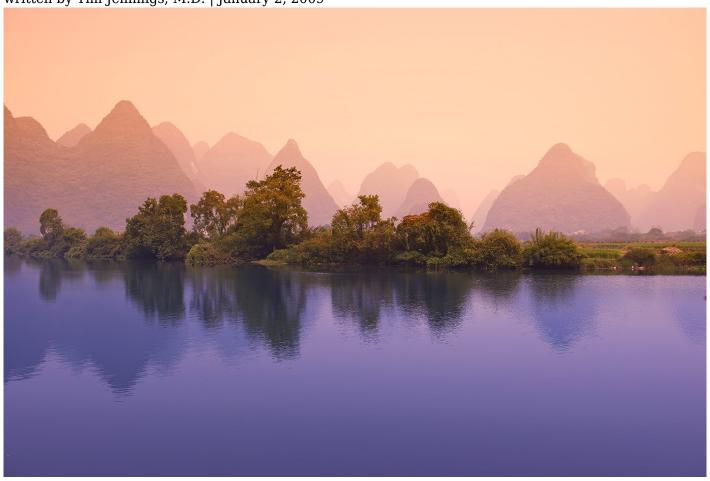# The Court in Daniel 7: Royal or Judicial?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | January 2, 2009

I listened to your lesson, 2008_Q4_L13_atonement_and_universal_harmony.mp3 for Saturday, December 27. You quote Daniel 7:10, where your translation reads:

> *Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.*

You emphasize the possibility that this could be a royal court instead of a judicial court. In all four other instances the context implies that the Aramaic word "diyn" {deen} (corresponding to Strongs 01780) is a judgment. The KJV reads judgment and the 5 instances of that word (Ezra 7:26, Daniel 4:37, 7:10, 7:22, 7:26) seem consistent with a judgment translation. Various other translations of this word use judge or judgment.

You follow this with:

> *"What is being described? "The court was seated" does it mean a judicial court or a royal court? In context, what is happening, a judicial review or something else? The text is describing a coronation, a crowning, a time in the universe in which God is on His throne and all the intelligences of the universe have gathered and Christ is brought into God's*

You seem to say that since one English version translates the Aramaic word "diyn" as "court" and that the context permits the translation as "court", we should therefore use the word "court", even though the word "diyn" cannot be interpreted as "court" in the 4 other instances. I am no Hebrew scholar, but this does not seem to me to be proper word study.

Your keen insight into the healing nature of Christ's salvation might be tarnished by association with inaccurate scholarship.

P

Thank you for your email and I appreciate your gracious approach.

You were right on the money, I didn't research this particular word thoroughly enough before presenting this topic. Since recieving your email, I have researched it and find that the idea of *diyn* being a royal court is based on the context of the events, which is within reason, with the word itself being more closely tied to the government of God. Thus, as I researched it, the judicial aspect is commonly held, but in this case, it may be too restrictive to mean only judicial, because the word used has broader connotations. A more accurate understanding, in this context, would be the authority or government of God, not just the judicial branch. So with this understanding, I still feel confident in maintaining the idea of a royal court as a means to convey that it is the authority of the entire government of God that was seated and power given to Christ at that point. This I believe is the most accurate emphasis of this text.

Below is from **The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament** published in 1980 by Moody Press and supports *"diyn"* as I have rendered it above:

> This word, with its derived noun *diyn* is nearly identical in meaning with *šhaphat* {shaw-fat} (q.v.) and its derived noun *mišhpat* {mish-pawt} (q.v.). It appears only twenty-three times, a fraction of the times *šhaphat* and *mišhpat* appear. Of the twenty-three appearances, five are in parallel with *šhaphat* (Jer 5:28; 22:16; Prov 31:8; Ps 7:8 [H 9]); 9:8 [H 9]) and twice more it is associated in the text with *mišhpat* (Ps 72:2; Jer 21:12). Thus nearly a third of its occurrences show how closely the idea of *diyn* was identified or associated with the root *šhaphat*. The verb also occurs in Ugaritic and in parallel with *tp* (the cognate of *šhaphat*) (Fisher, RSP, vol. I, p. 166). Likewise a similar—nearly identical as far as it goes—list of terms is associated with *diyn*, demonstrating the near identity of meaning: with *mêyšhar {may-shawr}* "uprightness," "equity" (Ps 96:10; cf. Ps 75:2); and with *gaša* (Ps 54:1 [H 3]; cf. Ps 72:4). As with *šhaphat* it represents God's government as both among his people (Israel) and among all peoples (Ps 135:14 "people"; Ps 7:8 [H 9] "peoples" cf Ps 72:2; Ps 9:8 [H 9]). As far as the small number of occurrences allows a test, the range of meanings is exactly the same: to govern, in the whole range of activities of government: legislative, executive, judicial, or otherwise. See the discussion of *šhaphat* and *mišhpat*. The difference between the terms is simply that *diyn* is poetic, probably also an archaic and more elegant term. Of the twenty-three occurrences, only one is outside the Protestant grouping of poetical and poetical-prophetic literature. The exception is the single passive form—a Niphal participle (II Sam 19:9 [H 10]). The chief theological significance of this word is that

apparently like *šhaphat* it embodies the idea of government, in whatever realm, in all its aspects.[1]

Thanks again for the opportunity to clarify.