

Dan 12:6 - Is the Period "Wonderful" or "Awful"?

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[Note: I would like to thank Pastor Carlos Capote for bringing to my attention a problem with the data listing below. I should have taken Dan 12:6 out of the classification, since that's the verse whose meaning is in question.¹ Actually, the listing was pulled together in haste and there are a number of problems with it, not just the one Pastor Caputo mentioned. But rather than patch up what follows, I'll leave it the way it is so that his readers will be able to see the basis for the point he was making. That's the only reason for keeping this online. For a more detailed listing of the forms that actually occur, please see the link immediately to the right of the one that brought you here, labeled "Revised." FWH]

Distribution

In the Old Testament there are 84 examples of **plʔ* in 81 verses. In five cases the root **plʔ* has the meaning "fulfill," which is unrelated to the present inquiry (see Lev 22:21; 27:2; Num 6:2; 15:3, 8). We focus on the other 81 examples here. Of these, 66 are verb forms (including participles) and 13 are nouns. Among verb forms, 89.4% refer to the acts or attributes of God and the other 10.6% refer to other things, for a ratio of about 9:1. Among nouns, 84.6% refer to God and 15.4% to other things, for a ratio of 8:2.

1. Verbs				
a.	59	89.4%	God	Gen 18:14; Exod 3:20; 34:10; Lev 22:21; 27:2; Num 6:2; 15:3, 8; Deut 28:59; Jdg 6:13; 13:19; 1 Chr 16:9, 12, 24; 2 Chr 26:15; Neh 9:17; Job 5:9; 9:10; 10:16; 37:5, 14; 42:3; Isa 28:29; 9:14, 14; Jer 21:2; 32:17, 27; Ps 9:2; 26:7; 31:22; 40:6; 71:17; 72:18; 75:2; 78:4, 11, 32; 86:10; 96:3; 98:1; 105:2, 5; 106:7, 22; 107:8, 15, 21, 24, 31; 111:4; 118:23; 119:18, 27; 131:1; 136:4; 139:14; 145:5; Prov 30:18; Joel 2:26; 3:5; Mic 7:15; Zech 8:6
b.	7	10.6%	Other	Deut 17:8; 30:11; 2 Sam 1:26; 13:2; 2 Chr 2:8; Dan 8:24; 11:36
2. Nouns				
a.	11	84.6%	God	Exod 15:11; Ps 77:12, 15; 78:12; 88:11, 13; 89:6; 119:129; Isa 9:5; 25:1; 29:14
b.	2	15.4%	Other	Lam 1:9; Dan 12:6

At issue

Some argue that, while verbal forms based on **plʔ* can refer to things other than God, the corresponding noun forms cannot. If so, then the word *happʿlāʾōt* in Dan 12:7 cannot refer to the "awful" outrages of the king of the North during the Middle Ages and must refer to something "wonderful" (<*péleʿ*>) that God does at a later time. Thus, the period must be applied to a time still future. I find this line of reasoning hard to follow. Participles are verbal nouns and because of their verbalness are included under (1) above. Nouns are included under (2). But both share the same root and this is where lexical meaning resides.

¹ See Caputo, "Las maravillas de Daniel 12:6," unpublished manuscript.

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Sometimes the same consonant letters can be listed as different roots. We have an example of this above (**pl* "fulfill"; **pl* "be wonderful"). But my point is that if there were a noun form having to do with "fulfillment" based on this root, it would share the semantic characteristics of the corresponding verb. In the present case, verb forms from **pl* are called denominative because they represent a secondary development from noun forms, which are primary. So not only do verb forms from **pl* and noun forms from **pl* share a common root, but the verb forms are secondarily derived from a noun base. The proposed distinction between these two types of forms does not bear scrutiny. They are semantically comparable.

Recall that in many passages God promises to punish Babylon. In Jer 51:24, 35, and 59 the reason He gives for doing this is because of the way Babylon treated Jerusalem. So yes, Jerusalem was getting what she deserved. Yes, God had a part in bringing this about. But no, He did not do this alone. The Babylonians also had a part, for which it would be appropriate to punish them in due time. If we say that God is active in history (He is), and that His purposes are always beneficial (they are), we could argue that everything that happens qualifies as one of God's wonder acts. But this is just not true. God's wonderful acts are, precisely, acts so out of the ordinary that they could only have been performed by Him. That is why they cause wonder.

Notice that all three uses of **pl* in the book of Daniel refer to things other than God. In Daniel's Hebrew – which is not always standard – words based on the root **pl* bring with them the expectation that they will refer to "horrible" things (see Dan 8:24; 11:36; 12:6), rather than to "wonderful" things. Here such usage, which would be an exception elsewhere, is the norm.

I conclude that Dan 12:6 refers to the outrages of the king of the North and can be applied with all confidence to the Middle Ages, just as Seventh-day Adventists have always done. There is no need to reapply the passage, and I would add that in view of Daniel's consistent usage it is not reasonable to do so.

Confirming evidence for this position can be found by checking available translations, which consistently apply the verse in question to a period of distress. It is possible for everyone to be wrong, but here they are not. Another consideration is Daniel's use of *ʿad mātay* in the same passage. In many passages a writer longs for the end of some period of evil, but one never longs for good things to end. If the times are good, one wants them to continue. This second matter is taken up in a separate note.²

² See http://www.historicism.org/Symposium/Documents/Heb_CadMatay.pdf.