

Syntactic Comments on Daniel 8:11

Copyright (c) 2006 by Frank W. Hardy, Ph.D.

When we start looking for passages that are parallel to this one and that can be used to inform our interpretation, it is not enough to go to a concordance and find examples of the verbal root **rwm* "be high, rise, raise." That root is present in Dan 8:11, to be sure, but it does not occur alone there. It occurs in connection with the preposition *min* "from." Parallels that do not combine these two elements are not appropriate parallels. The passage before us does not just say *hērîm* "he raised" (or whatever), but *ûmimmennû hērîm* "from him he raised."

A second constraint is that the verb *hērîm* is in the hiphil conjugation and does not have stative meaning. It must be translated either "raise" (taking the ketib reading) or "be raised" (taking the qere). Other appropriate terms can be substituted for "raise," but what we cannot do is make the word refer to a state of being. It does not. It refers to an action. Thus, parallels to it will have to refer to actions.

Another constraint on the available senses that we can bring to Dan 8:11 for testing has been alluded to in passing. There is a textual variant in Dan 8:11 such that the sense can be either active ("he raised the daily from him") or passive ("the daily was raised from him"). If we substitute the words "lifted" or "elevated" as literal glosses, that doesn't help a lot. A series of literal English glosses will not be a good substitute for a grasp of idiomatic Hebrew. But I don't want to prejudge the correct sense, because that is the issue before us. Having said all this, my point is that, whatever sense turns out to be right, it will have to be one which is capable of being stated with an active verb or a passive verb.

The Hebrew expression "raise from" is an idiom that conveys a number of meanings, but all of them have something to do with the idea of removal. That's because the most basic meaning of *min* is "from." If this word is included, some form of the sense it conveys will have to be included. If this word is not included, we don't have a parallel to Dan 8:11.

Nor is it enough for **rwm* and *min* to occur within the confines of the same verse. There are a number of passages where both elements occur but have no viable syntactic connection with each other. Such examples are of no interest here and can be set aside. But in 28 cases they occur together and interact syntactically. These 28 examples form the basis for my remarks that follow and result in six different senses or possible types of reading.

Below these are summarized in two groups. Of those readings that accurately reflect a combination of **rwm* and *min* in other passages and contexts, there are three which can be stated only as active. Since they can't be stated as passive they can't account for the textual variant that is part of the text as it currently reads. So we set these aside. The remaining three are candidates for further scrutiny.

Hebrew: *û(1)mimmen(2)nû (3)hērîm (4)hattāmîd*

1. *mim* (<*min*) = "from"
2. (*n*)*û* = "him"
3. *hērîm* = "he raised"
4. *hattāmîd* = "the 'daily'"

A. Glosses which do not allow a passive sense

1. Rise above, literal
 - a. Active: And the "daily" will rise above him (in a literal sense).
 - b. Passive: N/A.
 - c. Issues:
 - i. The "daily" is the subject, which makes very strange Hebrew syntax and makes it difficult to convey an alternative passage sense.
 - ii. The hiphil conjugation normally requires a causative sense (X causes Y to rise, in this case). Causative meaning can't be conveyed by an intransitive verb.
 - iii. The sense is literal, whereas the rest of the passage is figurative.
 - iv. No passive sense is available.
2. Raise from, stop
 - a. Active: And the "daily" will cause [someone] to desist from him (leave him alone?).
 - b. Passive: N/A.
 - c. Issues:
 - i. The "daily" must serve as subject.
 - ii. The verb is intransitive.
 - iii. A secondary subject must be inserted.
3. Raise from, deliver
 - a. Active: And the "daily" will deliver [someone] from him.
 - b. Passive: N/A
 - c. Issues:
 - i. The "daily" must serve as subject.
 - ii. A direct object must be inserted.

B. Glosses which do allow a passive sense

4. Raise above, exalt
 - a. Active: And he will raise the "daily" above him, exalt the "daily" over him.
 - b. Passive: And the "daily" will be raised above him, exalted over him.
 - c. Issues:
 - i. The syntax works, but there is a question how such a statement would fit in the available context.
5. Set apart from, offer
 - d. Active: And he will set apart the "daily" from something (as a gift).
 - e. Passive: And the "daily" will be set apart from something (as a gift).
 - f. Issues:
 - i. Again the syntax works, but the statement doesn't make any sense.
6. Take from, remove
 - g. Active: And he will remove the "daily" from him.
 - h. Passive: And the "daily" will be removed from him.
 - i. Issues:
 - i. This works syntactically.
 - ii. It also allows *min* to have it's most natural meaning and combines well with **rwm* in the present context.

- iii. There is another consideration. This reading has general support among translators. Translators can be wrong. A majority of translators can be wrong. Witness the insertion of "sacrifice" alongside "daily" in most translations. But the burden of proof rests on the one who wishes to show that there has been a mistake. I do not claim that the present reading is correct because a majority of translators support it. Instead, I claim that the present reading is correct and a majority of translators support it.