression וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר is used for each day of the creation narrative (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). R. de Vaux is right in calling attention to the fact that in Gen 1 *'ereḥ* marks the end of the creative acts accomplished during the day, and *bōqer* the end of the night of rest.²¹ It seems reasonable that in describing the days of creation the accent is placed on the creative activity which takes place during the light part of the day, rather than on the night of rest.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that this manner of designating a complete day is found nowhere in the OT except in Dan 8:14, 26. The standard practice is to designate the 24-hour day by the formula "day and night," or, much less frequently,

46): 410. It should be noted that Zeitlin favors the hypothesis that the Israelites reckoned the day from morning to morning in pre-exilic times.

²¹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 181. De Vaux uses the order עֶרֶב . . . בֹּקֶר as an argument in favor of the hypothesis that in pre-exilic times the day was reckoned from morning to morning. G. von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia, 1961), p. 51, draws the same conclusion: "The day here appears to be reckoned from morning to morning, in strange contrast to its reckoning in the cultic law." It should be said, though, that Gen 1 was not written with the purpose of recognizing or establishing any particular calendar or method of reckoning the day. For a different view, see E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Garden City, N.Y., 1964), p. 5.

by its inverse "night and day." It follows that if the author of the book of Daniel borrowed the phrase *'ereḥ bōqer* from Gen 1, as the evidence seems to substantiate, then its meaning points not to half days, as has often been assumed uncritically, but to full days.

K. Marti claims that the expression *'ereḥ bōqer* of Dan 8:14 is to be understood according to the parallel expression of Dan 8:26, where the existence of the conjunction *we* between the two nouns indicates that *'ereḥ bōqer* of 8:14 should not be taken as a unit of 24 hours.²² Marti's conclusion is open to question, since the very fact that *'ereḥ bōqer*, with or without *we*, stands in the singular is evidence that the expression represents a unit of time, namely one full day. Thus the LXX and Theodotion have understood it by adding *hēmerai* to the text. Elsewhere in the book of Daniel the days, weeks, or years counted are always in the plural and precede the numeral. Thus in the Hebrew portion of the book we find, *šānîm* 3 (1:5); *yāmîm* 10 (1:12, 14); *šāḇu'îm* 70, 7, 62 (9:24, 25, 26); *yāmîm* 1290 (12:11); *yāmîm* 1335 (12:12). In contrast, the formula *'ereḥ bōqer* stands in the singular, like French *après-midi*, which is also invariable.

The very fact that the expression *'ereḥ bōqer* stands exceptionally in the singular in contrast to all other enumerations in the book, favors the view that it represents a unit of time. If one also recognizes that the expression *'ereḥ bōqer* could not have been borrowed from the language of the cult, but was most likely modeled after the phraseology of Gen 1, then the conclusion that it stands for one full day is practically unavoidable.

²² K. Marti, *Das Buch Daniel* (Tübingen, 1901), p. 60.